

SWORD  
SORCERY

Ravenloft

GAZETTEER



VOLUME I

A Ravenloft Campaign Setting Supplement





# GAZETTEER<sup>™</sup>

## VOLUME II

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# Foreword

*Think how the joys of reading a Gazette  
Are purchas'd by all agonies and crimes:  
Or if these do not move you, don't forget  
Such doom may be your own in aftertimes.*

— George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Don Juan*:  
*Canto the Eighth*





ith these words I begin a research project that, to my best estimation, will require years to complete to my satisfaction. I accept this challenge; no knowledge worth having can be obtained without sacrifice.

I must note at the outset, however, that I partake in this personal journey with a certain degree of discontent.

I am aware that certain scholars whose works are popular with the unschooled masses prefer to begin their texts with a few paragraphs of autobiographical material, presumably to establish a rapport with their readership. I do not approve of the practice. I find it smacks of egoism, and as a scientist I should only hope that my audience is intrigued by the phenomena I present, not by the random trivialities of my life.

This said, I must momentarily swallow my distaste to frame my complaint properly. I am a scientist and a scholar; my areas of expertise cover multiple topics ranging from the mundane to the arcane, from the anthropological to the occult. For the past five years, I have conducted an independent study of Il Aluk, or the "Slain City," as it is called by the Darkonian folk. If I must say so myself, I have demonstrated a marked talent for acquiring information, be it through casual interviews or the more drastic interrogations required in dealing with dangerous subjects. Simply put, I know how to make my subjects talk. It is no empty boast when I claim to know more than any other *living* individual about the current state of affairs in the Slain City.

Agents of the individual I now refer to as my patron recently approached me, requesting that I present my research notes on Il Aluk. Furthermore, they asked that I vastly extend my research to conduct an exhaustive, first-hand survey of the current state of the lands of the Core. The attitude of these agents causes me to believe that they expected me to be flattered or even honored by this recognition of my work. I was not. I am not of the type who responds to promises of extensive rewards with weak knees and starry eyes. I am, quite simply, the most objectively qualified researcher for the task: assigning this demanding survey to anyone else would simply have been foolish.

From this evaluation stems the source of my discontent. I am aware that my academic peers will never study the series of volumes I will soon pen. I accept that I am on the verge of spending years compiling a travelogue that will be read only by a single pair of eyes — my patron's.

Thus, I find my patron's desire to remain anonymous a source of frustration and, to be frank, quite ridiculous. It is an insult to someone of my training and experience.

Azalin Rex made his "miraculous escape" from the Gray Realm only seven months ago. Understand that in my research I have obtained full knowledge of the actual facts behind Azalin's downfall and eventual return, but I shall continue to refer to the popular misconception of these events for the sake of civil discourse. Now the servants of an obviously powerful and wealthy Darkonian patron who desires a full accounting of his homeland and its neighbors approach me.

These agents assure me that my patron is not the king of Darkon. To heed their claim would be ludicrous. It is my patron's apparent belief that I could be duped by such lies that prompts my complaint. The only cause I can find to doubt that my patron is Azalin is the question of why he would not utilize his notorious secret police, the Kargat, to conduct this research for him. I could fully understand a willingness to sacrifice my greater capability for the wider resources and deeper loyalty the Kargat would present. But then, some of my studies these past few years indicate that Azalin may no longer find the Kargat as trustworthy as they may once have been.

Labeled a dullard, however, I shall play the role. I shall obstinately continue to assume that my patron is none other than Azalin Rex — wizard-king, lord of Darkon, and architect of that calamitous failure, the *Doomsday Device* — who now seeks to reacquire himself with the world after suffering half a decade of self-imposed oblivion.

If I am incorrect in any of these findings, my dear patron, you may correct me at your leisure. Until such time, I shall amuse my simple mind by dedicating this project to King Azalin. Indeed, I shall title these books in honor of the event that I believe precipitated the call for their creation.

I hereby present to you, my nameless patron, the opening pages of the first volume of the *Doomsday Gazetteers*. Be assured that I shall not mention my discontent with our current working arrangement again. After all, I presume that we share one sentiment in common at least: It is the *research* that matters.

*How clever. How presumptuous!  
How close to the truth, and yet how far  
from it.*







## Report format



ven on the harried schedule I have planned, a full accounting of the lands of the Core will require considerable time. Fear not, my dear patron; I know better than to tax your patience. Upon concluding my research in each country, I shall relay my findings back to Darkon at once. Thus, you should expect to receive reports on a regular basis. Of course, this assumes that the messengers you dispatch prove less belligerent than the agents I have so far encountered.

*This also assumes that my little scholar is not tempted to withhold valuable information. We shall see.*

Under ideal circumstances, I would adopt a slower pace, allowing me gradually to gain the confidence of the subjects I study. Yet I suspect my patron has as much interest in waiting years for each report as I have in spending the rest of my life on this bard's errand. Thus, I will devote six weeks to each region, taking more or less time as required. Rest assured that my results shall not suffer should I fail to gain the acceptance of the communities I visit. Should it prove necessary, I will provide so-called "local color" through direct excerpts of my interviews with the native populace. For clarity's sake, I shall present these anecdotes in illuminated sidebars.

Because these reports will be presented over the course of several years, I shall avoid confusion by adhering to a standard format throughout, as follows:

### Landscape

In this section, I present a naturalist's view of each region I visit, focusing on noteworthy features of its landscape, flora, and fauna. I also take note of important waterways and trade routes.

### History

Here I attempt to provide a historian's view of the land. Objectively speaking, many lands in our world have existed for only a very short time. On those occasions when the Mists have parted, however, the lands they revealed have typically appeared fully formed and fully populated. The inhabitants of these new lands have full memories of lives

### Local Animals and Native Horrors

These sidebars present natural wildlife and unnatural monsters that are particularly well-suited for adventures in the domain; they are not exhaustive lists of all the creatures to be found. Creature lists are divided into "Wildlife" (common, natural animals) and "Monsters" (uncommon, unnatural threats). To make it easier to prepare an encounter quickly, creatures are listed in order of ascending Challenge Ratings. Any creatures in *italics* are under the influence of the domain's darklord (see "Enchantment" effects in Chapter Three of the **Ravenloft** setting book). Unless noted otherwise, all creatures can be found in the *Monster Manual*. Creatures marked with an asterisk can be found in **Denizens of Dark-ness**. Creatures marked with a page number are included in the Attached Notes.

before the emergence of their home. In addition, their historical records often stretch back centuries.

Common wisdom holds that these new lands have simply been "revealed" to the world, having existed all along while hidden deep in the Misty Border. Occultists in some circles, though, have posited the existence of other worlds — the supposed homes of the "outlanders" with which my patron may be familiar. These occultists theorize that each of these realms may have been drawn into our Land of Mists from one of these so-called outlander worlds.

I once scoffed at such wild theories, but due to my extensive study of Azalin's past and his true goals in the Requiem, I have reluctantly come to accept them, at least on a theoretical basis. Yet when one probes into the recorded history — or even living memory — of a region before its emergence, such history often proves to be vague, incomplete, or even self-contradictory.

This leads me to the disturbing hypothesis that each land in our world may simply have been created from whole cloth on the day that it first appeared in the Mists. All the land's history, memories, and lives that predate that day may be nothing more than an unfathomably complex phantasm. I hesitate to guess at the power of the nameless forces







that would be capable of such acts, but the facts speak for themselves.

For the sake of clarity, I will endeavor to establish a “seminal event” during which each land first emerged — or, perhaps, was created. Following this seminal event, cross-referenced historical documents from surrounding lands confirm the region’s objective existence. I take some small comfort from the knowledge that the first appearance of Darkon can be verified as having taken place long before my birth. I, at least, am real.

*A wise decision, my little scholar. You sense the nature of the tapestry that surrounds you. The past exists only to torment those damned to remember it.*

I cannot confirm that anything *before* this seminal event actually occurred in any real sense. Therefore, although I include this “false history” in my accounts, I intend to focus instead on those historical events that still resonate in the present.

The historical records of some countries read as a chain of usurpers, one tyrant overthrowing the next. If one or more of the past rulers of a country proves particularly interesting, I will provide a brief biography in an illuminated sidebar.

## Populace

In this section, I present a census taker’s view of each land. My survey includes physical characteristics, demeanor, customs, cuisine, fashions, and an overview of prevalent religions. I am at least passing familiar with many languages of the Core, so I may present brief language primers for my patron’s amusement. After all, I suspect my patron may be too bound by his *responsibilities*, so to speak, to experience these cultures in person.

## The Realm

In this section, I turn my eye to the flow of power and how it is exploited. First, I provide an overview of each region’s formal government, including intriguing laws and the popular opinion regarding current rulers. Next, I turn to economic power, including forms of currency, natural re-

sources, and notable industries. Lastly, I focus on matters of diplomacy, examining how each region interacts with its neighbors.

Of course, not all forms of power are easily observed. My research into the Requiem taught me much about the *true* sources of might in these lands — but I suspect my patron is already intimately familiar with old Vistani tales of dread lords who bound themselves forever to the land in doomed attempts to reap untold power. I attempt to identify these dread lords whenever I deduce their presence. Perhaps this is what my patron truly seeks from my work?

## Sites of Interest

Here I present a brief travelogue of my journey through the significant settlements and other intriguing locales in each region, including noteworthy structures and inhabitants. For the sake of expedience, I list all major communities before indulging myself in recounting of sites of more esoteric appeal.

Simply for my own reference, I also include a few notes on food and lodging — always useful for a traveler such as myself.

## Final Thoughts

Upon the completion of my survey of each land, I will compile my notes and conclude by presenting my executive summary of the region as a whole. For my patron’s benefit, I will distill my impression of the land, including potential causes for concern and weaknesses that might be exploited.

My patron is, of course, familiar with the alarming accounts of travelers suddenly trapped at the borders of a country by eerie phenomena that appear and vanish without warning and seemingly without cause. The denizens of every region tell a different tale of how their homeland shuts itself off from the outside world. I suspect these so-called “border closures” are connected to the dread lords; these displays of power may even provide a direct reflection of their inner character. Thus, I will present a local account of each such phenomenon.

Of course, if I am to maintain my schedule, I would prefer not to encounter these supernatural barriers myself.







## How to Use This Book

The book you now hold is an annotated version of the *Doomsday Gazetteer Volume 1*, compiled from the narrator's reports and correspondence. The bulk of this text is a travelogue, relating the narrator's experiences and observations during a six-month journey through four domains of the southeastern Core: Barovia, Hazlan, Forlorn, and Kartakass.

The narrator's mysterious patron may also occasionally remark on the narrator's commentary, perhaps to offer a differing opinion, as can be seen above.

Sidebars present special game material that should be read only by the Dungeon Master. If you are a player, reading these sections may spoil some of the mystery your Dungeon Master has in store for you. Keep in mind that Rule 0 still applies; "Dread Possibility" sidebars in particular present secrets and adventure ideas that may or may not be true. The Dungeon Master should decide whether these scenarios apply to her campaign.

The final section of this book, Attached Notes, is a collection of appendices covering new game rules, magic, creatures, NPCs, and locations. Whenever the narrator refers to attaching extra notes at the end of a report, game material on that subject can be found in the appendix. As with sidebars, players should refrain from reading the Attached Notes.

A single copy of each *Doomsday Gazetteer* exists within the game setting, written in Draconic and carefully encoded (requiring a successful Decipher Script check at DC 30 to interpret). Heroes can avail themselves directly of the information found within these pages, but first they must obtain the book. This should invariably entail an adventure in itself. Heroes would most likely intercept a *Doomsday Gazetteer* report as it is being delivered to the narrator's patron. Of course, that "powerful and wealthy" patron will seek to recover his property . . .

While the primary purpose of the *Gazetteers* is to enrich the Ravenloft setting, Dungeon Masters are just as strongly encouraged to plunder these books for chilling NPCs, locations, and concepts for use in any horror-tinged campaign. The Realm of Dread is a jigsaw world, and each element can be easily imported to other settings, including those the Dungeon Master creates herself.

## Domains at a Glance

Each domain report opens with a brief account of the domain's vital statistics, in the following format:

**Cultural Level:** The domain's degree of technological and cultural development, ranging from Savage (0) to Renaissance (9). See Chapter One of the *Ravenloft* setting book for more details.

**Ecology & Climate/Terrain:** The domain's ecology rating (*Full*, *Sparse*, or *No*) and terrain types (see the *Monster Manual*). These factors determine the effectiveness of summoning spells within that domain. (See "Conjuration" effects in Chapter Three of the *Ravenloft* setting book.)

**Year of Formation:** The year on the Barovian Calendar when the domain first appeared.

**Population:** The domain's approximate total population. Undead and full-blooded Vistani are not included in population statistics.

**Races:** A racial breakdown of the domain's population. "Other" indicates a mixture of standard nonhuman races that are not explicitly cited, as well as a smattering of living, intelligent monsters that can pass for human. When more than one human ethnic group lives in the domain, these groups will also be broken down in descending order of social dominance.

**Languages & Religions:** Local languages and religions are presented in descending order of popularity. The official or dominant





language(s) and religions(s), if any, are labeled with an asterisk.

**Government:** The domain's officially recognized form of government. In Ravenloft, however, the true, hidden chains of power may take a significantly different form. Not all domains have a centralized authority, and some have no formal government at all. When applicable, sections will also include notes and game statistics for typical members of local law enforcement.

**Ruler:** The domain's publicly recognized political ruler, should the domain have a centralized government.

**Darklord:** The domain's *true* master. Individual darklords are described in full in the Attached Notes.

## The Native Hero

These sidebars offer special notes and advice on creating PCs native to the domain. Such notes include the local role of the standard races and classes, recommended skills and feats that capture the domain's atmosphere, and examples of typical names. When applicable, sections will also include notes and game statistics for typical members of local law enforcement.

## Sites of Interest

Each settlement includes a sidebar presenting full community statistics. (See "Generating Towns" in Chapter Four of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.)







# Report One: Barovia

*"Do you not know that tonight, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things of the world will have full sway? Do you know where you are going, and what you are going to?"*

— Bram Stoker, *Dracula*



My patron has been most adamant that I begin my survey in the realm of Barovia. To the layman, this rustic, mountainous land might seem an unusual starting point for an accounting of the Core, yet I believe that my patron is keenly interested in Barovia and her mysteries.

My daunting journey began along the Old Svalich Road, where eastern Borca ends and western Barovia begins. There, the rolling western foothills of the Balinok Mountains, the Dreadmount, finally break the thorny thickets of the Tainted Wood. My journey to this departure point was less than comfortable. My patron's lackeys, odiferous thugs sorely lacking in wits and manners, first met me in Viaki, whereupon I was locked in an enclosed wagon for a trip of a week or more. This is an unacceptable way to treat an esteemed scholar whose talents and good graces are desired!

When I was released, the sensations that greeted me were at once terrible and magnificent. I stepped out into air that sang with a clean alpine scent, soured slightly by the tang of animal musk. A chill wind whistled across the landscape of highland herbs and crystal streams. Before me, stony hills climbed slowly to the east, clad in stands of evergreens. Through this country the Old Svalich Road stretched out like a dying serpent of worn cobbles. Looming over all was the towering presence of the Balinoks, jagged and pitiless in their mantle of snow. I had never set eyes on Barovia before, and the discomfort of my journey made it seem as if I had been escorted to a new world.

As I marveled at the vista, a great black cloud of shrieking bats rose up from the south, as if disgorged from the earth itself. The swarm's flight was unaccountably premature; the sun would not set for some time. Yet as the creatures surged toward the east, I noted that the faded purple of Barovia's night was already creeping up behind the Balinoks.

With the threat of dusk looming, I gathered my possessions, gave my patron's goons a final spit and curse, and took my first steps into both Barovia and the most ambitious undertaking of my life. The Vistani, I would be told many times while traveling through this land, call Barovia *Anda Thema*, meaning both "heart of the world" and "edge of the world." Indeed.

## Barovia at a Glance

**Cultural Level:** Medieval (7)

**Ecology:** Full

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate forest, hill, and mountains

**Year of Formation:** 351 BC

**Population:** 27,700

**Races:** Humans 98%, half-Vistani 1%, other 1%

**Human Ethnic Groups:** Barovians 44%, Gundarakites 50%, Forfarrians 3%, Thaani 2%, Other 1%

**Languages:** Balok\*, Luktar\*, Vaasi, Sithican, Forfarrian, Thaani

**Religions:** The Morninglord, Ezra, Hala, Erlin

**Government:** Feudal hereditary monarchy

**Ruler:** Count Strahd von Zarovich

**Darklord:** Count Strahd von Zarovich

## Landscape



Barovia straddles the heart of the Balinok Mountains in the south-central Core. Historically, the realm's borders encompassed only the Balinoks and their surrounding foothills; modern Barovia includes the Gundarak foothills, stretching west beyond the mountains. Barovia produces goods of only modest value to the outside world, but its location is strategically vital. Svalich Pass is the only way through the Balinoks south of the Shadow Rift, and consequentially Barovia's stability is key to the fortunes of many southern realms.

This significance is easy to appreciate when one lays eyes on the Balinoks. Notable peaks include Mount Baratak, the highest point in the Balinoks (7,440 feet); Terestrâu Dinte (better known as Mount Sawtooth) (7,170 feet); and Mount Ghakis (4,620 feet). Within Barovia, the Balinoks are especially rugged and tortuous, the high passes choked with ice for nine months of the year. As I journeyed through the region in mid-spring, penetrating the mountains by any means







but the Old Svalich Pass proved nigh impossible. Frigid winds whip sheer cliffs, and the crevasses and gorges create black maws where no light reaches. Traversing the upper elevations requires proper equipment and an experienced mountaineer who knows the terrain, predators, and avalanche possibilities. As if these hazards were not enough, the Barovians spin endless tales of snow demons, frost spirits, and the ghosts of frozen travelers, most of whom are associated with the dizzying peak of Mount Baratak. Many Barovians take a cynical sort of pride in the sheer lethality of the Balinoks. Of the mountains, I often heard, "Nothing can kill a man as quickly, or as slowly, as the Balinoks."

Rugged foothills and rolling dales surround the Balinoks on all sides. The wide expanse of the Dreadmount, which extends from the Tainted Wood of Borca to the foot of the western Balinoks, dominates Northwestern Barovia. The heavy traffic along the Old Svalich Road attracts brigands and vampires to the Dreadmount.

In the south, the Bloodfang Hills stretch to the haunted forests of Forlorn. Haunting the Bloodfangs are barbaric goblins (often mistakenly called "snaggle-toothed hags" by the Barovians), who will emerge from the forests in search of their favorite delicacy, human brains. In the mid-sixth century, such incursions were reportedly much more common, and the von Zaroviches ordered the construction of watchtowers along the frontier with Forlorn. Although still manned by a token garrison from Immol, the towers have fallen into disrepair; assignment to these "Bogie-Towers" is one of the loneliest military details in all of Barovia. At the western edge of the Bloodfangs, the Gundar River cuts deep into the Balinoks as it flows through the spectacular Gorge of Passing Sorrow. Barren of all but wilted grasses, the shadowy gorge's steep bluffs take on a crimson hue as one travels upriver toward Forlorn.

East of the Balinoks, the descent from the hill country to the Borderwood in Nova Vaasa is much quicker. From even the lower elevations of these Hills of Bleak Vistas, a traveler can see beyond the Borderwood to the endless horizon of Nova Vaasa's grassy steppes. The distinctions between all of these upland regions surrounding the Balinoks are vague, and I could rarely get two Barovians to agree upon where, for example, the Dreadmount ends and the Bloodfangs begin.

Barovia's landscape is dotted with dark woodlands, but the only notable pristine forests are the

Svalich Woods and the Tepurich Forest. The Svalich is a small pocket of dense, old-growth beech-fir forest in the Old Svalich Pass, surrounding the Village of Barovia. Though many Barovians assume that the woods are reserved for Count von Zarovich's private game, a Barovian soldier informed me that this was not true. Nonetheless, I heard many rumors that wolves larger than an adult horse stalk the woods. The vast Tepurich Forest blankets Southwestern Barovia. *Tepurich* means "scarred" in Balok, an appellation derived from the strange preponderance of galls, blight, and twisted scars that mar the trunks of the trees. Once a part of Gundarak, the whole region has an evil reputation. The folk of nearby Zeidenburg and Teufeldorf depend on the forest's timber and game, but confessed to me repeatedly that they cannot shake the sensation that eyes are watching them from the shadows.

Three river basins define the major waterways of Barovia: the Gundar, Ivlis, and Luna. Though none of the rivers are navigable for heavy traffic, locals do travel downstream on light river vessels and rafts when it is more convenient than a torturous overland route. The Gundar River drains the southern Balinoks, flowing west into Invidia, and is joined by the Nharov River, which flows northwest from Kartakass. Both run through some of the wildest and least-traveled parts of the whole realm, and river travelers count themselves blessed if they emerge intact from the sinister Tepurich Forest and into the comparative serenity of Invidia.

The Ivlis River flows east from the Old Svalich Pass into Nova Vaasa, paralleling the Saniset River, which also flows east from further south in the Balinoks. The Ivlis and Saniset are dotted with rapids that conceal a maze of jagged outcroppings, gravel bars, and other hazards. Even Barovians on the smallest and lightest rafts dare not brave such waters. The Luna River drains the southern Balinoks as well, meandering west through the Dreadmount toward Borca. Its course is gentler, although not by much, and Barovian militiamen confided that its banks are a favored haunt for the brigands that plague the west.

Nestled in the heart of the Balinoks just north of Svalich Pass, Lake Zarovich is Barovia's largest freshwater body. The lake has no outlet, and most locals hold that its depths drain into the very abyss. Catches of fish are plentiful on Lake Zarovich, and fishermen brave the bitter winds that blow across the lake's surface year-round, ice fishing in winter.





Not so in Lake Krezk, which lies in northwestern Barovia. Most Barovians refer to it as the Lake of Veins, alluding to the faint wisps of maroon that seep into its waters along the northwestern shore. Whatever toxin is leaching from the soil of the Tainted Wood, it slays much of the lake's fish stock each autumn, choking the banks with rotting carcasses.

Although numerous roads and trails crisscross Barovia, it is also blessed with a handful of true highways. The most significant is the Old Svalich Road, an ancient highway that breaches the otherwise impenetrable Balinoks. The highway connects Borca in the west to Nova Vaasa in the east. Nearly every realm in the south utilizes the Old Svalich Road for the movement of goods. The highway is still smooth and broad, but has begun to show its age, with crumbling stone and weeds peeking through the cracks in places. Svalich Pass has a haunted reputation, and few folk make the journey between Vallaki and the Village of Barovia at night if they can help it. Perhaps the Road's most notable features are the ancient gateways that stand at each end of the Pass, stone archways with swinging gates of iron. An imposing pair of iron statues flanks each gate, twenty feet tall and covered in centuries of corrosion and bird droppings.

The figures are hulking Barovian soldiers bearing huge warhammers. Their visages are hidden beneath helms, but the von Zarovich arms on their shields declare their allegiance. Though no longer used to control traffic through the Pass, the gates have been known to open and shut of their own accord, seemingly without reason. I observed this phenomenon myself in my journey from Krezk to Vallaki, when the western gate, which I had found open to allow me passage, thundered shut behind me.

The Crimson Road runs south-southeast from Borca, along the edge of the Tepurich Forest, and into Kartakass. This highway, once called the Gundar Road during the duke's reign, is now named for the horrific bloodsports his soldiers were known to engage in along its roadsides. Gundarakites claim that screaming spectres nearly cleaved in twain by brutal axe blows wander the highway on moonless nights. In southeastern Barovia, the Warlock's Road leads south from Immol into Hazlan. Named for the wizards that practice their so-called "black arts" openly in that land, the highway is a boon for Immol, which conducts brisk trade with Ramulai and the other Hazlani settlements lying beyond Barovia's borders. Also notable is the Dreadpass, a short road that connects Vallaki





with Zeidenburg. Once barely a trail, Count Strahd has ordered the road expanded since annexing his new lands.

The majority of buildings in Barovia are constructed in the typical, uninspired brick-and-timber style commonly observed throughout the Core. The brick is usually plastered over without and within, and then painted in neutral, earthen tones. The homes and shops on many streets alternate between deep russet and pale dun exteriors, resulting in a tidy — if bland — color scheme for the whole village. Barovians are fond of decorating the facades of their buildings with colorful stones, especially those that glitter with bright mineral flecks or a strange luster. These pebbles are pressed into the plaster in neat rows or decorative patterns of curls and florals. Roofs are thatched and constructed quite steeply, and the gables are often graced by tiny, leaden rose windows. For all the realm's cruel dreariness, I was struck by the lively decorations that adorned even the humblest Barovian homes. Doorways tinkle with silver wind chimes, while the mountain air wafts past bunches of dried herbs. During my springtime trek, window boxes overflowed with bright and delicate mountain flowers, while harvest time sees pumpkin lanterns and cornhusk moppets. Although quaintly charming, I found that all this domestic primping simply highlighted just how trivial the joys of a Barovian commoner are.

Numerous crumbling ruins predating the Terg occupation dot Barovia's countryside, and even a cursory examination reveals three distinct types of structures. First, abandoned monasteries are found throughout the high elevations of the Balinoks. The Monastery of Silver Threads on Mount Baratak is one such sanctuary, thought to conceal fabulous treasures and prodigious secrets, not to mention undead shades.

Second among the ruined structures are the anonymous, demolished keeps and towers in the foothills. The Keep of Forgetting along the Dreadpass, for example, is renowned as an abode of evil; its noble masters were slain by the von Zaroviches in ages past, their bones brought forth to haunt the ruins forever.

Finally, there are the mysterious stone circles, evidently prehistoric in origin, found in remote valleys and groves. These circles lack the size and purposeful arrangement that characterize such monuments in realms such as Tepest, seeming to be little more than haphazard rings of menhirs. Some

## Dread Possibility: The Tomb of Leo Dilisnya

Leo Dilisnya, patriarch of the Dilisnya family, was not present on the eve of Barovia's doom. Excusing himself from Sergei von Zarovich's wedding just before his assassins sprung, Leo spent the following decades in hiding, orchestrating the concealment and diaspora of his kin. He rightly feared Strahd's wrath, but also came to uncover the count's vampiric nature and soon made preparations to trap his old enemy.

In 398 BC, Strahd picked up Leo's trail with the aid of a loyal noble family: the Wachters, who blamed Leo for the massacre at Castle Ravenloft. The Dilisnya elder was waiting, however, when Strahd tracked him to the Monastery of Silver Threads. Leo had studied necromancy himself, magically slowing his aging, and had learned much about Strahd's weaknesses. Trapping the vampire lord in a chamber woven with divine wards, Leo nearly managed to stake Strahd, but was thwarted by monks under the count's thrall.

For his sedition, Strahd bestowed the vampire curse on Leo and had his fledgling nemesis entombed forever in the crypts beneath the long abandoned monastery. Leo (male human old vampire Ari7/Nec5/Clr4, CE) remains trapped in his black tomb, slipping in and out of ravenous torpor and clawing madly at the inside of his sarcophagus. Death at the hands of Strahd extinguished the magic that had slowed his age, leaving him with the withered, bent body of a seventy-year old man. Should he ever be freed, he will undoubtedly embark on a feeding frenzy, but his remarkable mind may yet survive. If Leo remains sane, he will attempt to regain control over his legacy and steer the Dilisnyas' resources toward but one goal: Strahd's destruction. Leo's cleric domains are Death and Protection.

Barovians attest to a strong — if suspiciously vague and unverified — sensation of tranquility within these circles.





## The Stone Circles

Typically ten to twenty feet in diameter, each of Barovia's stone circles has the effect of a *hallow* spell within its boundaries. This aura comprises only the three basic effects of *hallow*, and does not include an additional spell effect. This is a supernatural effect and never fades with time.

## flora

Hardwoods (beech, and oak with cherry and hazelnut) dominate in Barovia's lower hill country. Forests of mixed evergreens (ancient spruce, fir, and pine) tower prominently in the realm's higher elevations. Green meadows proliferate in the dales, where short grasses and wildflowers sway amid clear brooks in the warmer months. Barovians are particularly fond of the wild lilac and daffodils that burst forth every year with abandon.

The Vistani prize several Barovian plants. Though the Vistani are reticent about their herbal traditions, a Forfarian midwife in Immol provided me with much valuable second-hand information. For example, *bitterblot* — a large, pale green fruit related to Barovia's famous plums — has a weak, slightly tannic sweetness that prevents it from being cultivated widely. The Vistani value the fruit for divination. The oracle cuts the fruit in half with the most savage chop she can muster; if the pit breaks cleanly in one strike, it is a good omen. I was also told that the fruit is ritually cut in a potent Vistani curse, rendering the victim a whimpering cripple.

Also notable, the *Vistan's tears*, a delicate alpine flower that closely resembles a bluebell save for its dull white color, is widely believed to be the basis for the Vistani's legendary curative elixir.

## fauna

Near Vallaki, I convinced a huntsman to take me on a naturalist's hike, where he pointed out deer, elk, and wild boar. We also sighted many creatures hunted for their pelts, including chamois, wild cats, lynx, otters, badgers, weasels, red foxes, and gray wolves. The wolves rarely left my mind during my weeks in Barovia, as they are particularly common here and have a remarkably fearless dis-

## Bitterblot and Vistan's Tears

Bitterblot's effectiveness in divination is up to the DM, but the fruit is indeed a powerful focus for Vistani curses. If a Vistana slices a bitterblot while invoking a curse, she receives a +1 bonus to her curse check. If the curse is specifically designed to cause a reduction in the target's effective Dexterity, the bonus increases to +4. In the hands of anyone other than a full-blooded Vistani, the bitterblot provides only a +1 bonus to such a curse, and no bonus at all to other curses. Even then, the character must learn from a full-blooded Vistana how to cut the fruit properly, knowledge that the gypsies are unlikely to share.

Vistan's tears can be used to brew an extraordinary tea with the effect of a *potion of cure serious wounds*. Only full-blooded Vistani can brew such an elixir. For each draught of the tea to be prepared, the Vistana must gather the plant in the Balinoks, requiring four hours and a successful Profession (herbalist) check (DC 15). Brewing a single draught requires half an hour, though larger batches can be prepared with more time. The Vistana must succeed at a Profession (herbalist) check (DC 20) for the entire batch (regardless of how many draughts are prepared) or the tea is rendered toxic and the materials ruined. The curative properties of the tea persist as long as it remains hot. A character can only benefit from the tea's healing qualities once per week. Such a priceless elixir is reserved for the Vistani themselves and their rarest and most honored guests.

position. Though verified wolf attacks on humans seem as rare as in other lands, travel in Barovia is characterized by a perpetual sense of being stalked. As well, countless varieties of bat swarms regularly blot out the moon on otherwise clear nights. Strangely enough, plagues of wild rats also burst forth in the Barovian countryside from time to time. During such occasions, the vermin are sighted







surging through the fields in horrific, squealing packs, where only fire can stop them.

Of course, Barovia is well known for its vampire legends, called the *vrolok* in Balok and *voishlacka* in Luktar. Vampires are so integral to Barovian folk beliefs, I dare say they are inseparable from the Barovian identity. Tales of such creatures usually feature hapless maidens, dull-witted heroes, and occasionally historical boyars of vile reputation who are recast as vampires by the peasant storytellers. Other undead creatures are spoken of fearfully as well, particularly flesh-eating ghouls, shuffling revenants, and the mindless undead that are said to serve powerful vampires. Lycanthropes are reputedly common here, though I found that the

distinctions between vampirism and lycanthropy were often hopelessly muddled in the Barovians' simple folk tales.

Other creatures are more obscure, but their names were greeted with equally fervent warding gestures by the peasantry. There is the beguiling *veela*, which tempts men to drown themselves; the bloodsucking crone known as the *nocnitsa*; the orchard nymph called the *poludnitsa*, which cuts off trespassers' heads; and the bizarre moth demon known as the *mahr*. My own observations of the unnatural in Barovia were unfortunately limited to the occasional glimpse of a dark figure moving through village streets at night, when the timid commoners are locked away in their homes.

## Local Animals and Native Horrors

**Wildlife:** CR 1/10—bat; toad; CR 1/8—rat; CR 1/6—raven; CR 1/4—cat; owl; weasel; CR 1/3—hawk; snake, viper (Tiny); CR 1/2—badger, eagle, snake, viper (Small); CR 1—snake, viper (Medium-size); wolf; CR 2—bear, brown; boar; CR 4—bear, black.

**Monsters:** Vampires and vampire spawn are under Strahd's influence only if they are his progeny. CR 1/3—dire rat; skeleton; CR 1/2—geist\*; human, Vistani\*; plant, Bloodrose\*; zombie; CR 1—ghoul; skeleton, Strahd (pg. 124); zombie, Strahd (pg. 124); CR 2—bat, carrion\*; dire bat; plant, crawling ivy\*; ravenkin\*; skeleton, Strahd's skeletal steed\*; worg; CR 3—allip; dire wolf; ghoul, ghastr; lycanthrope, wereraven\*; lycanthrope, werewolf; shadow; wight; CR 4—gargoyle; vampire spawn; lycanthrope, werebat\*; CR 5—lycanthrope, lowland loup-garou\*; lycanthrope, mountain loup-garou\*; odem\*; wraith; CR 6—bastellus\*; corpse candle\*; vampire, vrykolaka\*; CR 7—ghost; spectre; vampire; vampire, nosferatu\*; vorlog\*; CR 8—ghoul lord\*; mohrg; CR 9—valpurleiche\*; CR 10—dhampir\*.



## History

**H**is own personal motivations aside, my patron has good reason to be engaged in Barovia's fortunes. Of all the extant civilized lands in the Core, Barovia has arguably the longest continuous historical record. This continuity, along with a great deal of ancillary evidence, indicates that Barovia is the Land of Mist's most ancient region.

The Barovian Calendar, long in use by the lands of the Core, is widely known to derive from the foundation of the nation of Barovia by the ancient von Zaroviches. Many Barovians, however, also mark this date as what they call the "First Revelation," when the Mists first parted to create the world. I believe this legend is entirely fallacious, however. All my research indicates to me that Barovia once existed as part of some outlander world. Not until the summer of 351 BC, specifically the doomed and infamous wedding of Sergei von Zarovich and Tatyana Federovna, do contemporary writings make any mention of the Misty Border or the pervasive pall of fear that has since infected Barovia's populace.

Few written records survive from the first 350 years of Barovia's history, and those that do are strangely murky and incomplete. Although the young nation apparently had many relations with neighboring states, the Barovians recorded virtually nothing about these other lands except as they directly related to Barovia. Although I take this as further evidence of this period being "false history," I concede that it could simply be a trait of the Barovian mindset. Even now, these backward folk often behave as though the world ends at Barovia's borders.

In any case, a handful of crucial events can be verifiably dated to this period. The first is the formal founding of the state Church of Andral in 168 BC, which received the blessing and official sanctioning of the von Zaroviches. The Church evidently evolved out of the worship of an archetypical tribal sun god, variously named *Andral*, *Ahndrel*, and *Eundrel* in historical documents. Though once widespread, this religion apparently died out in the fourth century; none of the peasants whom I probed about the matter even recognized Andral's name. Little is known of the Church's dogma or practices. The few remnants of Andral temples that still survive have all been converted

into places of worship for Ezra or the Morninglord in the centuries since.

The next significant event during this period is the invasion of the Neureni Horde in approximately 230 BC. Although effectively forgotten in the wake of the Terg occupation, the Neureni were just as fearsome a force as the Tergs. One of the few surviving sources from the period, the epic ballad *Blood of Mazonn*, describes their battle prowess:

*They thundered from the east, a tide of blades and frothing fury.*

*They rode like demons on their steeds, and slew our children*

*Without a thought; No sanctuary could be found against them,*

*And no force of men or gods could halt their advance.*

Yet halt them the Barovians did, under the remarkable command of Nicoleta von Zarovich, the legendary General-Princess. Though the Horde's assault was relatively brief (lasting only seven months by some accounts), the Neureni advanced west through Svalich Pass as far as Vallaki, where they were routed after a three-month siege. Today, a corruption of their name, *neuri*, is synonymous in Balok with werewolves or shapeshifting wizards. Intriguingly, although few scholars have pointed out as much, the scarce evidence of Neureni culture that has survived hints that these barbarians were kin to the horsemen that settled in Gundarak. Indeed, the Gundarakite death god Erlin is in all likelihood an aspect of the demon lord Irlek-Khan, whom the Neureni supposedly worshipped. Thus the flow of history may have come full circle, as the modern Barovians oppress the very people that assaulted their kingdom over five centuries ago.

One last crucial event prior to the Terg occupation is the so-called War of Silver Knives, a bitter conflict between the noble Dilisnya, Katsky, and Petrovna families. The struggle was reputedly sparked by the assassination of Izabela Dilisnya in 314 BC, ostensibly over a disputed silver mine. In reality, a century of resentment had been brewing between the families over slights real and imagined. For two years, chaos reigned in the Barovian courts as revenge murders multiplied. The von Zaroviches, for their part, remained above the fray, until Count Barov von Zarovich commanded an end to the conflict in 316 BC and appeased the families with gifts of new land. Though the families complied with their ruler's edict, the struggle weak-





ened the kingdom considerably and rendered it unprepared for the coming of the Tergs in 320.

Though the word *Terg* is rarely spoken in Barovia today without an accompanying curse, the origins of the Tergs themselves are hazy at best. Like the Neureni, they came from the east, though their conquest was spurred by an astounding religious zeal. Many period accounts describe their behavior on the battlefield like that of the demon-possessed. Though their god's name has been stricken from most records, I discovered the name *Zagaz* or *Za'far* (the transliteration is ambiguous) on several ruined Terg structures near Vallaki.

The Tergs conquered Barovia with astonishing speed — less than a month by some reckonings. Their warlord, Durukan the Unstoppable — better known by his Balok name, Dorian — was a wicked zealot who knew no fear. Unlike other barbarian hordes, the Tergs did not raze their spoils and move on; instead, they settled in conquered lands to bring the whole world under the eye of their god. This was the ultimate shame for the von Zaroviches, who fled west as refugees.

The fortunes of Barovia reversed with the coming of age of Strahd von Zarovich I, eldest son of Barov. Strahd was a youth of enormous resolve and pledged to rebuild his family's army and lead it against the invaders. For twenty-seven years, Strahd did just that, inching eastward with a combination of fearlessness, tactical genius, and a matchless charisma that stoked his troops' patriotism. Consider this account of the Siege of Krezk in the winter of 326 BC, from Petre Raluca's *The Exile and the Return*:

*Strahd saw that his men were weary, and that hunger and cold had sapped their morale. He went out into their camps before the siege and roused them like mad wolves. "For every drop of Terg blood you spill today," he roared, "Barovia will endure for a year when it is ours again. I will claim a thousand years for my family today. How many will you claim?"*

Modern Barovian adoration of Strahd I is difficult to overstate. As deeply as they resent his descendants, they hold the first Strahd von Zarovich up as a savior, the true founder of present day Barovia. Tales paint him as mighty in battle, keen of mind, virtuous in spirit, and stunningly handsome. There is even an apocryphal legend that the Tergs sent a demon named *Ijrail* — or possibly *Inraji*, the sources vary — to tempt Strahd with unholy power in battle. The young general banished the demon and went on to victory the next

day regardless. I have included further legends of this wicked fiend in the Attached Notes.

*I am more than familiar with this particular jackal. May he rot forever in this prison with us all.*

By 347 BC, the last of the Terg armies were driven from their camps near the modern Village of Barovia. Strahd began rebuilding his family's kingdom by renovating Durukan's toppled citadel, dubbing it Castle Ravenloft to honor his mother Ravenia (Barov and Ravenia were slain by the Tergs just a year before Strahd's final victory). The castle was completed in 349, and Strahd sent for his scattered brothers to return to their rightful place as the rulers of Barovia. Weary of battle, Strahd assumed his father's title and set about enforcing his new rule.

A year later, the Ba'al Verzi made an attempt on the Count's life. They failed and their masters were never exposed, but Strahd I could not elude his enemies forever. Tragedy struck at the wedding of his youngest brother Sergei in 351 BC, when Dilisnya assassins murdered all of the gathered guests, Sergei, his bride, and Strahd himself. The motivations behind this seditious gambit seem plain today: with Barovia restored, the Dilisnyas hoped to seize control of the realm before the von Zaroviches' power had been completely rebuilt. According to legend, the monstrosity of this event cast the land of Barovia into an accursed shadow from which it has never escaped — further evidence that this massacre was the seminal event marking the entrance of Barovia into the Mists. Naturally, the country was thrown into confusion and despair. Fortunately, Sturm von Zarovich had been unable to attend the wedding. Through him, the von Zarovich line survived and the Dilisnyas were forced into hiding.

Strahd I's victories were surely the zenith of Barovian glory, and with his death the realm's decline was perhaps inevitable. The following centuries were characterized by growing despotism, as Strahd's heirs (more thoughts on these so-called "heirs" later) seized authority from the nobles and concentrated it their own hands. In 470 BC, the first Vistani *vardos* began to appear in Barovia. Strahd von Zarovich IV quickly sealed a pact with the gypsies, pledging his protection in return for vague oaths of service. This pact survives to this





day, and the relationship between the von Zaroviches and the Vistani seems to have only grown firmer and more complex with time.

Though the rule of the von Zaroviches plodded forward in a kind of dismal stagnancy, the world outside of Castle Ravenloft was changing. One morning in 475 BC, a young outlander boy named Martyn Pelkar stumbled out of the Svalich Woods. Few could predict that the boy's ramblings about his salvation at the hands of a "golden morning lord" would spawn a cult that somehow made inroads in the hearts of the naturally suspicious and cynical Barovians.

In 528 BC, prompted by tales of black magic within its walls, outlander mercenaries attempted to besiege Castle Ravenloft. They failed, despite the fact that no army defended the castle's battlements. Of course, this only heightened the growing rumors that the von Zaroviches had betrayed their forebears and bargained with the minions of darkness.

The early sixth century saw two successive waves of refugees pour into Barovia from the south. In roughly 550 BC, survivors of a secretive druidic order from Forlorn began settling in Immol, apparently fleeing the savage goblin clans that plague that land. I plan to

investigate these claims more closely later in my journey. Around 585, these Forfarrians were followed by the Thaani, who claimed that they had escaped from a nightmarish enslavement beneath Bluetspur. Both groups were rapidly absorbed into Barovian society, though many retained their languages and the occasional remnant of their culture. The Thaani, as I will discuss later, brought a potent tradition of mystic secrets to Barovia, not to mention legends of their alien masters that still reverberate throughout the Core.

The first contact between Barovia and Gundarak is cited as occurring in 593 BC, when the Mists first revealed the latter realm. Since much of Gundarak's former territory is





now under Barovia's control, a brief survey of Gundarakite history is also in order. Commoners claim that Nharov Gundar led his people from "the land where the sun dies" and settled in the area of the Dreadmount and the Tepurich Forest. Several ancient Gundarakite tapestries that I examined in Teufeldorf place this event variously between 251 and 263 BC, though of course this predates the actual appearance of Gundarak.

Similar false history speaks of three successive bloody civil wars that struck the realm in 425, 437, and 501, the so-called Unwise Rebellions. In each case, a confederation of minor noble families attempted to wrest control of Gundarak from the Gundars. Each time, the uprising met with crushing defeat, and in the Third Unwise Rebellion, Duke Boldiszar Gundar executed every last remaining noble not related to his house by marriage. Such dreadful ruthlessness in the Gundars eventually spun into capricious bloodlust. Tales speak of later dukes selecting random peasants for their soldiers to slaughter in the streets or to be hanged from the walls of Castle Hunadora.

Count Strahd VII and Duke Gundar loathed one another from the moment the Mists revealed their realms' shared border, but this hatred was never so intense as to spark war between Barovia and Gundarak. Gundar and his descendents are seen as lacking their ancestors' fierce barbarian mentality. The Gundars came to be regarded as degenerate tyrants in the following centuries, prone to violent fits of madness, the legacy of generations of inbreeding.

Modern Barovia truly began to take shape in 736, when Dr. Henrik Dominiani, the warden of an asylum near Teufeldorf, assassinated Duke Gundar. Present day accounts of this incident are contradictory, but they indicate that the assassination may have stemmed from a failed attempt between the two men to usurp control of neighboring Kartakass. Few Gundarakites shed a tear when Gundar was slain; apparently, his remains were left to rot wherever he fell. I plan to look into this when I visit Castle Hunadora, which now lies in Invidia.

Gundarak collapsed into years of true anarchy. In the wake of the Great Upheaval in 740, Count Strahd XI chose to capitalize on the ripe potential of this power vacuum. Making a bold move, he ordered the boyars of western Barovia to annex Gundarak. Conscriptio was called down on the Barovian commoners for the first time since the Terg occupation, and Barovian troops poured into

eastern Gundarak. Nine bloody months of fighting ensued as ragtag Gundarak partisans, enticed by a brief taste of freedom, waged a brutal guerilla war against the Barovian militias. The fighting culminated in the Teufeldorf Massacre, when the treacherous Captain Abel Ivilskova captured and beheaded the partisan leaders under the pretext of negotiation.

In the years since the Great Upheaval, Gundarak has been brought firmly under Barovia's rigid control. The resentment bred by over a decade and a half of armed occupation, however, seems to be leading unavoidably toward escalating ethnic bloodshed. In 748, the outspoken Gundarakite separatist Ardonk Szerieza began espousing a vision of Gundarak as it once was. Szerieza continues to fan the flames of hatred with ethnic pride and patently revisionist notions of Gundarakite history, even going so far as to paint Nharov and Medraut Gundar as patriotic monarchs unjustly toppled from power. The scattered Gundarakite "freedom fighters" in western Barovia are slavishly devoted to Szerieza's principles, though Szerieza himself denies any connection to violent rebels. Most Barovians believe that Szerieza and his supporters are allied to the remnants of the Gundarakite army holding Castle Hunadora in Invidia and to the gypsy witch they follow, Gabrielle Aderre. This suspicion was confirmed in the minds of many last year, when rebels blew up the Barovian garrison in Zeidenburg with a wagonload of gunpowder, purportedly smuggled into the realm from Invidia.

## Populace



Barovia's population has four distinct ethnic groups: Barovians, Gundarakites, Forfarrians, and Thaani. While the broad cultural differences between these groups are minimal today, they can generally be distinguished by their physical appearance and language.

Ethnic Barovians are the descendents of the folk that first settled the Balinoks over 750 years ago. They have spread throughout present day Barovia, though they remain most dominant in their original lands. In the most distant reaches of the west, The boyars, their agents, and the Barovian militias represent Barovians almost exclusively. Ethnic Gundarakites, conversely, are found in greatest numbers in the west and are rarely encountered east of the Balinoks. The Gundarak region is cur-





rently much more densely populated than the rest of Barovia, and as such may actually outnumber Barovians by a small margin. Both groups vastly outnumber the Forfarrians and the Thaani, who dwell almost exclusively in the village of Immol. Though together the Forfarrians and Thaani of Immol number only a few hundred, their refusal to intermarry with the local Barovians has maintained the integrity of their communities for roughly two hundred years. Whether such a degree of inbreeding has maintained their health, intellect, and sanity is another matter.

The wretched irony of the conflict between the Barovians and the Gundarakites is that an outsider would be hard-pressed to tell them apart by their physical appearance. Woe to the traveler who confuses one for the other, however! Both ethnic groups have thick, stocky builds, characterized by broad shoulders, meaty limbs, and wide hips. Generally dusky in appearance, their skin tones range from a pale olive-tan to light brown. Dark hair and eyes are the norm, the former varying from light chestnut to deep, glossy black, the latter from pale hazel to rich brown. Men of both ethnicities prefer to wear their coarse, wavy hair just above the shoulder. Women grow their hair long throughout their lives, and younger maids often braid their locks in a single or double tress. Nearly all men wear the distinctive, drooping mustache common to the region, grown thick and long. Beards are widespread only among younger men, who consider them a sign of virility (and then quickly abandon the notion when they marry).

Amid such physical uniformity, the Forfarrians and the Thaani tend to stand out like sore thumbs. The Forfarrians are of more average, athletic build, though they tend to be husky about the waist. Their skin is always very pale and frequently densely freckled. Their hair is inevitably some shade of red, ranging from a deep brown with auburn highlights to a striking carrot orange. In contrast, few generalizations can be made about the appearance of the Thaani. Though as a people they have no memory of their history before their centuries of enslavement, an obvious inference is that their ancestors were drawn from many lands and bound together by their common fate. Although most Thaani could be misconstrued as belonging to various Core ethnic groups, a few possess remarkable and distinctive physical traits, such as entirely hairless bodies or white irises.

*Correction: The Thaani claim to know nothing of their history. The secrets of slaves are dearly kept.*

The Vistani are present in significant numbers in Barovia, not the least because of their pact with the von Zaroviches. Nonetheless, since no civilized realm would count the gypsies among its native citizens, I will refrain from discussing them further here. If additional details on the Vistani and their culture are required, I refer my patron to the comprehensive — if overly maudlin — *Van Richten's Guide to the Vistani*.

All of Barovia's ethnic groups dress in a similar manner, though modern Gundarakites prefer to distinguish themselves in trifling ways from their Barovian oppressors. Male attire begins with heavy breeches, a loose white shirt, and the signature sheepskin vest, woolen within and exquisitely embroidered without. Women dress quite plainly in a loose, shapeless blouse, long skirt, and heavy wool shawl. The head kerchief is a customary tradition for all women, though Barovians wear it only when married and Gundarakites only when unattached. Misunderstandings over the kerchief tradition have caused more than one bloody brawl between young Barovian and Gundarakite men. Other than the ubiquitous vests worn by men of every class, most clothing is plain and unpatterned. Barovians seem to favor somber, earthy shades, especially black, gray, and dark brown, while Gundarakites prefer brighter, if muted, shades of yellow, green, and blue. Traditionally, ethnic Barovian women wear black for five years following the death of even their most remote relation, and thus seldom wear any other color. Ornaments and jewelry are rarely worn, save for necklaces of garlic and belladonna, and the stag brooches of Nharov oak and amber that some young Gundarakite men have taken to proudly displaying — a symbol of the deposed Gundars.

The dominant languages of Barovia are Balok and Luktar, tongues that likewise distinguish the realm's primary ethnic groups, the Barovians and the Gundarakites. While Balok has a thick and guttural sound, many folk speak of Luktar's "sing-song" cadence, though to my ear it sounds more like a hive of angry wasps. Most Barovians know a bit of Luktar, and most Gundarakites know a bit of Balok. The Forfarrian and Thaani languages are





spoken among their respective groups in Immol, though they are virtually unknown outside of that village.

## Language Primer

A few of the more common words are presented here for the traveler.

### **Balok**

*bunā ziua*: good morning; good day

*adio*: goodbye

*da*: yes

*nu*: no

*ajutor!*: help!

*se duce!*: go away!

*noapte*: night

*tigan*: gypsy; thief

*ceatsā*: mist; fog

### **Luktar**

*szervusz!*: cheers!

*viszlát*: goodbye

*igen*: yes

*nem*: no

*segítség!*: help!

*utazik messze!*: go away!

*fellázad*: to rebel

*zsarnok*: king; tyrant

*szabadság*: freedom

their monthly rent and the occasional kickback to a burgomaster's agent. True nobles are vanishing creatures in Barovia, and none of Barovia's ancient families but the von Zaroviches still hold land. The Count is the master of all, and the modern aristocracy consists of his duly appointed burgomasters and boyars. Though they occasionally serve in these roles, the old families — the Buchvolds, Ivilskovas, Katskys, Petrovnas, Romuliches, Trikskys, Velikovnas, Wachters, and innumerable others — are slowly dying out. Their glories have faded, their gold has dwindled, and their sons and daughters have scattered to the corners of the world. The exception is, of course, the Dilisnyas, who through twists of cuckoldry and treachery managed to establish their own realm in Borca.

Barovians marry young, boys often by the age of sixteen and girls as early as thirteen. Arranged marriages are not commonly observed, even among wealthy merchant families. Nonetheless, the social and economic boons of marriage lead many parents to pressure young men and women to wed their sweethearts prematurely. Unfortunately for such couples, Barovian custom forbids both divorce and the remarriage of widows. As I have heard it, Barovian families once advertised the availability of their daughters for marriage by hanging a flower wreath of wildflowers on their front door, but the practice has long since been abandoned — such girls had a tendency to vanish in the night.

Unsurprisingly for a region dominated by agriculture, Barovia depends on sizeable families filled with abundant healthy laborers. Married women are thus expected to bear as many children as they can suffer. Medicine in Barovia lags far behind the rest of the world; even with the aid of divine magic, childbirth is not always safe for mother or child. Midwives I spoke to reported an astonishing twenty percent fatality rate for mothers in remote regions. Mortality for infants remains high in the first two years, due to the ravages of scarlet fever, pneumonia, and particularly cholera. Those children who survive to the age of eight have usually learned most of the basic skills needed to shoulder their parents' livelihood.

Formal schooling is almost unknown in Barovia. Most folk receive nothing more than fundamental (and often erroneous) lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic from their parents. There are no private academies for even the wealthiest nobles or merchants, who provide their children

As with the vast majority of folk throughout the Core, most Barovians live in poverty. Nonetheless, it is hardly the sort of wretched urban destitution one finds in Darkon's larger cities. Most Barovians are subsistence farmers, herders, or fishermen, living day-to-day on what meager resources they can summon from the land. Though life must be harsh for such folk, the odd Barovian peasant insisted to me that their lot is far from joyless. Serfdom is still widespread in rural areas, where the boyars oversee the productive use of Count von Zarovich's lands. Freeman farmers or herders are quite rare; very few commoners are ever allowed to leave their short lives of drudgery.

In the villages, however, free tenants of the Count are commonplace, and most craftsmen and merchants owe nothing to the von Zaroviches save





with tutors or send them to schools in Borca or Richemulot. It seems that true scholarship in Barovia is limited to what occurs in the dusty libraries of a handful of dedicated sages or in the rare temple of Ezra.

Most commoners in Barovia travel on foot, though the rugged terrain can make journeys arduous if one ventures off the maintained highways and roads. As such, Barovians are even more sedentary than peoples in neighboring lands; many never leave the villages in which they were born. Horsemanship is not especially practical in the mountainous regions, though it thrives in the hill country of the west. Oxen and draft horses are the primary beasts of burden, employed to pull plows, sledges, and the massive wooden wagons that venture up and down the Old Svalich Road. Though rivers are numerous in Barovia, the whitewater is far too hazardous and shallow to support heavy river traffic. With the deep blue waters of Lake Zarovich at hand, however, Barovia has a rich freshwater nautical tradition that goes back centuries. In the warmer months, multitudes of tiny vessels leave the piers at Vallaki every day to ply the lake in search of a plentiful catch.

Barovian commoners live on a subsistence diet of grains and vegetables, supplemented by dairy foods from goat's or sheep's milk. I can speak from personal experience that such fare is miserably bland and heavy, and grows tiresome by the third meal. A wide variety of coarse breads are baked from wheat, corn, barley, and potato flour, as well as oat and sunflower meal. Most commoners eat a cornmeal mush called *mamliga* at least once a day, gods help them. Cold potatoes with goat cheese are also a typical dish for the peasantry. Those fortunate enough to own chickens may prepare cheese omelets for any meal. Hearty vegetables such as cabbage, turnips, beets, and onions round out most simple meals,

usually stewed or in thin, sour soups. Weak barley beer is drunk by commoners of all ages with every meal.

Among folk with more substantial resources, a diet heavy in pork, lamb, chicken, and freshwater fish is typical. Meats are usually stewed, grilled, or made into sausage. Popular dishes include pork liver, trout balls, smoked herring smelt, chicken broth, *sarmale*







(pork wrapped in cabbage or grape leaves), *tocana* (pork stew with onions and garlic), *mititei* (grilled pork and lamb meatballs), and *patricieni* (grilled sausage). Sweets are a luxury in Barovia, but *placinte*, pastry and fruit turnovers, are popular among those with the coin to spend. Wine accompanies finer meals, and a plum brandy called *tsuika* — a Barovian specialty — is enjoyed both before and after eating. Despite the sometimes fractious ethnic divisions in Barovia, the folk here share a common unifying element: a thoroughly frosty demeanor. Life under the stern gaze of Count Strahd has forged them into a harsh people who mind their own business (and who lack even an ounce of hospitality, I might add). Strangers are not welcomed, and questions are rebuffed with disregard and glares. Travelers will find their appearance, dress, accent, manner, and possessions scrutinized with suspicion by all.

Ah, yes. I remember these Barovian glares well, though I doubt my little scholar's own frosty demeanor could possibly have improved matters.

Utterly unapologetic for their backward mentality, Barovians have little use for the ways of more civilized realms. More often than not, their concerns revolve around simple matters of daily survival such as turnip crops and mountain storms. This cheerless manner may be ascribed in some degree to the crippling fear of the supernatural — especially the undead — that pervades Barovia. Nothing paralyzes a Barovian with fear quite like a blood-drinking, flesh-devouring, soul-stealing creature of darkness. Children are raised on elaborate folk tales of the undead, filled with vampires displaying powers any serious scholar of the preternatural would regard as outlandish. Although I strongly suspect these tales are based in fact, most of these stories also include patently false object lessons regarding the weaknesses of the undead. Thus it is little wonder that Barovians rarely survive genuine encounters with such creatures.

The pervasive dread that characterizes the Barovian outlook has seeped into the realm's daily rituals. Doors and windows are dutifully and securely locked at the moment the sun drops below the horizon. Indeed, I have it on good standing that a Barovian mother would not dare open her door after nightfall even to save her own shrieking babe from hungry wolves.

## Magic in Barovia

Though Barovians believe in magic, the vast majority of them have never seen it in practice, at least outside of the local cleric. Most folk regard magic as a secret as old as time and riddled with spiritual risks too terrible to contemplate.

Arcane magic is practiced only in secret in Barovia, as the common folk believe that all such power is a gift granted by demons. These fell blessings can be bestowed in the womb (sorcerers) or deliberately sought out by the deranged (wizards), but it makes little difference to the fearful peasant mind. Even bards must be careful not to reveal themselves as anything but wandering performers in this land. Since popular opinion holds that arcane spellcasters are unquestionably the minions of evil, the agents of the boyars and burgomasters rarely discourage violence against them. Villages are rife with tales of suspected spellcasters lynched in full view of idle Barovian soldiers.

Divine magic as practiced by clerics is regarded as spiritually pure, at least when the spellcaster in question serves a virtuous deity. Nonetheless, Barovians who do not share a cleric's zealous devotion to a particular god are often fearful of the priest's magical power. Like arcane magic, the divine magic of druids is thought to flow directly from a demonic source; Barovians predictably regard such priests of nature with fear and contempt.

As a people, the Barovians tend to be suspicious of organized institutions, and as such they often have little love for clergy. The vast majority of ethnic Barovians are not religious; the reasons, I discovered, can be as numerous as the folk one presses on the matter. Most, however, believe that the nebulous gods of antiquity are literally missing or dead and that churches are sanctuaries for pretenders and fools. They seldom frequent their churches except when attending funerals. In fact, even in settlements with a functioning temple, weddings are commonly held in the local inn. Only the most optimistic young couples arrange for church weddings.

**Ezra:** Ezra's church has never gained a strong foothold in Barovia. Many Barovians believe that Ezra's clergy are nothing but quislings for Ivana Boritsi, the Black Widow of Borca. Indeed, boyars and burgomasters are notoriously hostile to the notion of temporal Church power when it threatens their own. Temples that become too ambitious or wealthy for their own good often find their assets





seized and their clergy jailed by the Count's minions. Nonetheless, the Goddess' message of duty and guardianship appeals to some Barovians, and the Church of Ezra persists here without Strahd's formal blessing.

**Hala:** As in realms throughout the Core, the Church of Hala maintains a fragile and unobtrusive presence in Barovia. Most Barovians' experiences with the faith are limited to its hospices, where weary travelers are given shelter and healing. The majority of folk thus have a benign impression of the Church. Few suspect the reality that the Weathermay ladies so casually exposed by publishing *Van Richten's Guide to Witches*: that the Church espouses a magical, naturalistic creed that would be regarded as profane by most Barovians. Hala's clergy practice great discretion when dealing with Strahd's agents, making a tremendous show of appearing humble and obedient. Their secrecy, I should note, has been aided by the Count's suppression of van Richten's works, a matter I shall soon return to.

**The Morninglord:** The cult of the Morninglord is, of course, Barovia's native religious phenomenon, a faith that sprang up seemingly overnight in the fifth century and has slowly gathered influence ever since. Martyn "the Mad" Pelkar was regarded as a harmless eccentric when he first began proselytizing about the Morninglord. Gradually, with the aid of his first young acolyte, the charismatic Sasha Petrovich, he was able to attract a modest congregation at the Sanctuary of Blessed Succor in the Village of Barovia.

The cult's religious center has moved westward in the centuries since, first to Vallaki and then to Krezk, supposedly at the prodding of unnamed, generous contributors. Many wagging tongues insist that the cult wishes to put as much distance as possible between its most holy temple and Count von Zarovich.

I learned quite quickly that nearly every Barovian has an opinion on the Morninglord and his faithful. Most ethnic Barovians view the cult with bemusement or cynicism. The Morninglord's message of blind hope in the face of darkness strikes many as foolishly naïve. Some Barovians, particularly the burgomasters, boyars, and their agents, grow suspicious of the cult's popularity among the Gundarakites. Gundarakites seem to cleave a little too closely to the cult's uplifting message, and some burgomasters have gone out of their way to prove a link between the Morninglord's devotees and

### Secret Society: The Dawnslayers

When Sasha Petrovich took the words of Martyn Pelkar into his heart, he brought more than his youthful fire to the fledgling faith. Strahd von Zarovich had slaughtered the young cleric's family when he was but a boy, and Sasha swore to hunt the Count's undead spawn and extinguish their evil. Sasha's personal quest for vengeance evolved into a secret doctrine for the cult, a charge for the pure of heart to hunt down and slay Barovia's blackest, the vampire. This mandate, known as the Midnight Clarion, is one of the cult's most jealously guarded facets. Curiously, the Clarion also demands mercy for afflicted lycanthropes, though the roots of this tradition are lost.

While not every member of the cult's laity or clergy knows of the Clarion, those who pursue it, called the Dawnslayers, are always the most righteous clerics. The Dawnslayers are further divided into the Heralds, who seek out the undead and destroy them, and the Harkeners, who record the demise of slain vampires and accumulate lore concerning those that still walk the Realm of Dread. The Dawnslayers are currently headquartered in the catacombs beneath the cult's largest temple, the Sanctuary of First Light in Krezk. Their ostensible leader is Elizabeta Pirosska (female human Clr7/HrD5, CG), a wizened priestess whose seemingly frail hands have staked legions of bloodsuckers. Few vampire hunters in all the Land of Mists are the equals of the Dawnslayers, and few would be as fanatically destroyed by their enemies if exposed.

The Herald of Dawn prestige class is described in the Attached Notes.

violent Gundarakite rebel activities. Gundarakites, for their part, seemingly cannot help but be drawn like lambs to the Morninglord's cheery promise of salvation. The cult's temples are strongest in settlements where Gundarakites dominate, and in some temples Luktan is even the preferred language for religious services.





## The Morninglord Revisited

This section expands upon the information presented in the **Ravenloft** setting book.

**The Morninglord (MORN-ing lord)**

**Symbol:** A rose-tinted disc of gold

**Alignment:** CG

**Portfolio:** Hope, perseverance, the dawn, light, compassion, protection, salvation

**Domains:** Good, Luck, Protection, Salvation (see page 114), Sun

**Favored Weapon:** A ray of golden sunlight (shortspear)

The cult of the Morninglord has a relaxed hierarchy that honors those clergy who have founded temples or committed great deeds of sacrifice and bravery. Clergy martyred while serving the cult or its ideals are often canonized as *chanticleers* by local temples. There is no centralized authority or orthodoxy within the cult, and each temple is autonomous. Rites, liturgies, hymns, and other elements that prove popular at one temple are quickly shared with others in the region. Clergy are charged with protecting others from the minions of evil and bestowing hope through their words and deeds.

Clerics of the Morninglord pray for their spells at sunrise. Brief worship services are held every morning at temples, and lay folk are encouraged to attend at least once a week at their convenience. The cult is often involved in local festivals, but also celebrates its own high holy day, *Nevermore Night*, held on the winter solstice. Though celebrated under sixteen hours of darkness, the occasion is filled with prayers of hope and haunting *a cappella* hymns. Clerics of the Morninglord occasionally multiclass as abjurers, fighters, rangers, or witch hunters. The broader clergy includes commoners, experts, and even some warriors.

**Dogma:** Even the darkest night cannot last forever. Dawn approaches, and you are its herald. You are the emissary of hope, salvation, and surcease. Liberate others from their fear and teach those you cannot release to endure just a little longer. Justice comes to all evildoers eventually, not by man's laws, but by your hand and the tortuous paths of fate. Lift the spirits of the downtrodden with the good news of the Morninglord's coming. Pledge your protection to the unfortunate whenever the opportunity presents itself, and see your pledge through to the end. Destroy the foul undead wherever you find them, for they are the enemies of the dawn.





**Erlin:** Erlin is a puzzling Gundarakite death deity whose worship was sanctioned and encouraged by Duke Gundar during his rule. He is an ancient god and likely a corruption of an even older demonic entity, Irlek-Khan. Most Gundarakites refuse to speak of him, but I convinced several youths to expound on his attributes at length. He displays neither the cold detachment nor the absolute evil associated with death deities in most cultures. His demeanor could be described as that of a trickster, yet thoroughly malicious and scatterbrained. He supposedly created death as a gleeful deception, convincing the first man that his demise was unavoidable; the mortal, of course, promptly died. Erlin has thousands of demonic

minions (all of them named and organized into a vast and mutable hierarchy) that assist the god in his duties. His supervision of the departed is cast in the metaphor of herding cattle or sheep, though Erlin often neglects his obligations and allows the dead to roam free; hence, the existence of the undead. Though his priests have never included clerics capable of divine magic, the clergy are no less fervent in their devotion. Just as he has threatened to fade from memory entirely, Erlin has experienced a revival of sorts in recent years. Many young Gundarakites now associate him with Gundarakite ethnic pride, using the faith as a banner around which to rally.

### **Dread Possibility: The Resurrection of Erlin**

Legends of the Gundars leading their barbarian people to settle in Gundarak are of course false history, and therefore Erlin is not truly the bastardization of an ancient tribal god. In reality, the god is a perverted version of the death god worshipped on the world where Nharov Gundar once dwelled. When Gundar entered the Realm of Dread, he discovered that the terrible deity he knew had been rendered pitiful and powerless, as the priests could not call upon divine magic. Gundar nonetheless demanded that his subjects pay tribute to the god, that they might remain properly fearful of death and the Duke's power to beget it. When Gundarak fell into the hands of Strahd von Zarovich, Erlin's worship quickly fell out of favor among all but the eldest Gundarakites.

With mounting Gundarakite resistance to Barovian occupation, Erlin was recast as another element of Gundarakite culture being stamped out by Barovian oppression. The wicked deity might have only served as a political symbol, were it not for one startling development. In 754 BC, a Gundarakite rebel named Emanuel Maryszkas called upon Erlin to save him from pursuing Barovian militiamen and was answered with waves of unholy fear directed at his enemies. Emanuel (male human Clr4, CE) has since become the high priest in an emergent underground cult of Erlin clerics who for the first time find themselves blessed with the power of true divine magic. Emanuel is eager to forge an alliance with Ardonk Szerieza, though the cleric's appetite for violence (not to mention his dealings with Barovian vampires disloyal to Strahd) will likely not sit well with any but the fringe of Gundarakite rebels.

#### **Erlin (AIR-lin)**

**Symbol:** A sickle crossed with a hog-slaughtering knife, both stained with blood and overlaying an orb of night sky, glittering with stars.

**Alignment:** CE

**Domains:** Chaos, Death, Evil, Trickery

**Favored Weapon:** Battleaxe







Regardless of their professed faith, if any, Barovians adhere to a simplistic, somewhat muddled cosmology. While they believe in a heaven and hell, which are called *Refugiu* and *Iadul* in Balok, such otherworldly locations are more folk beliefs than facets of a refined cosmology. *Refugiu* is a vague and mysterious place, not so much a paradise as a place of rest, where the weariness of the mortal coil is shed for eternal spiritual slumber. As with most heavenly realms, *Refugiu* is thought to lie above the mortal world, beyond the firmament of

stars. The souls of most mortals, even those who were generally wicked in life, are thought to journey to *Refugiu* upon death.

In contrast to *Refugiu*'s ambiguity, most Barovians have a vivid conception of *Iadul* as a place of unspeakable horror. Fragments of the ancient Barovian epic *Flight from the Balinoks* describe *Iadul* as a fetid pit of disease that stretches into the bowels of the earth. Such a place does not serve to punish evildoers in any cosmic sense. It is merely the abode of demons, and any mortal who

## The Barovian Hero

This section presents information potentially useful in creating PCs native to Barovia.

**Races:** Humans are Barovia's dominant race, though half-Vistani run a distant second. Other races are extremely rare, but not unheard of. Calibans occur with disturbing regularity in Barovia, though their births are just as often blamed on the influence of vampires, demons, or wizards as hags. Halflings are found exclusively in the large villages of western Barovia, where they live in tiny ghettos. Dwarves are thought to dwell deep in the Balinoks, and wild elves purportedly stalk the Tepurich Forest. Rural Barovians who encounter such nonhumans are likely to consider them monstrous freaks or malicious fey.

**Classes:** Clerics, fighters, rangers, rogues, and sorcerers are the classes most commonly encountered in Barovia. Clerics are admired for their healing and power over the undead, even if they are not always trusted. Fighters and rangers are always given their due, for Barovians respect the warrior's path. Reviled as scoundrels, rogues are widespread, though they generally restrict their activities to countryside banditry rather than urban guild endeavors. Sorcerers must keep their nature secret for fear of retribution by suspicious peasants. Druids and wizards are fairly rare but similarly feared. Barovian bards are uncommon, but are enjoyed for their mournful ballads and lullabies. Paladins are regarded as hopeless madmen by all but devotees of the Morninglord, who respect their virtue if not their lawful outlook. The odd barbarian is usually a wild man, raised among beasts in the high mountains. Monks are all but unknown.

**Recommended Skills:** Balance, Bluff, Climb, Craft (armorsmithing, blacksmithing, carpentry, weaponsmithing, weaving), Handle Animal, Hide, Jump, Knowledge (nature, undead lore), Perform (ballad, chant, dance, epic, melody), Profession (brewer, farmer, fisher, guide, herbalist, herdsman, lumberjack, miller, miner), Sense Motive, Use Rope, Wilderness Lore.

**Recommended Feats:** Blind-Fight, Dodge, Endurance, Ethereal Empathy, Extra Turning, Great Fortitude, Spell Focus (Abjuration, Conjuration, Divination, Necromancy), Run, Toughness, Track, Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (battleaxe, heavy mace, light lance, longsword, scimitar, shortbow, throwing axe, warhammer).

**Barovian Male Names:** Alexandru, Bela, Cosmin, Dimitry, Horatiu, Ionache, Lucian, Mircea, Nicolae, Ovidiu, Petru, Radu, Sorin, Vasile, Zaharia.

**Barovian Female Names:** Anica, Bianca, Costela, Draguta, Florica, Izabela, Lizuca, Marilena, Nadezhda, Nicoleta, Rodika, Simona, Uta, Viorela, Ylenia.

**Gundarakite Male Names:** Baltasar, Csepan, Demetrius, Elfric, Fredek, Gusztav, Istvan, Lazlo, Miklos, Paszkal, Rognvald, Stefano, Ubul, Varady, Zeteny.

**Gundarakite Female Names:** Antonia, Boriska, Dominika, Ethelhild, Hortenzia, Ingrid, Jusstina, Mariska, Orzebet, Pirooska, Serafin, Szabina, Tzigane, Vilhelmina, Zsofika.

**Thaani Male Names:** Arjan, Bekim, Dritan, Ermal, Fatos, Gjon, Hysni, Jusuf, Klodi, Lulzim, Mirdon, Nuhi, Qamil, Sokol, Ysni.

**Thaani Female Names:** Anjeza, Axhire, Blerta, Drita, Enkela, Fitore, Jorgji, Lejla, Mirsada, Nazibe, Rozafa, Shasine, Shpresa, Vona, Zhaklina.





finds his way there forged his own damnation without the gods' judgment. Unfortunately, demons are thought to be able to claw their way up into the mortal world to wreak havoc on humankind. Such fiends are generally seen as agents of destruction and perversity interested in humanity only inasmuch as it can assist in furthering their own dark desires.

All Barovians celebrate the same seasonal festivals widely observed throughout the Core's temperate regions. Perhaps due to their druidic heritage, the Forfarrians hold the four solar holidays as especially holy.

## The Realm

**B**arovia's ruler since 735 BC is, supposedly, Count Strahd von Zarovich XI, the most recent heir to both the title and the name in a long and terrible lineage. The Barovians despise their ruler even as they equate their cultural identity with him, for the von Zaroviches are Barovia, as much a part the land as the Balinoks themselves.

Note my equivocation above. In fact, I do not believe the von Zarovich chain of succession actually exists. The clues, though subtle, build a damning case. Accounts, both recorded and oral, of Barovia's rulers over the past four centuries are *remarkably* consistent. Without fail, each successive von Zarovich since Strahd I has ruled Barovia without pity or frailty, taken a bride who supposedly produces a single male heir, each named after his father. None of these wives are ever seen again, and no "heir" is ever seen before succeeding his father.

The current Strahd is a harsh lord, but also like his "ancestors" keeping a noble distance from his realm's petty affairs. Dubbed "the devil Strahd" by the locals, the Count demands strict obedience from his subjects. His edicts are few and his public appearances even fewer. He seems to prefer the cold comfort of Castle Ravenloft, where he is surrounded by the crumbling glories of his ancestors. Some Barovians, particularly the elderly, whisper that the long-lived von Zaroviches have delved into black magics to extend their life spans unnaturally — a theory perhaps familiar to my patron — and that they continue to spend their time in the pursuit of blasphemous arcane knowledge.

I submit there exists but a single Strahd von Zarovich: an undying creature who has ruled Barovia for more than four centuries and who has con-

cealed his unnatural longevity by posing as one successor after another. I am, admittedly, not the first scholar to discover this truth; Dr. van Richten came to just such a conclusion in his first book, *Guide to Vampires*. No wonder, then, that Strahd has all copies of van Richten's "seditious treatises" (to quote one edict) systematically seized and burned.

*And here the backward nature of the Barovian peasantry is laid bare. Strahd is well served by keeping his subjects illiterate and ignorant.*

Count Strahd XI has not yet taken a wife, though he has long been searching, which the locals hardly find surprising. While Strahd must marry a noblewoman to carry on his lineage, few women of station remain in Barovia, and no foreign brides have evidently yet met with his approval. Of course, it is rumored that the Count, like his "predecessors," harbors an unquenchable lust for commoner women; young peasant beauties tremble with fear whenever Strahd's name is mentioned. In any other realm, such a scandal would surely topple the heir apparent. The von Zarovich dynasty, however, will evidently not break for something as trivial as peasant bastardry.

As I feel that the life of Barovia's ruler may warrant closer examination, I have enclosed additional documents in the Attached Notes, many of which the Teodorus Archives reluctantly provided. Additional records were obtained with the assistance of the Red Vardo Traders in Krezk.

## Government

To his credit, Strahd's lordship is unwavering and blessedly free of the courtly backstabbing and pretender kings that characterize some dynasties. By law, no one but Strahd's direct male descendants may call Barovia their demesne, and their rule is absolute.

The Count relegates the bulk of his realm's business to the hands of the *burgomasters* (vassals personally selected to administer Barovia's villages) and *boyars* (rural landholders). In modern times, few are drawn from the old noble families. If the peasantry is to be believed, most burgomasters and boyars are cruel and scheming figures, eager to please the Count and enrich themselves at the expense of the common folk. Their positions are hereditary by tradition, but turnover in their ranks





is shockingly high. Strahd has a habit of replacing his vassals frequently, and many fall victim to suspicious deaths. Though they must be cunning and strong of will, not all burgomasters and boyars are above foolish acts of sedition against the Count, especially when the occasion reaps gold for their coffers.

The Count enforces only three laws of significance, edicts that are centuries old. First, no one may enter Castle Ravenloft without the Count's permission, on pain of death. While most native Barovians would never dream of approaching the Count's dread abode, countless foolish adventurers have apparently made the attempt. None have lived to tell the tale, which is not to say none have ever returned.

Second, theft from the state is considered treason and is punishable by death. This applies equally to a beggar that filches from a garrison's kitchen or to a burgomaster that skims from the Count's coffers.

Finally, Strahd IV decreed that the lives of the Vistani are sacrosanct; any who spill Vistani blood forfeit their own lives. This law still stands and is one of the most mystifying aspects of the von Zarovich character. None can say with certainty why the gypsies were given such special treatment, and while every Barovian has a theory, the Vistani themselves refuse to speak of the matter. The scant evidence regarding the relationship is contradictory. At times the Count appears to be allied with the Vistani, as on numerous occasions the gypsies have been seen entering and leaving Castle Ravenloft. Paradoxically, the Vistani often speak harshly of the Count, cursing his name openly within earshot of astonished Barovians. Of course, the most tantalizing public theory is that neither Strahd nor the Vistani remember what boons or debts were exchanged so long ago, and their pact is obeyed out of custom. I find it difficult, however, to fathom the individuals involved forgetting anything of such consequence.

Beyond these laws, burgomasters and boyars may rule as they see fit. Strahd's demands for tribute are quite irregular, but his shrewd accountants keep detailed records of all the realm's economic activity. On sporadic occasions, a burdensome levy is called down from Castle Ravenloft on all Barovians, representing the accrued debts of the previous months or even years. More regular local taxes are still collected by Strahd's vassals, primarily to fund the maintenance of civic order.

Loyal career soldiers or mercenaries in the direct service of Strahd's vassals patrol most settlements in the Balinoks. In the occupied areas of western Barovia, the growing discontent and violence among ethnic Gundarakites amplify the need for a strong military presence. Accordingly, western burgomasters and boyars offer handsome stipends to lure ethnic Barovians down from the mountains and into their militias. Accordingly, the bulk of the soldiers in Gundarakite settlements are poor farmers or herders from the east, seeking a better life through military service. The Gundarakites are ostensibly controlled through the presence of these troops, as well as local edicts that forbid them from owning weapons larger than a common dagger.

## Law Enforcement

A typical Barovian career soldier works in service to a burgomaster or boyar to enforce edicts and keep the peace. A typical Barovian militiaman is conscripted to supplement such soldiers in the Gundarak region.

**Barovian Soldier:** Human War1; CR 1/2; Size M humanoid (human); HD 1d8+2; hp 6; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (touch 11, flatfooted 18); Atk +4 melee (1d8+2, crit 19–20/x2, longsword) or +3 melee (1d8+2, heavy lance) or +2 ranged (1d6, composite shortbow) or +2 ranged (1d6, throwing axe); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

**Skills and Feats:** Handle Animal +1, Intimidate +1, Listen +4, Ride +2, Sense Motive +2, Spot +4; Alertness, Weapon Focus (longsword).

**Possessions:** Banded mail, large steel shield, masterwork longsword, heavy lance, composite shortbow, 20 arrows, 4 throwing axes, light war horse, studded leather barding.

**Barovian Militiaman:** Human War1; CR 1/2; Size M humanoid (human); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 10, flatfooted 15); Atk +1 melee (1d8, crit x3, warhammer) or +1 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10. **Skills and Feats:** Intimidate +2, Listen +2, Sense Motive +1, Spot +2; Dodge, Endurance.

**Possessions:** Studded leather armor, small wooden shield, warhammer, light crossbow, 10 bolts.





Beyond maintaining such forces, the burgo-masters and boyars occupy themselves principally with economic matters. They shape taxation and the regulation of trade for the benefit of their own treasuries and keep a perpetual eye on the guilds lest they become too powerful. Local magistrates are appointed by these vassals to handle the realm's petty civil disputes. Military officers, who act as judges, juries, and executioners, carry out criminal justice in swift and brutal fashion.

One should not come to the erroneous conclusion that the Count is ignorant of the events in his realm. Strahd is said to monitor his realm through Vistani spies — anything said or done in the gypsies' presence is reportedly certain to reach the Count's ear within a day. Though the common impression is that Castle Ravenloft's gates are closed to visitors, they swing wide nightly to allow the comings and goings of the Count's minions. Premier among Strahd's *giorgio* minions are the van Holtzes, a commoner family with some measure of sinister prestige in Barovia. Traditionally the favored servants of the von Zaroviches, they slink through the realm's villages, delivering messages, offerings, and warnings on behalf of the Count.

*Bah. Another of the bloodsucker's lies. As I recall, "van Holtz" is nothing more than Strahd's habitual alias when he wishes to interact with the peasantry without attracting undue attention.*

## Economy

Barovia's resources are primarily agricultural, and its economic influence remains minimal when compared to titans such as Darkon or Nova Vaasa. Barovia has maintained continuous, healthy trade with its neighbors for centuries, however, and such activity is lifeblood to all of the realm's significant settlements. Networks of mercantile interdependence have strengthened considerably in recent years. A triangular web of ventures and alliances between merchants in Barovia, Kartakass, and Invidia are contributing to the gradual rise of wealthy merchant families in Barovia, a phenomenon seen in more advanced societies throughout the Core. Strahd, for the time being, seems to have no particular objection to this accumulation of power. How long this state of affairs can last re-

mains to be seen, as Strahd is not known for suffering shifty merchants with political ambitions.

Barovians grow a spectrum of cereals, with barley, oats, and wheat the most dominant. Other crops are limited to hardy vegetables grown anywhere, even in the harshest conditions, such as potatoes, turnips, cabbages, and onions. Even destitute freeman farmers keep small gardens of such crops to see them through lean years. Maize and sunflowers, introduced long ago from a distant realm, have fared well in Barovia, growing to spectacular heights during long summers.

Sheep, goats, and chickens are all raised widely, particularly in higher elevations, and nearly every peasant keeps one or two animals for milk, wool, and eggs. Clumsier animals such as cattle and hogs fare better in the lower regions than high in the Balinoks; young Barovian boys often take their goat herds into treacherous crannies to reach hidden mountain meadows. Lake Zarovich produces a bounty of freshwater fish, including lake trout, pike, smelt, and gray mullet. Sturgeon and their rich caviar, however, are the most valued in other lands, where there is only sparse demand for the relative blandness of other freshwater seafood.

Barovia's most famous cottage industry is its distilleries, which produce some of the Core's finest brandy. Luscious local plums are favored over grape wine as a basis for the best brandy, though some distilleries experiment with Borcan apricots or Nova Vaasan apples and peaches. The premiere orchards — such as Antoanetas, Luminitus, and Romulich — are concentrated along the Old Svalich Pass and especially in the region surrounding Vallaki. Vineyards are a common sight in the hill country of the Gundarak region, though most Barovian labels are regarded as unacceptably sour and earthy compared to comparable wines from Borca or Invidia. Local lamb sausage, oozing with fat and blood, as well as hard goat cheeses is produced in large quantities for export. Timber is felled in the Tepurich Forest, though the trade is not as relentless as in neighboring realms, particularly Kartakass.

The Balinoks possess abundant mineral resources, exploited for centuries by Barovia's nobles. Salt, coal, and iron ore are especially prevalent, but the comparably rare deposits of native silver and copper tantalize most merchants. Their avarice has not been accompanied by much concern for the laborers in their mines. Over the ages, untold





numbers of Barovian miners have perished in lightless shafts, slain by pockets of poisonous gas, by lungs filled with a lifetime of dust, or in smothering tombs created by collapsed tunnels. Productivity has fallen sharply at many mines in recent decades, and some have been abandoned altogether. Cynical mine engineers have commented that the Balinoks may be close to the exhaustion of their wealth.

Though few of its crafted goods receive much attention in other lands, Barovia's woodcarving is prized throughout the southern Core. Absurdly enough, nobles covet only authentic Barovian woodcrafts, crafted by the knotty digits of an appropriately oppressed elderly peasant. Particularly sought are signature local works such as sumptuous wardrobes covered in dense floral carvings, massive throne-like dining chairs with a wolf motif, and sensible wooden toys.

Most trade in Barovia is conducted with the ancient currency of the von Zaroviches. The head sides of such coins are identical regardless of denomination, depicting the von Zarovich arms ringed by the phrase "Never Again Conquered, Home Forever More" in Balok. The Rat-Tooth is the copper piece, the Raven-Claw is the silver, and the Wolf-Fang the gold, each coin's tail side showing the appropriate creature. Merchants almost always accept the currency of other realms, so long as the weights are equivalent. Many merchants make an uncouth show of examining foreign coins suspiciously before taking them. Barter is still practiced in the more remote regions, where it provides a means for poor farmers and fishermen to obtain a broader variety of foodstuffs.



## Diplomacy

Barovia's relations with other lands are hampered by the realm's backward nature and the unremitting tyranny of the von Zaroviches. Though the Old Svalich Pass serves as a strategic trade route, merchants are often guilty of viewing Barovia as a place one passes through on the way to more prosperous and vibrant realms. Strahd, for his part, seems to have little interest in forging alliances with his peers in neighboring lands, though whether this is due to arrogance, caution, or apathy remains a mystery.

**Borca:** Barovia's relationship with Borca is cool, but astonishingly peaceful given that the von Zaroviches' ancient rivals the Dilisnyas and their cousins, the Boritsis, now dwell there. Most Barovians surmise that the von Zaroviches long ago took their revenge for the assassination of Strahd von Zarovich I; little else could explain why Strahd XI suffers the Dilisnyas' continued existence in light of such a heinous crime. Modern dealings are limited primarily to trade along the Old Svalich Road and perennial religious expansionism by the Church of Ezra.

**Forlorn:** Forlorn is a forsaken land. Barovians avoid it at all costs. The many rumors of goblins, ghosts, and weirder things haunting Forlorn's highland wilds assuage the most curious Barovian travelers and merchants.

**Hazlan:** Hazlan seems a frightening realm to many Barovians. There, arcane magic is practiced openly, a tiny ethnic minority mercilessly dominates the masses, and the oppressive Church of the Lawgiver rules. Most of Barovia wants nothing to do with Hazlan or its diabolical, arrogant ways. In southeastern Barovia, however, the village of Immol has prospered mightily from trade across the border with Hazlan, and even the unholy practices of that realm's wizards cannot persuade Immol to give up this boon.

**Invidia:** Invidia has long been one of Barovia's reliable trading partners via the Gundar River, though the rise of Malocchio Aderre has complicated matters considerably. Malocchio has a standing bounty on all Vistani, and his mercenaries are not above pursuing the gypsies into neighboring realms. On more than one occasion, this has proven a fatal mistake for mercenaries who slew Vistani on Barovian soil, as word of the crime always reaches the ear of Count von Zarovich. For now, Malocchio's forces seem to have learned to be



mindful of Barovia's borders when engaging in Vistani manhunts.

**Kartakass:** Like Invidia, Kartakass is a dependable source of commerce for Barovia. Kartakan merchants are expansionist and aggressive, and can be sighted traveling the Crimson Road through western Barovia throughout the year. This mercantile alliance is the extent of the relationship between Barovia and Kartakass, however. Barovians see the decentralized system that governs Kartakan villages as strange. Without a strong, hereditary ruler, Kartakass has no one who might approach Count Strahd on equal footing to establish a stronger relationship.

**Nova Vaasa:** Despite the long border they share, Barovia holds Nova Vaasa at arm's length. Vaasi culture is peculiar to the Barovians, and they are distrustful of Prince Othmar, regarded as the worst sort of greedy, exploitive dilettante noble. Though moderate trade exists along the Old Svalich Road, most of Nova Vaasa's merchants are preoccupied with the Mordentish-speaking realms beyond Barovia to the west.

**The Shadow Rift:** Like most lands that border the enigmatic Shadow Rift, Barovians fear that unnatural chasm. Most Barovians regard the Rift as an unholy gash in the face of their world; no sane person wants anything to do with such a place.

**Sithicus:** Sithicus has always been a mysterious realm to the Barovians, an unhallowed land of haunted forests that make the Tepurich Forest seem tame by comparison. The frightening rumors that Kartakan merchants have brought out of the realm in recent years have done little to quell such fears. Despite the region's recent political upheavals, it is still regarded as an unnatural land populated by evil fey, best avoided by right-thinking folk.

## Sites of Interest

My journey through Barovia started at the town of Krezk with spring in full bloom. No need to repeat my thoughts on the manner in which I arrived, of course.

### Krezk

Krezk is situated at the northwestern edge of Barovia, within a few miles of the Borcan border and the city of Levkarest. As in many settlements throughout Barovia, remnants of the Terg occupation persist here in crumbling traces of their

architecture and scrawled graffiti from their blasphemous holy book. Perhaps most conspicuously, a towering Terg minaret known as the *Needle of the Ghaddar* dominates the village's square. The structure's purpose is unknown, but more mystifying is why the von Zaroviches allow it to remain.

The central village is heavily fortified and surrounded by four distinct quarters for general commerce, upscale commerce, residences, and temples. Krezk is a humming mercantile center that prospers from trade along the Old Svalich Road. Its markets and warehouses are a hub for foodstuffs and crafts from throughout the region. On any given day, Krezk's stalls might hold the finest Nova Vaasan stallions, marble figures of Ezra from Borca, or rare, pungent mushrooms still damp with the dew of Verbrekan forests.

Burgomaster Ivan Wachter is a cunning trader in copper and woodcrafts, and the patriarch of the last old Barovian noble family to retain any significant power. Though their blood has spread to the far corners of the Core, the Wachters have retained their eminence in their native land through unwavering loyalty to the von Zaroviches. The merchants of Krezk are content with Wachter's rule, believing that he is one of their own and serves their interests first and foremost. The burgomaster has little patience for matters beyond the mercantile, however, and trusts the harried captain of the guard, Gheorghe Zarnesti, to keep the town running smoothly.

The renowned Red Vardo Traders, headed by Jacqueline Montarri, have made a reputation as ruthless "finders" who can recover lost and stolen cargo, objects, or even people. Their methods are closely guarded, and although most suspect them of underworld dealings, their services to the merchant community in Krezk are so valued that objections are never raised.

The cult of the Morninglord maintains its largest temple in Krezk, the Sanctuary of First Light. The cult's high priest, Harbinger of the Rosy Dawn Samuel Valentin, is regarded as a voice of compassion and reason in Krezk's cutthroat mercantile community. The Sanctuary also houses the Hands of the Dawn Healer, the mummified hands of the Morninglord's first high priest. This most holy relic is said to beget miraculous healings, including a cure for lycanthropy. The cult's strong presence in Krezk has lured some Gundarakites to settle here from the more oppressive villages in the south.







## Secret Society: The Red Vardo Traders

The Red Vardo Traders are the truly ruthless salvagers that their public face suggests. They are perfectly willing to commit brutal acts of violence to recover their clients' possessions. Since they have no concern over the legitimacy of ownership, the Traders are often employed as little more than hired robbers and burglars. They never turn away paying customers, and anyone who has a genuine need will find the Traders are often the only hope of reclaiming one's property. Of course, the Traders are not above accepting a generous bribe from those who hold stolen goods, whereupon their recovery efforts mysteriously "turn up nothing."

Though the activities of the Traders reap substantial wealth for their mistress, profit is not Jacqueline Montarri's true motive. She lives under the shadow of a bizarre Vistani curse, inflicted on her for the murder of none other than Madame Eva of the Zarovan. Jacqueline established the Red Vardo Traders to assist in her perpetual hunt for her original head, the whereabouts of which remain a mystery. Further details on Jacqueline Montarri can be found in the Attached Notes.

## Where to Stay in Krezk

When foreign traders come to Krezk, they flock to the Smoldering Ember (good quality rooms, common quality meals), a gloomy old inn built on the bones of the first Terg that Strahd I cut down in battle (or so the proprietors boast). Though the Ember's vast brandy collection, famous fried goat cheese curds, and affable wenches make it popular, its renown also usually precludes walk-in guests. Three additional inns of lesser note take up the slack.

**Krezk (large town):** Conventional; ALN; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 309,000 gp; Population 2,060; Isolated (human 97%, half-Vistani 1%, halfling 1%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Burgomaster Ivan Wachter, male human Ari3/Exp4; Captain Gheorghe Zarnesti, male human Ftr5.

**Important Characters:** Ramona Orasani (merchant guildswoman), female human Exp6; Samuel Valentin (cleric of the Morninglord), male human Clr12.

## Zeidenburg

Lying along the Crimson Road at the western frontier of Barovia, Zeidenburg is Barovia's largest settlement, a prosperous but dangerous town on the brink of revolution. The surrounding countryside has a reputation as a haven for brigands, much to the displeasure of the Count and local boyars. Complicating matters further are the Gundarakite rebels, who have apparently declared Zeidenburg the unofficial launching point for their revolution. Ardonk Szerieza spends most of his time and efforts here while in Barovia, which only heightens tensions. The conflict exploded last year when a faction of Gundarakite "freedom fighters," calling themselves the Coursers of Chaos, sent a wagonload of smoking gunpowder hurtling into the front door of the militia garrison. Zeidenburg's troubled burgomaster, Jacenty Girghiu, strives desperately to crack down on both the banditry and the rebels, but his time is short.

Zeidenburg grew up around the Ashen Stronghold, a grim fortress of charcoal-gray stone. The Gundars constructed the fastness after the First Unwise Rebellion to keep an eye on the nobles in the region and protect the lucrative trade along the Crimson Road. Zeidenburg was the most difficult and bloody settlement for Count von Zarovich to seize in the wake of the Great Upheaval, requiring a four-month siege that ended only when the Gundarakites were overwhelmed not by Barovian militias, but by rats breeding in the village's mass graves.





The winds of rebellion blowing so strongly through Zeidenburg paralyzes the boyars in the surrounding countryside with fear, which only worsens local brigand problems. Fear has not yet claimed Lyssa von Zarovich, distant cousin to the Count himself, whose estate rests in the heart of Zeidenburg's old patrician district. Though she has suffered from a wasting melancholy in recent years, the alluring aristocrat remains one of the village's most potent political figures. In a treasonous move, she has lately snubbed her heritage by publicly voicing sympathy for Gundarakite separatists, though most believe it a petty ploy to antagonize her cousin.

The resurrected cult of Erlin is strong in Zeidenburg, and the homes, shops, and belongings of the faithful are adorned with tiny, jingling bells thought to distract the fell god and his demon servitors, staying their lethal touch. Despite modern unrest, bountiful cereal harvests from the surrounding estates have allowed the village to prosper. More significant is the thriving trade in contraband, which involves legitimate Barovian merchants as often as it does Gundarakite smugglers and rebels. Despite the massive militia presence, with only a few hours of searching I was able to track down a whole spectrum of illicit goods, including raw Hazlani opium poppies, clockwork lock picking contraptions from Mayvin, and salted pheasant poached from Vlad Drakov's personal game reserve.

### Where to Stay in Zeidenburg

The traditionalist traveler will probably be drawn to the spartan Grizzled Boar Inn (common quality rooms, good quality meals), where the beds might be hard, but the sturgeon roe on fresh sunflower crust is served nightly. The adventurous seek out the Bloated Leech (poor quality rooms, poor quality meals), a lice-ridden flophouse where a fortune in shady merchandise changes hands every night, and nearly any proclivity, no matter how bizarre, can be satisfied.

### Lyssa von Zarovich

Lyssa von Zarovich was born in 525 BC, the granddaughter of Strahd's younger brother Sturm. Lyssa was raised to despise her granduncle as a traitor and monster, but that hatred prompted her to seek out undeath herself in 554. Exceptionally cunning, Lyssa devised a plot involving the spirit of a deceased lover. The scheme exposed her to furious ethereal energies seething with temporal distortions. For her efforts, Lyssa reaped the vampiric powers of two centuries of unlife in a moment.

In the two hundred years since, Lyssa has been involved in perpetual plots to frustrate, undermine, or topple Strahd von Zarovich, all to no avail. In 739, her most recent scheme allied her with the mind flayers of Bluetspur to create vampiric illithids, creatures she hoped would overrun all of Barovia. The plot failed, but not without reaching Strahd's ears through the Vistani, and the Count eventually reprimanded his wayward niece with an alchemical poison in 750 BC. Lyssa slipped into a soporific torpor and now finds that she can only awaken for three hours a night, though that span is slowly growing. The Count will likely never destroy Lyssa utterly, as her hateful antics amuse him too much. Currently, Lyssa (female human ancient vampire Ari9/Sor2, CE) is funding the activities of violent Gundarakite rebels, including the Coursers of Chaos, purely out of a desire to annoy Strahd. Though she is mildly interested in seducing Ardonk Szerieza, the Gundarakite already has many malevolent masters vying for his destiny. Lyssa can be found most frequently at her manor in Zeidenburg, surrounded by mortal and vampire thralls. She also spends her precious waking hours at a defiled druidic circle in the Tepurich Forest, where she and her minions conduct fabricated "blood rituals."

**Zeidenburg (large town):** Conventional; AL LE; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 692,250 gp; Population 4,615; Isolated (human 97%, half-Vistani 1%, halfling 1%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Burgomaster Jacenty Girghiu, male human Ari8.

**Important Characters:** Juliska Ujvesce (smuggler), female human Rog7; Ardonk Szerieza (Gundarakite rebel), male human Com2/Ftr4/Rog4.



## Teufeldorf

Teufeldorf lies in southern Barovia, where the Balinoks quickly drop away to the edge of the Tepurich Forest along the Crimson Road. Supposedly, the site has been inhabited sporadically since the ages of stone, when brutish tribesmen erected dolmens to a profane cave bear god. In historical times, perennial invasions by neighboring barbarian tribes prompted the early dukes to fortify Teufeldorf heavily and honeycomb it with tunnels and passageways. The fact that Count von Zarovich was so easily able to annex Teufeldorf testifies to the anarchy following the Great Upheaval. Folk whisper that there are still threads of smoldering misdeeds in Teufeldorf, however, some of them older than Gundarak. Fearful boyars in the region say that the Ba'al Verzi, the assassins that once attempted to slay Strahd von Zarovich I, have resurfaced in Teufeldorf. Reputed to be pitiless mercenaries willing to slay anyone for enough coin, one must still find them first, a challenging task.

Teufeldorf currently has no burgomaster and is governed by the captain of the guard, the stern Rebeka Ditrau. The Count himself executed the previous burgomaster, Shaithis Vosrovna, in 753 for manipulating naïve adventurers into slaying a local Vistana. Ditrau was thereafter handed temporary control of the town until Vosrovna's replacement could be found, but no such substitute has yet arrived. Ditrau is adamant about preserving law and order in Teufeldorf, but has none of a burgomaster's scheming self-interest. She is plainly uncomfortable with her political duties, and the village militiamen are displeased with sharing their space in the garrison with clerks and magistrates.

Unusually for a Barovian village, Teufeldorf has a fairly strong religious community. The Sentire of Barovia oversees the Church of Ezra's efforts in the region from the Refuge of Quiet Diligence, while the witches of Hala minister from the Hospice of the Three Hundred Wounds. Unfortunately, the town also has a rampant problem with beggars and pickpockets, who repeatedly attempted to filch my gold. Teufeldorf's most striking feature is undoubtedly the Twisting Tower. Its corkscrew profile and leering gargoyles rise from the highest point in Teufeldorf. Though it supposedly once housed a cabal of black magicians in thrall to the Gundars, the curious keep is now used to train a handful of Barovian soldiers in military tactics and intelligence. In addition, the former asylum of the

## Secret Society: The Ba'al Verzi

In the days before Strahd von Zarovich doomed Barovia, the Ba'al Verzi were a cabal of assassins, notorious for their remorseless character and devious methods. They thrived in the treacherous atmosphere of the century before the Terg occupation, carrying out many of the slayings in the War of Silver Knives. Their membership was secretive and pervasive, and many boyars feared that their own servants, courtiers, or kin might be assassins.

For all their notoriety, the Ba'al Verzi were merely mundane assassins of remarkable skill, possessing enchanted weapons and tools, but few other supernatural edges. Their power ebbed during the Terg occupation, and their last significant undertaking was the attempted assassination of Strahd in 350 BC, a crime financed by the Velikovnas. When Barovia was ensnared by the Dark Powers, a handful of Ba'al Verzi assassins became trapped in the Realm of Dread. Most of the cabal's leadership was left behind, however, and the assassins remained discreet for many centuries, passing on their knowledge to a handful of promising apprentices.

In 697 BC, the Ba'al Verzi took on a fateful contract for the life of Nicu Moldonesti, a wicked boyar from the southern edge of the Dreadmount and also a nosferatu vampire. Amused by the tenacity of the mortal assassins, Nicu (male human mature nosferatu, Ar1/Rog6/Asn6, CE) elected to make the cabal his own tool and quickly seized its leadership for himself. Nicu's control has revived the fortunes of the Ba'al Verzi, and many of the cabal's master assassins are now also nosferatu. The Ba'al Verzi most effective killers, however, are not even members, as the nosferatu vampires have learned to use the potent domination of their feedings to lethal effect. Dominated servants, friends, relatives, or lovers carry out the most dangerous slayings, while the true perpetrators are never uncovered.

Though they have retained the amoral, avaricious character of their forebears, the modern Ba'al Verzi refuse to approach one particular figure, either as mercenaries or killers. They will not accept coin from Strahd von Zarovich, nor from any client that would see the Count slain.



traitorous Dr. Heinfroth lies in a gorge an hour's walk to the east. Ditrau has restored the dark keep to its original use as a military prison.

## Where to Stay in Teufeldorf

Though its affordable inns are surrounded by squalid Gundarakite tenements, Teufeldorf blessedly has one establishment that stands out: the Weeping Widow Inn (good quality rooms, common quality meals). Although the food is dominated by endless bland vegetable stews, the inn's meticulous attention to the comfort and cleanliness of guests' mounts is especially well regarded by travelers throughout the southern Core.

**Teufeldorf (large town):** Conventional; AL LN; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 530,850 gp; Population 3,539; Isolated (human 97%, half-Vistani 1%, other 2%).

**Authority Figures:** Captain Rebeka Ditrau, female human Ftr9.

**Important Characters:** Antonijja Hajdusa (cutpurse ring-leader), female human Rog8; Darzin Morcantha (forest guide), male human Rgr6.

bookstores filled with esoterica and unassuming storefronts for ecstatic mediums and mystics. In the village graveyard stands the Vault of Quinn Roche, which supposedly holds a hundred and one enchanted suits of armor, not to mention lethal traps and the unliving husk of the old collector himself. Several sages in Vallaki studiously chart the stars and planets of the evening sky, and rumors persist of bizarre astrological cults in the village. More conservative townsfolk blame all this occult activity on the lingering legacy of the Tergs, whose demon servitors are said to still walk the streets at night.

Vallaki is divided into the prosperous Upper Town and the somewhat squalid Lower Town. The former surrounds an ancient citadel constructed by the Tergs in their distinctive style with domes and spires, circular arches, and narrow arcades of slender columns. The town's burgomaster, Nicolai Ionelus, has made this nameless fortress his own, housing both his extensive family and the village garrison in its vast halls. Among the boyars, Ionelus is widely regarded as Barovia's canniest burgomaster. Though callous and scheming, he is fairly trustworthy and is known to employ the services of mercenary adventurers for various tasks.

## Vallaki

With my tour of the occupied lands complete, it was now time to brave the thawing mountain passes. From Teufeldorf I set forth on the rugged Dreadpass toward the Old Svalich Road — and Barovia's festering heart.

Nestled at the western end of Svalich Pass, Vallaki is a pivotal crossroads for the entire southern Core. Once, the village was a quaint lakeshore holiday spot for the old noble families, but it has since grown into a prosperous economic heartland for Barovia. The surrounding valley is blanketed with the realm's most prestigious orchards and distilleries. Vallaki is home to a significant population of fishermen, who labor through weather fair and foul to reap Lake Zarovich's rich bounty of freshwater fish. Considering the superstitious nature of most Barovians, the village fishermen are remarkably unfazed by legends of horrors in Zarovich's deeps, from cannibal hags to seductive water sprites to tentacled leviathans.

Though its modest, bustling streets might not suggest as much, Vallaki has a sinister reputation for harboring arcane secrets. Between the clanging blacksmith shops and riotous fish markets are musty

## Where to Stay in Vallaki

Undoubtedly the finest establishment I encountered in all of Barovia was Vallaki's Blue Water Inn (good quality rooms, good quality meals), originally built as a hunting lodge for the Velikovnas in the third century. Although its rates are steep, its amenities include available private meeting rooms, a spectacular twilight view of Lake Zarovich and Mount Baratak, and complimentary *tsuika* from the Romulich distillery in one's room every night!

**Vallaki (small town):** Conventional; AL LN; 800 gp limit; Assets 61,880 gp; Population 1,547; Isolated (human 98%, half-Vistani 1%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Burgomaster Nicolai Ionelus, male human Ari4.

**Important Characters:** Toret Mugur Costinus (anchorite), male human Clr8; Lavinia the Blind (Stygian), female half-Vistani Wiz7/Sty5.







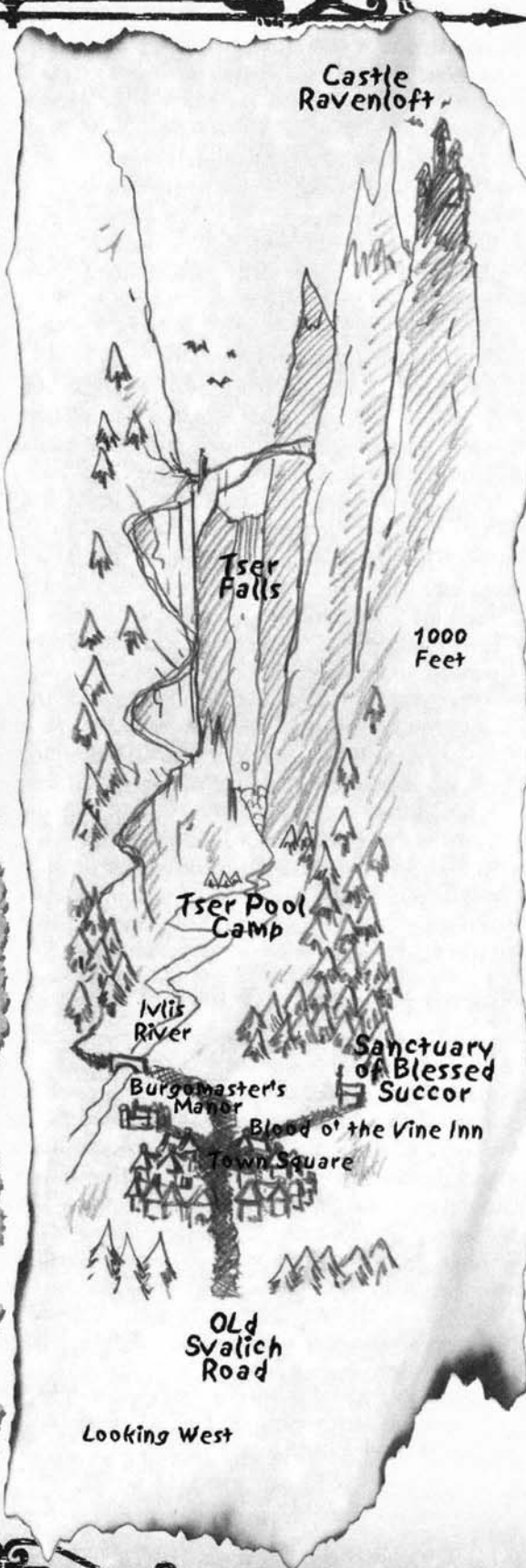
## The Village of Barovia

The Village of Barovia is arguably the realm's bleakest settlement. Crouched under the looming shadow of Castle Ravenloft, the village marks the eastern end of Svalich Pass and serves as an unnatural toll station for travelers on the Old Svalich Road. Known locally as the "Devil's Descent," the road twists back and forth as it drops precipitously in its approach to the village from the east and offers a remarkable view of the valley below. Particularly bracing is the view from an ancient but comfortably solid stone bridge that crossed a cleft in the mountainside. To the west, the Tser Falls plunge a thousand feet to the whitewaters below, accompanied by a whistling, echoing downdraft.

A perpetual ring of fog encloses the village and its surroundings, and I am almost certainly not the first to notice that these vapors bear an uncanny resemblance to the Mists themselves. One can enter the fog freely, but those folk who leave the village without Strahd's permission die in a horrible, choking fit. Travelers need not despair, however, as the Vistani — ever-opportunistic snakes that they are — can sell an elixir that grants

## Strahd's Choking fog

The ring of fog that surrounds the Village of Barovia and Castle Ravenloft is a lethal poison, one that infuses itself around a creature's organs and lays dormant until an unfortunate soul attempts to escape the village. Any living creature that steps beyond the fog's outer edge immediately suffers from frothing fits, suffering 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage per hour until it dies (no saving throw). Lost Constitution returns only when the creature returns to within the ring. A Vistani with the Alchemy skill can make an elixir (DC 25) that renders a creature immune to the fog's effects for 10 minutes, long enough to pass through. The Vistani never allow *giorgio* to learn the elixir's formula, and they deny their services to any travelers without hesitation if Strahd instructs them to do so. Strahd can dissipate the choking fog if he wishes, but he never does.





one resistance to the choking mists for roughly ten minutes. The price is a scant 5 gp. Merchants call this elixir the "captive tax"; I call it highway robbery.

The nature of the fog is unknown, but many believe it is a lingering divine punishment for the wedding massacre of 351 BC. The villagers who dwell here are horribly wretched even for Barovians, plodding through their daily rituals with the hollow look of prisoners. The whole town is wrapped in a palpable morbid aura, as if the fog was a funeral shroud and the citizens the walking dead.

The burgomaster, a cruel and restless widow by the name of Vanda Atanasius, loathes her duties in such a place and abuses the peasantry more out of spite than anything. Travelers along the Old Svalich Road typically pay their fee to the Vistani and hurry on about their business.

There are a few bastions against this dismal atmosphere, among them the venerable Blood o' the Vine Inn. I must admit that I was overcome with fondness for the warmth of its hearth, its patrons, and its owner, the hearty Bray Martikova. Also of note is the Sanctuary of Blessed Succor, the first Morninglord temple in Barovia, built on the site of a ruined state church temple. The adjoining graveyard, however, clearly centuries old, is widely believed to be haunted. Each night, it is said, the spirits of those who perished trespassing in Castle Ravenloft rise from the earth and begin a doomed trek up to the castle, where they throw themselves shrieking from the high tower. Needless to say, I myself did not observe this phenomenon.

### Where to Stay in the Village of Barovia

As I have noted, the hospitality at the Blood o' the Vine (common quality rooms, common quality meals) is exceptional, especially since one has no other choices when the sun sets. The meals are cheap and simple, thickly spiced for Barovian fare, and the nightly tragic ballads by local minstrels almost make it worth one's while to suffer the dismal village for a night.

### Secret Society: The Keepers of the Black Feather

The Blood o' the Vine is the headquarters for one of the most secret and ambitious conspiracies in the Realm of Dread, the Keepers of the Black Feather. Their goal is nothing less than the destruction of Strahd von Zarovich, whose vampiric nature the Keepers know. To this end, the organization subtly works to thwart the Count's schemes, primarily by obliquely aiding his enemies. Their principal quest, however, is to recover the legendary *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*, the one artifact that may hold the key to Strahd's destruction. In hidden chambers beneath the Blood o' the Vine, the Keepers gather lore regarding this holy object, as well as intelligence on Strahd's activities and plots.

Most members of the Keepers are normal Barovian men and women, unable to suffer the Count's tyranny any longer. The leadership is structured in successive circles of secrecy and harbors both afflicted and natural wereravens. Bray Martikova (male human afflicted wereraven Exp4/Ftr6, NG) is one such soul, and his family and his inn have harbored the Keepers for centuries. The head of the Keepers is always a ravenkin cleric, the only priest of Andral remaining in the Land of Mists. The Keepers' erstwhile leader, the venerable ravenkin Pyoor Twohundredsummers, perished peacefully in his sleep in 755 BC, his quest to recover the *Symbol* unfinished. His mantle has been taken up by Keeva Sixtywinters (female ravenkin Clr12/Sor2, NG) a hopeful ravenkin who is still unsure that she can shoulder Pyoor's legacy. Keeva's cleric domains are Good and Sun.

The *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* is described in the Attached Notes.

**Barovia (village):** Conventional; AL LE; 200 gp limit; Assets 5,350 gp; Population 535; Isolated (human 97%, half-Vistani 2%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Burgomaster Vanda Atanasius, female human Ari5.

**Important Characters:** Pavel the Upright (Vistani charlatan), male Vistana Ill2/Rog3; Cezar Vatrallau (mercenary warrior), male human Ftr10.







## The Tser Camp

On the approach to Castle Ravenloft from the Village of Barovia, a rough trail breaks off the main road. This detour leads down to a misty clearing at the base of the Tser Falls, one of the headwaters of the Ivlis River. It is a serene but gloomy place, filled with verdant shadows, silver billows of haze from the cascades, and the cacophony of songbirds and crickets. The site serves as the closest thing to a permanent Vistani camp in all the Land of Mists, for this clearing is a refuge for Vistani vardos, particularly that of the Zarovan, renowned as the rarest and most inscrutable of all Vistani tribes. Indeed, the Zarovan caravan that makes its perennial camp at Tser Falls is the only known Zarovan caravan.

Where the Zarovan roam when absent from Tser Falls is unknown, but pithy Barovians are fond of remarking that "the Zarovan can be sought by anyone, but they can only be found by those whom they themselves seek." This adage did not hold true for myself, as I discovered a telltale circle of vardos in the clearing, belonging, as luck would have it, to the Zarovan. I was eager to visit the campsite and interview its nigh-legendary *raunie*, Madame Eva, but my sense of preservation prevailed. My presumed patron, Azalin Rex, is widely reputed to be the despised foe of Count Strahd, and I would not wish to be viewed as the servant of the former by the servants of the latter.

Despite my hesitation to confront Eva in person, I collected numerous anecdotes about the ancient crone related to me by peasants in the Village of Barovia. This further information can be found in the Attached Notes.

## Castle Ravenloft

As I was repeatedly and needlessly reminded by locals who learned of my undertaking, no survey of Barovia would be complete without mentioning Castle Ravenloft, one of the Core's most recognizable landmarks. Nearly twenty stories tall, the castle overlooks the Village of Barovia from the northwest. With stones the color of bright bone and its thick shroud of ivy, the castle is the most striking structure in Barovia. Sadly, Ravenloft is virtually a metaphor for Barovia herself: grim and crumbling, filled with tarnished glories, ancient cruelties, and secrets not meant for the eyes of common men.

The legends I heard surrounding the dread abode of the von Zaroviches are so numerous that

relating them here would be an exercise in futility. Where would I begin? With the tales that trespassers and thieves are transformed into mindless slaves to polish the corroded silver and dust the rotting tapestries? That the chapel stands as it did on the day of Sergei von Zarovich's wedding four centuries ago, still filled with the scent of wilted flowers and the blood of Strahd I and his kin? Even this cynical observer is inclined to say that Ravenloft has very nearly ascended into the realm of the mythic. That is, if its terrible shadow did not fall so long and so dark on the lives of so many. I have included a few of my sketches of the looming castle in the Attached Notes.

## Immol

The next leg of my trip proved the most taxing. The simpleton guide I hired in the Village of Barovia promised me that Immol could be reached with ease via a seldom-used side road. The truth came in the form of days spent meandering along treacherous, icy goat trails to a remote village often forgotten by Barovians elsewhere.

Immol lies in the extreme southeast of Barovia, cradled by the Balinoks and standing as the southernmost bastion of the von Zaroviches. The village's headstrong merchants have a reputation for breaking from the Count's rule every few decades, only to be brutally put in their place. In recent years, Immol has again drifted toward the edge of the von Zaroviches' sphere of control. The Warlock's Road provides a vital link between the village and the realm of Hazlan to the south, and each year Immol seems to draw closer to that dubious kingdom of wizards.

The village is laid out in a horseshoe pattern in a shallow dale at the foot of the Balinoks. The town's periphery is dotted with ancient watchtowers, while the Keep of the Scarlet Cross dominates the village center. The latter was the stronghold of a lost order of holy knights who served the state church, apparently posted in Immol to put down unrest. The present burgomaster is Petre Teodorus, a pleasant but fickle man obsessed with Barovian history and myth who seems to care little for the health of the citizenry.

Immol and its environs host two tiny ethnic groups found nowhere else in Barovia: the Forfarians and the Thaani. Their communities are secretive, though they have both made their mark on Immol in small ways. The druidic legacy of the Forfarians has resulted in a modern proliferation of herbalists, heal-





ers, apothecaries, midwives, and other such folk in the Forfarian district. The Thaani, meanwhile, speak to this day of their ancient captors, whom they call the Silent Masters or the Four-Fingered Ones. Thaani remembrance of these creatures is long on abject terror and short on detail; most Thaani are convinced, on some level, that the Silent Masters will one day find them. Several Thaani confided they keep satchels packed with food, water, and family mementos beneath their beds, should the night come when they must flee.

## Psionics in Ravenloft

Psionics do not escape untouched in the Realm of Dread. The psionic powers and items detailed in the *Psionics Handbook* are altered according to the same general guidelines for magic described in Chapter Three of the **Ravenloft** setting book. If there is any doubt as to whether a given power has an altered effect or requires a powers check, consult a spell with a similar effect. Full rules for adapting psionics for Ravenloft will appear in an upcoming accessory.

Among the notable sites in Immol stands the Teodorus Archives, a remarkable library of Barovian history, legends, and records — the only one of its kind in the realm — that proved of some use to my own research. Although not available for general public perusal, the archives can be accessed by legitimate scholars. The burgomaster expends a great deal of time and coin on administering and improving the collection, hopelessly convinced that it elevates his reputation with Count von Zarovich.

## Where to Stay in Immol

While it hosts several small and cleanly common rooms, Immol's sole inn is the Bolting Stag (common quality rooms, common quality food), a rugged watering hole brimming with hard-drinking Forfarrians and adorned with the tartans of forgotten noble houses. The Stag has the best lamb sausage in the realm, and serves a smoky house whiskey that leaves the throat searing for hours.

**Immol (small town):** Conventional; AL N; 800 gp limit; Assets 64,720 gp; Population 1,623; Isolated (human 98%, half-Vistani 1%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Burgomaster Petre Teodorus, male human Ari6.

**Important Characters:** Camelia Moldovenita (ghost hunter), female human Clr5/Wiz5/WHn4; Proinsias Ballinmuir (healer), male human Adp5/Com2.

The Witch-Hunter prestige class appears in **Secrets of the Dread Realms**.

## Parting Thoughts

Barovia is clearly a hopelessly backward realm, lacking in any strategic resource that cannot be obtained under the eyes of a less oppressive despot. Its crucial location, however, ensures that it will likely remain a key player in the events of the broader world for years to come. Although the Gundarakite rebels exhibit an admirable ruthlessness and tenacity, I have seen little evidence that their grubby ranks will succeed where so many others have failed. Count Strahd has crushed far more potent antagonists in centuries past. If von Zarovich is ever to be toppled, it must be through a coordinated effort between disciplined and well-armed rebels spread throughout the realm and powerful foreign opportunists willing to put sizeable military forces on the line. If my theories prove true, and Strahd is undead and immortal — and likely even the dread lord at Barovia's black spiritual heart — their chances of success are even more remote.

I left Barovia from Immol in the still hours just before dawn, traveling south along the Warlock's Road and into the bleak landscape of Hazlan. The vistas that lay before me were nowhere near as lush and spectacular as those of Barovia, and the tyrant into whose realm I was traveling was reputedly no less tyrannical than Strahd von Zarovich. All the same, I must confess to a twinge of relief when I left Barovia behind and was leagues beyond the sight of Castle Ravenloft's ghastly ramparts.







# Report Two: Hazlan

What have I done, that thou shouldst scorn me thus?  
What have I said, that thou shouldst me reject?  
Have I been disobedient to thy words?  
Have I betrayed thy Arcane secrecy?  
Have I dishonoured thy marriage bed  
With filthy crimes, or with lascivious lusts?  
— William Shakespeare, *Lucrine/Mucedorus*



**W**ithin moments of crossing the border from Barovia into Hazlan, I could sense a change in the air. This was something subtle, an almost imperceptible change in the flavor of the air itself — a brief hint of spice and incense (though Hazlan is known for neither), of musty parchment, of smoldering leaves . . . all gone within an instant. Although Hazlan is one of the youngest lands to emerge from the Mists, it feels ancient. Although it shares a language and many customs with neighboring realms, it has an undeniable feel of the exotic.

Sadly, the novelty of this land proved all too transient. As I traveled the Warlock's Road toward the city of Toyalis, it became apparent that oppression and gloom hang as heavy in the air here as they do in Barovia.

### Hazlan at a Glance

**Cultural Level:** Medieval (7)

**Ecology:** Full

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate hills, mountains, and plains

**Year of Formation:** 714 BC

**Population:** 26,100

**Races:** Human (92%), Halflings (4%), Gnomes (3%), Other (1%)

**Human Ethnic Groups:** Mulan (10%), Rashemani (90%)

**Languages:** Vaasi\*, Halfling, Gnome, Balok

**Religions:** The Lawgiver\*, Hala

**Government:** Feudal ethnocratic despotism

**Ruler:** Hazlik

**Darklord:** Hazlik

drier than most lands within the Core. Weather that would bring more regular precipitation to Hazlan usually blows from the northwest, bogging down in damp Forlorn or falling as rain and snow on Barovia's mountains, bringing Hazlan a dusty aridness, especially during the long summer months. Only during Hazlan's short winters is precipitation common. During the rest of the year, droughts and brush fires prevail, and every few years a tornado tears across the plains, destroying a hamlet or two.

As the Balinoks pass into Hazlan, the mountains become more easily traversable, though still rugged. Less frigid than the Barovian heights, the Balinoks gradually lose altitude to the south. They are barren, marked by rock falls and sheer cliff faces. The major peaks are Mt. Soren (5,230 feet), Mt. Veduradeth (6,890 feet), and Mt. Urkoth Sor (6,310 feet). The mountains are riddled with mazes of dusty canyons and dry caves, carved by wind, water, and eons of time. Breathtaking rock formations such as needlelike spires, natural arches, and strangely shaped towers grace the rocky foothills that roll eastward and westward from the Balinoks. Mineral springs are common throughout the mountains and their foothills. These warm pools of jade-green water are crusted with alkali salts, and the Hazlani speak of the *grønsamkøre vulk*, the terrible and wise fey that call the springs home.

The mountains feature few settlements of note. The only site likely to admit weary travelers is a fortified camp of the local governor's enforcers, stationed a few miles southwest of Ramulai to guard against raids. The Iron Sanctum, a monastic retreat, rests somewhere high in the mountains, overlooking the Warlock's Road far below. It is home to a reclusive order of scholarly monks, the Order of the Guardians, a society devoted to collecting evil artifacts and magic items to keep them from being used to cause harm. Hazlik reportedly knows of their presence, but has ordered his governors to allow the monks to continue their activities so long as they do not oppose him. I was unable to find the Iron Sanctum myself (I suspect the presence of magic screening the aerie from my scrying attempts), but local legend holds that they guard a terrible iron flask said to contain the spirit of an unthinkable evil entity.

To the west of the Balinoks, the *Skraplans* foothills descend into a hilly lowland. This rocky wasteland is known as the *Ben i Gigantsmark*, named after the gigantic bones that are occasionally found littering the plain or embedded in exposed stone.

### Landscape

**H**azlan lies at the Core's extreme southeastern edge, weighted at the west by the Balinoks and stretching into rolling hills and plains toward the Vaasi Plateau in the east. The climate is much







Along the southern border of the *Gigantsmark* lies a region where the soil has long since worn away, leaving an expanse of exposed bedrock. This bedrock is known as the Black Iron Shield, *Negerjern Afskaerme*, so called for the iron ore deposits found here as well as for the land's harshness. To the west, the *Gigantsmark* slowly gives way to the forests of *Kartakass*, while in the north lies *Itu Skoven*, the Broken Forest, where the lowland of *Hazlan* meets the highland of *Forlorn*. Other than the lonely settlement of *Forfarmax*, the region is primarily home to strange creatures, assorted outcasts, and the hideouts of vicious bandits. Students at the Red Academy occasionally send expeditions to this desolate region seeking buried ruins of ancient, pre-human cultures.

The Black Spire, a strange natural formation, rises at the Misty Border at the southern edge of the Black Iron Shield. This spire of purplish-black, glassy stone is said to be a reminder of a time when the nightmarish wasteland of *Bluetspur* stretched to the south of *Hazlan*. *Hazlan's* Misty Border is often called the Road of a Thousand Secrets and is commonly held to be a mistway to the distant sands of *Pharazia*. Travelers who pass the Black Spire may find themselves headed for a far different destination, however. *Hazlani* lore claims that the Black Spire releases an unearthly, vibrating tone whenever struck by lightning. According to one version of the tale, all those who hear the tone are driven mad, but a second version claims that the luckless victims are actually transported far away to the realm of *Bluetspur* and its alien abominations.

### Dread Possibility: The Black Spire

The Black Spire absorbs electricity damage. If hit by lightning or an electrical attack, the Spire reverberates to release an eerie chime for a number of rounds equal to the spell level of the attack (assume lightning is equal to a 10th-level attack). Any creature within a 100-foot diameter of the Spire while it chimes must make a successful Will save or fall unconscious. When such creatures come to, they find themselves in the domain of *Bluetspur*.

This mistway, called the Song of Obscene Hunger, is a one-way mistway of excellent reliability.

On the *Balinoks'* eastern side, the foothills, called *den Forhenvaerendman* ("the Ancient Ones"), reach farther beyond the shadows of the mountains than their western cousins. Beyond these hills, *Hazlan* spreads into the *Ensommark*, the Lonely Plain. The *Ensommark* is divided roughly in two by the eastward flow of the *Saniset River*. To the north, the *Ensommark* is called the *Ufrugtbarlan*, the Barren Lands.

Lying in the Barren Lands near the *Nova Vaasan* border, *Høj i den Safdrede Sti-Naavne*, the Hill of the Hundred Paths, is a much feared site. Ringed with standing stones, the hill is covered with dozens of winding, branching flagstone paths leading to the crest of the hill, which is capped by a simple flagstone circle. The *Rashemani* believe this hill is home to vengeful ghosts who strike dead any who walk upon it without knowing the secret path the dead use. Surprisingly, the credulity of peasants serves them well, for in this case they are right. As I examined the site, I noticed a large number of bones strewn about the mound and a greasy tang of arcane energy filled the air. Not wishing to terminate my employment quite yet, I avoided setting foot within the ring of standing stones. If I may risk a theory, however, the auras I detected here spoke to me not of restless undead, but of strange creatures trapped between this reality and the next. Had I been better equipped, I would have enjoyed further study.

South of the *Saniset*, the *Ensommark* is known as the *Dun Lands* (*Dunlan* in *Vaasi*). On the *Ensommark*, the *Warlock's Road* cuts east from *Immol* in *Barovia* to the great crater occupied by the city of *Toyalis*, where it branches off to the *Red Highway*. This road leads into the *Ancient Ones*, providing access to the *Red Wizard's Vale* at the foot of *Mt. Soren*, where the village of *Ramulai* and *Hazlik's* school of wizardry lie. A third route, the *Iron Road*, traverses the *Ensommark*, stretching from *Toyalis* to *Sly-Var*. Beyond this settlement, the *Iron Road* degenerates to little more than a wagon trail as it continues east along the *Saniset River* before passing beyond the borders of *Hazlan* toward *Arbora* in *Nova Vaasa*.

The mountains of *Hazlan* are the source of the *Musarde River*, which cuts a shallow canyon across the Black Iron Shield before passing into *Kartakass*. Also on the western side of the continental divide is the *Kilovan River*, a tributary of the *Musarde* that originates in the very center of the *Hazlani* *Balinoks* and flows northward in *Forlorn*. To the





east, the Saniset River winds south from the Barovian heights before cutting east to the sea. A pair of tributaries joins this gentle river as it crosses Hazlan — the *Felgmøse* (“Mistmoss”) River and the *Genspejle* (“Mirror”) River. The Mirror River is a minor tributary, noted for its silvery purity and tendency to take on a reflective quality at sunset. The Mirror River flows south into the Saniset River from Nova Vaasa. The Mistmoss River, however, emerges from the southern Mists, crossing only a few miles of Hazlan’s terrain before emptying into the Saniset. Much of the Mistmoss is whitewater, which flows over a bed of jagged rock and clinging, slimy weeds, and the banks of this river have many shallow and stony pools in which crawl strange and unsavory crustaceans. Near the Misty Border, the Mistmoss River broadens, and huge boulders covered in laces of strange phosphorescent mosses rise from the water, looming from the Mists like the strange lights of a distant, otherworldly city.

Hazlani architecture falls into two distinct types divided along ethnic lines. Rashemani buildings are generally simple, squat structures of

whitewashed brick, with flat, thatched roofs and unadorned facades. The Rashemani often plant small vegetable gardens around their homes. Mulan architecture is more elaborate, often characterized as sprawling and opulent. Behind stone walls and wrought iron fences stand polished stone edifices in gray, pink, and russet. Estates are surrounded by serene gardens of poppies, lilies, and finely hued roses, accented by the murmur of fountains or the song of nightingales. Delicate latticework covers rounded windows both tiny and large. Minarets reach toward the sky, and domes inlaid with dazzling mosaics arch overhead. Particularly large and opulent buildings may sport one or more onion domes, one of Hazlan’s signature architectural touches.

The Lawgiver’s temples, known as *fanes*, lend a third style to Hazlan’s structures. Fanes are built to reflect a dour and imposing grandeur. Most emphasize height and are fashioned of dark gray to black stone, with slab-like facades decorated with stern, even menacing statues depicting the Iron Tyrant. Fane roofs seem evenly split between narrow, high peaks and broad domes, both of which







are adorned with spiky cornices. Within, they feature a main worship hall with high, vaulted ceilings supported by large columns. The worship hall is filled with rows of uncomfortable pews made of darkly varnished wood. At the front of the hall is a raised dais where the pulpit and altar stand.

In addition to these architectural styles, Hazlan is dotted with long-abandoned windmills. No one is certain who originally built them. Neither the Rashemani nor the Mulan lay claim to their construction, nor do they match the structures left by the Vossath Nor. These beehive-shaped structures are four stories tall with exteriors of earthy red and dirty gray sails. The interiors of most of the windmills are in considerable disrepair, as the Hazlani make no efforts to fix them. Instead, this is where the Rashemani display an artistic sense entirely lacking in their other edifices. The Rashemani decorate the windmills by painting scenes and messages telling the joy and sorrow of their community.

Other ruined structures can be found scattered throughout the mountains, hills, and plains. One may see half-buried statues, massive blocks of golden stone, or crumbling entranceways to buried complexes. These ruins are the remnants of the Vossath Nor civilization, an ancient people wiped out ages

ago. As told in Madeline Galbraith's *Dust of Empires*, some believe that the ruins of still more ancient empires rest beneath the Vossath Nor ruins, though few remember their names. The Hazlani say that one day their culture too will fall, and on that day, every structure in Hazlan will sink beneath the soil, swallowed by the land just as the Vossath Nor and others were in ages past. This belief is the source of the Hazlani's seldom used other name for their land — *Saette Til Livs Gaa Ned*, the Devouring Land.

## flora

Hazlan lacks Barovia's floral wealth. Instead of lush green forests and fields, Hazlan features long plains of golden grains and grasses punctuated by occasional tangled patches of scrub trees. The rolling grasslands to the east are used to grow various grain crops, including wheat, barley, rye, millet, and hops. The grasses and grains of Hazlan's fields are subject to a number of diseases such as rusts, smuts, and molds, and in the summer months, hazy clouds of spores and pollen hang over some fields. Hazlani farmers are diligent about watching out for such infections, and most will burn their fields rather than let grain infections spread. The scrub trees of the plains are largely stunted pines,

## Quøvusp Root and Poppies

**Quøvusp Root:** This root has two uses. First, the odor of burning *quøvusp* root drives away most predators. All animals, beasts, dragons, magical beasts, shapechangers, and vermin must succeed at a Will save (DC 18) to approach closer than 75 feet to a fire laced with burning *quøvusp* root. In addition, by smoking *quøvusp* root for four hours, the user receives a *vision* per the spell (non-spellcasters make an Intelligence check). *Quøvusp* root grants a +5 circumstance bonus to Scry and Intelligence checks associated with its use.

**Poppies:** Opium — ingested, Fortitude save (DC 20); initial and secondary damage stupor. A creature in a stupor cannot feel pain (and is thus immune to stunning effects and ignores half of all subdual damage taken). The user also ignores all Fear and Horror effects, but suffers 1d6+1 points of temporary Wisdom damage and a -4 competence penalty to all other Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-modified checks and saves. Wisdom points return at the rate of 1 per hour. All stupor effects end when the user's Wisdom returns to normal.

Opium is highly addictive. When the user's Wisdom returns to normal, she must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or enter withdrawal, suffering 1d4 points each of temporary Dexterity and Constitution damage. Lost ability points return at the rate of 1 each per day, or when the user ingests more opium, whichever comes first. In addition, the user must make a successful Will save (DC 20) or seek out more opium to ease her withdrawal. The user must make an additional Will save each day, but the DC drops by 1 for each day that has passed since the last use of opium.





while in the west one finds the larger pines of *Itu Skoven*, the "Broken Forest." Much like Nova Vaasan timber, the wood harvested from the pines of the Broken Forest rots quickly, making it useless for construction. Trees grow at the extreme western edge of Hazlan, where the Hornwood Vale lies as well. The trees of the Hornwood are afflicted with a strange parasite that causes hornlike growths to sprout from trunks and branches and also renders them unfit for construction.

Of note is an indigenous root called *quovusp*. The Mulan use ground *quovusp* root much like snuff, although it costs twice as much. The Rashemani use for this substance is quite different, however. At night, a Rashemani will venture out into the plains alone and build a fire. While the fire blazes, the user throws a handful of *quovusp* root into the flames. The Rashemani then sits before the fire and smokes a pipe filled with *quovusp* root. As the night wears on and the *quovusp* smoker stares into the fire, visions appear to him within the flames, supposedly answering whatever questions may be weighing on the *quovusp* smoker's heart. Because of this, a single pouch of *quovusp* root can fetch up to 300 gp from a knowledgeable buyer.

I would be remiss to omit mention of Hazlan's most notorious crop, the poppy flower. The milky juice from this blossom can be refined into opium, a powerful narcotic. When dried and smoked or taken internally, opium induces a state of euphoria dulling even severe pain. Opium does have some medical applications when used with care, but it far is better known for its highly addictive properties. "Opium dens" are a common sight in Mulan circles, where privileged Hazlani lounge about in glassy-eyed stupors. Of course, these decadent settings little resemble their equivalent in Rashemani or Nova Vaasan circles, where they are more likely to be wretched and dangerous flophouses.

## fauna

Although Hazlan contains many of the mundane creatures one would expect to find in temperate hills, the region is noted for the unusual nature of its fauna. Nowhere else in the Core can such twisted beasts be found, unless one believes the tales told of distant Vechor. Hazlani lore claims this profusion of unnatural wildlife is the result of centuries of restless arcane experimentation by

Hazlik and the wizard-lords who preceded him. An example of this is the plains predator called the *krenshar*. Once, these beasts were plains cats, the predatory felines found in Nova Vaasa. Some time in the past, a mad wizard used sorcery to transform them, flaying the skin from their skulls in large flaps, giving them the disturbing ability to peel the skin away from their skull. Another bizarre creature is the *chuul*, hideous water-dwelling beasts that lurk beneath the surface of the Saniset River, posing a severe hazard to river traffic. More legendary than real are the mythical "ghost-eaters," called "ethereal marauders" by a few sages. These strange behemoths dwell in the Gray Realm (or whatever term one wishes to apply to the spirit world) and feed on ghosts and other restless spirits. Storytellers claim that when no ghosts are nearby, hungry ghost-eaters will step into the world of flesh to feast on the unwary.

## Local Animals and Native Horrors

Hazlan is a cornucopia of strange and deformed creatures. Many of these monstrosities started life as twisted creations in Hazlik's laboratories, then broke free or were simply discarded in the wilds.

**Wildlife:** CR 1/10—bat; toad; CR 1/8—rat; CR 1/6—lizard, raven; CR 1/4—owl; weasel; CR 1/3—hawk; snake, viper (Tiny); CR 1/2—badger; eagle; snake, viper (Small); CR 1—snake, viper (Medium-size); wolf; CR 2—boar.

**Monsters:** CR 1/3—dire rat; skeleton; CR 1/2—geist\*; stirge; zombie; CR 1—bakhna rakhna\*; carrion bat\*; ghoul; quevari\*; tentacle rat\*; CR 2—carrion stalker\*; choker; chosen one\*; dire badger; dire bat; ogre; shocker lizard; skin thief\*; CR 3—allip; broken one\*; cat, midnight\*; doppelganger; ethereal marauder; ghastr; head hunter; impersonator\*; krenshar; plant, bloodroot\*; shadow; wight; CR 4—backwards man\*; darkenbeast\*; gargoyle; leucrotta\*; mimic; otyugh; owlbear; plant, lashweed\*; CR 5—cloak; cloak; shadow\*; cloak, resplendent\*; cloak, undead\*; odem\*; phase spider; wraith; CR 6—bastellus\*; corpse candle\*; hag, annis; lamia; plant, doppelganger plant\*; troll, dread\*; will-o'-wisp; CR 7—chuul; ghost; spectre; CR 8—ghoul lord\*; mohrg.

\*\* Creature found in *Monsters of Faerun*.





## History

**H**azlan's history is largely unexamined. The Hazlani claim that Hazlan has been inhabited for millennia, but they record few facts about the civilizations that came before theirs. A few names are known — the barbaric Duruun, the fey Quelshar, the stunted Yath; yet all but the most basic information has been lost, the records of each civilization purged by the next wave of conquerors. A recurring belief, however, holds that each race was somehow less *human* than those that followed. On rare occasions, Rashemani workers unearth spiny, chitinous husks of the long-dead race known as the El-Koth, said to be have been the original inhabitants of Hazlan millennia before the coming of humanity.

The founding of the current Hazlani civilization dates to circa 1,100 years ago, deep in Hazlan's false history. In that time, the legendary Nameless King led the Mulan and their Rashemani slaves to Hazlan and conquered the last of the nonhuman civilizations, the Vossath Nor, to found the Nameless Dynasty. At the time, each dynasty (as well as the country itself) was named for its ruling family, but today historians commonly refer to these eras as a succession of Hazlani Dynasties. Thus, the Nameless King's reign is today known as the First Hazlani Dynasty.

The Nameless King supposedly ruled for three centuries, although the legends do not explain his longevity. On his deathbed, he peacefully passed his rule to the Dannouth family, founding the Second Hazlani Dynasty. Eventually, control of Hazlani passed to the house of Shadasinet, then to the house of Fangtør, and finally, in the Fifth Hazlani Dynasty, to the house of Warrowdine. The last Warrowdine king, Yorne of the Weeping Eyes, died in 661 BC without an heir, having appointed no Mulan house to which a new dynasty would pass. Thus began the last phase of Hazlan's false history, the Years of Tattered Banners.

During this period, Hazlan's Mulan families waged bitter warfare on each other, both openly and covertly. Assassinations were rife, many houses raised small armies of Rashemani conscripts, and Mulan mages battled each other on all levels of reality. The Tattered Banners flew for 53 years while each Mulan house struggled in vain to establish itself as the Sixth Hazlani Dynasty. Although I find the claim dubious, Hazlani today claim that by the end, the decades of arcane warfare threat-

ened to unravel the Veil of Sleep that separates the waking world from the world of nightmares.

The Years of Tattered Banners ended in 714 BC, when the Red Wizard Hazlik returned to Hazlan after years spent abroad supposedly making pilgrimage to the ancient Mulan homeland, seeing the world, and learning its secrets. Within a month, Hazlik's arcane might cowed the quarrelling Mulan families into obedience. Hazlik took control of Hazlan for himself and outlawed all use of arcane magic to prevent another war. Historical records in surrounding realms also note 714 BC as the year when Hazlan first emerged from the Mists, so I have identified Hazlik's rise to power as the seminal event marking the beginning of Hazlan's true history.

Contemporary maps show that Hazlan was positioned quite differently when it first appeared. Nova Vaasa was its northern neighbor even then. At the time, Barovia formed its western border and Bluetspur its southern one. To the east lay the Nightmare Lands, a nebulous and poorly understood realm that once stretched down the eastern Core, but seems to have been strangely forgotten since it disappeared in the Great Upheaval. Not until that cataclysm would Hazlan border Forlorn, Kartakass, or the Mists.

The Church of the Lawgiver swept down across Hazlan's northern border almost immediately after it appeared and established itself among the receptive Mulan within a decade. The following decades have proven relatively quiet, with the reclusive Hazlani barely interacting with their neighbors and with their crushingly oppressive culture preventing internal upheavals. The only event of true, lasting significance must be Hazlik's reversal of the arcane ban following the Great Upheaval, the ramifications of which are discussed elsewhere in this report.

## Populace

**T**he people of Hazlan belong to two major ethnic groups: the Rashemani, who make up 90% of the human population and are subservient to the Mulan, who make up most of the remaining 10%. A smattering of other human ethnicities can be found, including Barovians, Forfarrians, Thaani, Kartakans, and Nova Vaasans, but none in any significant numbers. The attitudes of the Mulan ruling class toward other peoples makes Hazlan an unattractive place for foreigners to put down roots.





## Appearance

The Rashemani are a tough and sturdy folk, who tend to be short in stature, with men usually standing a little over five feet in height and women slightly shorter. No doubt their stunted growth is due at least in part to the widespread disease and malnutrition that plagues these impoverished laborers. Their skin naturally ranges from a light olive complexion to a deeper bronze, but their long days in the sunlight often give them a ruddier appearance. Little variance exists in hair or eye color: hair ranges from dark brown to deep black, while eyes are almost uniformly dark brown. Indeed, a Rashemani child born with lightly colored eyes usually causes something of a scandal. The Rashemani have thick, straight hair, which they spend little time bothering to groom. Men let their hair and beards grow wild and long, chopping them back somewhat roughly when they become a nuisance. The women treat their hair more delicately, tying it back in intricate braids.

The wealthy Mulan have an altogether less rugged appearance than the Rashemani. The Mulan are tall on average, with slim builds and fine bones, but their pampered lifestyle makes them much more prone to obesity than the Rashemani. Their features are fine and angular; they tend to have

prominent cheekbones and noses that are somewhat longer and thinner than average. Their skin ranges from a very pale white to a dark fallow shade. Compared to the Rashemani, they have a somewhat unhealthy appearance, though in fact they are far less prone to illness, mainly due to their better diet. The Mulan have light hair, ranging from dirty blond to chestnut brown, but the Mulan find hair on the scalp to be offensively unclean. Men and women alike ritually shave their heads daily. Facial hair is not considered vulgar, but it is uncommon. Those Mulan men who do grow beards or mustaches keep them meticulously neat and trim.

The appearance of the Mulan is made even more distinctive by their traditional practice of tattooing. All Mulan children receive their first tattoo at the age of twelve, as a rite of adulthood. The first tattoo is placed on the scalp, slightly above the forehead, and is a symbolic representation of the child's name. The Mulan continue to add tattoos thereafter; by the age of sixteen, elaborate tattoos cover the typical Mulan's scalp, neck, and shoulders. Traditionally, men are tattooed in geometric designs and depictions of legendary beasts such as dragons, while women receive designs of flowers, vines, and abstract whorls and swirls. De-







pictions of lightning, flames, water, and similar natural elements as well as traditional pictographic symbols may also be included in the adulthood tattoos of both sexes.

Mulan adults can thereafter have themselves tattooed as often as they wish and can afford. The finer tattoo artists in Hazlan charge considerably for their services, and even among even the Mulan, few can afford to have themselves tattooed frivolously. Most Mulan wait until after significant events in their lives to add additional tattoos: births, marriages, deaths, and educational accomplishments making suitable occasions for a commemorative tattoo.

Mulan tattoos often include pictographic representations of words or concepts. A staggering number of these symbols exist, yet the Mulan are able to recognize each one at a glance. The symbols have such a deep and abiding meaning to the Mulan, however, that they are never used for something as coarse as written communication. Drawing these symbols on anything other than human skin is a crime punishable by the loss of the artist's hand. It is a crime for a Rashemani to draw or wear tattoos at all.

## Fashion

The clothing of the Rashemani is simple, woven from wool and rough cotton. Fashions distinguish little between the sexes. Both men and women prefer loose trousers with tapered legs and tunics with long, baggy sleeves. Another common Rashemani garment is the *kaftan*, a loosely fitting, ankle-length shirt with long sleeves. Men often wear a belt with the *kaftan*, while women usually do not. Rashemani clothing is not very decorative. They prefer simple earth tones, with dark reds, blues, and greens used for highlights and trim.

In contrast, Mulan clothing is very distinctive. Men and women both wear ankle-length cloth wraps around their waists, somewhat like long skirts. These *zarongs* are worn in lieu of trousers, which the Mulan consider peasant garb. They also eschew tunics: men go bare-chested, while women wear stiff vests left open in the front. The rigid cloth of these vests is just enough to maintain the wearer's modesty while still leaving much of the neck, stomach, and sides exposed. Both sexes favor long, silken robes dyed in bright colors, especially reds, yellows, and purples. When the temperature falls, these silken robes are replaced with hooded, woolen cloaks.

## Language

The language of Hazlan is Vaasi, which the Hazlani speak in common with the Nova Vaasans and the Kartakans. The dialects of the three lands are mutually intelligible, but the Hazlani dialect emphasizes some of the language's harder aspects. In Hazlani Vaasi, the normally sibilant "s" is instead pronounced much like the buzzing "z," and the Hazlani tend to cut short vowel sounds that would be prolonged in the "purer" Nova Vaasan dialect. This gives Hazlani Vaasi a somewhat clipped sound.

### Vaasi Primer

*godaag*: good day  
*afsked*: goodbye  
*jao*: yes  
*ikke*: no  
*jaal!*: help!  
*afgaa herfra opstille!:* leave this place!  
*trolldom, trylleri*: magic  
*trolldommen*: wizard  
*skyde, afbrænd*: fire

## Lifestyle & Education

The Rashemani are a poor and downtrodden folk, with nearly everything they work to produce taken to support their Mulan masters. The Governor's Council has divided the entire countryside of Hazlan between Mulan families, and each Rashemani must pay taxes to one of these governors. Of course, the Mulan own most of the land and resources in Hazlan, so Rashemani seeking to meet these exorbitant tax demands must usually find employment with the very Mulan who collects their taxes. Rashemani effectively become serfs, working the fields and tending the livestock of their Mulan overseers. Their labors are enough to offset their tax demands and provide them with enough additional funds to survive, but such labors also subject them to the Mulan's harsh whims. Serfs who are judged disobedient or incompetent are whipped and beaten liberally, sometimes to death. It is perfectly legal for a Mulan to kill a Rashemani in his employ if he can provide sufficient cause.





Given the large numbers of Rashemani, rebellion would seem inevitable under such oppressive circumstances, but the Mulan are able to keep order through their retainers. These retainers are Rashemani men who have proven themselves willing to enforce the harsh will and whims of the Mulan in return for generous compensation. Not surprisingly, they are a largely cruel and devious bunch, despised by their Rashemani kinfolk and distrusted by their Mulan employers.

Rashemani who have valuable skills as craftsmen may be able to escape serfdom. The Mulan have little interest in manual labor of any kind, yet they crave finely manufactured goods. A Rashemani with the talents to produce such goods, whether of cloth, leather, wood, or stone, may be able to generate enough income to live comfortably and independently. Such skills are rare among the Rashemani, however, and those who have them are reluctant to share them lest they reduce their own value. Most Rashemani artisans pass their skills on to their children, exclusively.

The major art produced in Hazlan is theatre. Traditional Hazlani theatre is called *haebstzarn*. Haebstzarn is an unusual form of theatre characterized by having each character played by two actors, one of whom sits on the other's shoulders; the former supplies the voice and the latter does the walking. Haebstzarn comedies are popular throughout the Core, although most non-Hazlani troupes do not use the double-actor method employed in true haebstzarn. Further, characters in haebstzarn are generally caricatures, with wildly exaggerated features and personalities. The masks used by haebstzarn actors, called *haebstza*, are prized artworks and are frequently made not as decoration but as display pieces, masquerade disguises, and personal accessories.

The Hazlani also enjoy puppetry, and *abhaebstza*, or puppet theatre, is almost as popular as haebstzarn theatre. Many Hazlani enjoy shadow puppet shows that tell the stories of Hazlan's folk heroes. In particular, the Rashemani hold the tales of Vosshik, Berineth Waeydottir, and Stalker-of-Deadmen in highest regard, though a number of other Rashemani heroes exist. The Mulan prefer tales of their heroes, such as Kiva Erdru and Gemeyes the White. A variant of haebstzarn uses cloth marionettes as tall as three men to portray the characters.

Rashemani tradition demands that Rashemani men seeking marriage must provide a "bride price"

in either currency or goods to the father of the chosen bride. These bride prices, usually ranging from 10 to 50 sp, represent a relatively substantial amount of wealth for the average Rashemani, and the result is that few Rashemani men marry young. Rashemani grooms are often ten years older than their brides. Marriages outside the immediate community are discouraged, and parallel cousin marriages are not infrequent. Divorce is not permitted by Rashemani custom, though they face no legal consequences for leaving a spouse, as the Mulan do not recognize Rashemani marriages.

The parents arrange Mulan marriages, usually while the betrothed are still children. These arranged marriages are essentially transactions, with one family seeking to buy its way into alliance with another family. The marriage itself takes place when both of the betrothed become adults. Divorce is possible, though costly. One must have the approval of the local governor before divorce can take place, and such approval rarely comes cheaply. The cost in goodwill from other Mulan can be even greater.

Education in Hazlan is done mostly through foreign private tutors, as teaching is too common and mundane a task for most Mulan, while the Rashemani are not permitted an education. Gnomes have proven particularly popular as tutors. For more advanced education, a handful of specialist academies can be found in the major settlements. The most infamous is the Red Academy in Ramulai, where Hazlani wizards are trained.

As with everything else in Hazlan, food is split along ethnic lines. The Rashemani diet consists mostly of vegetables supplemented with just enough meat and cheeses to keep them strong. *Dolma*, or stuffed vegetables, is the most common dish. Most *dolma* are stuffed with a mash of corn and nuts, though rice and meat are popular among those who can afford them. Another popular Rashemani dish is the *kebab*, an assortment of cooked meats and vegetables served on a stick. Breads, cheeses, and grapes are served with nearly every meal. For drink, the staples are tea and goat's milk, but when something stronger is called for, *boza*, made from fermented wheat berries, serves well.

The Mulan have more eclectic tastes, with a heavier emphasis on meat and baked goods. *Frikadeller*, rolled balls of chopped meat served with creamed vegetables, are a popular dish, as are *spandauers*, sweet pastries topped with nuts and jams. The Mulan are collectively wealthy enough,







however, that nearly any dish found in the Core might find its way to their tables.

Circumstances have left both the Rashemani and the Mulan distrustful and suspicious, not only of each other but of nearly everyone they encounter. The Rashemani have come to expect the worst of people until given reason to think otherwise. They naturally assume that others seek to exploit them in some way, which leaves them guarded and distant. Their trust must be earned, and earning it is a long, difficult process. Life has left them with little reason or opportunity for merrymaking, and they see most forms of leisure and entertainment as valueless frivolity.

The Mulan, meanwhile, mix their sense of ethnic superiority with a constant state of fear for their safety and security. There are nine Rashemani for every Mulan; if any widespread, organized revolt were to break out, the Mulan would be nearly defenseless. Each Mulan family has a large number of guards under its employ, but these guards are also Rashemani and can only be trusted so far. The Mulan are thus afflicted with paranoia and unease, constantly skirting a line between oppressing the Rashemani enough to render them powerless while rewarding them just often enough to keep them loyal.

## Attitudes Toward Magic

The Hazlani have maintained an odd, inconsistent relationship with the arcane arts. In the distant past, the Mulan considered the arcane arts a noble calling, and their greatest satraps and kings were mages. Following the Years of Tattered Banners, Hazlik seized control of Hazlan, and for decades the practice of arcane magic was prohibited, under penalty of death, by any save the Red Wizard himself. The Mulan grudgingly supported and enforced this prohibition, imprisoning and executing anyone discovered to be an arcane practitioner. The church of the Lawgiver in Hazlan eagerly supported the ban as well, proclaiming arcane magic as a violation of the natural order and a sin against divine law (with the esteemed Lord Hazlik a divinely ordained exception).

After the cataclysm of the Great Upheaval, Hazlik suddenly reversed his position, founding the Red Academy. Hazlani were now *encouraged* to study the arcane, even the Rashemani. Needless to say, the Mulan were confused, but also pleased, by this sudden change in policy. Many Mulan, seeking

to match the Red Wizard's power and follow in the traditions of their culture, had been put to death for exploring the arcane in previous decades. Enforcers of the law had supported the executions because magic was purported to be dangerous and blasphemous by the Lawgiver's priests. Now, suddenly, it was to be propagated and embraced, with no explanation for the change.

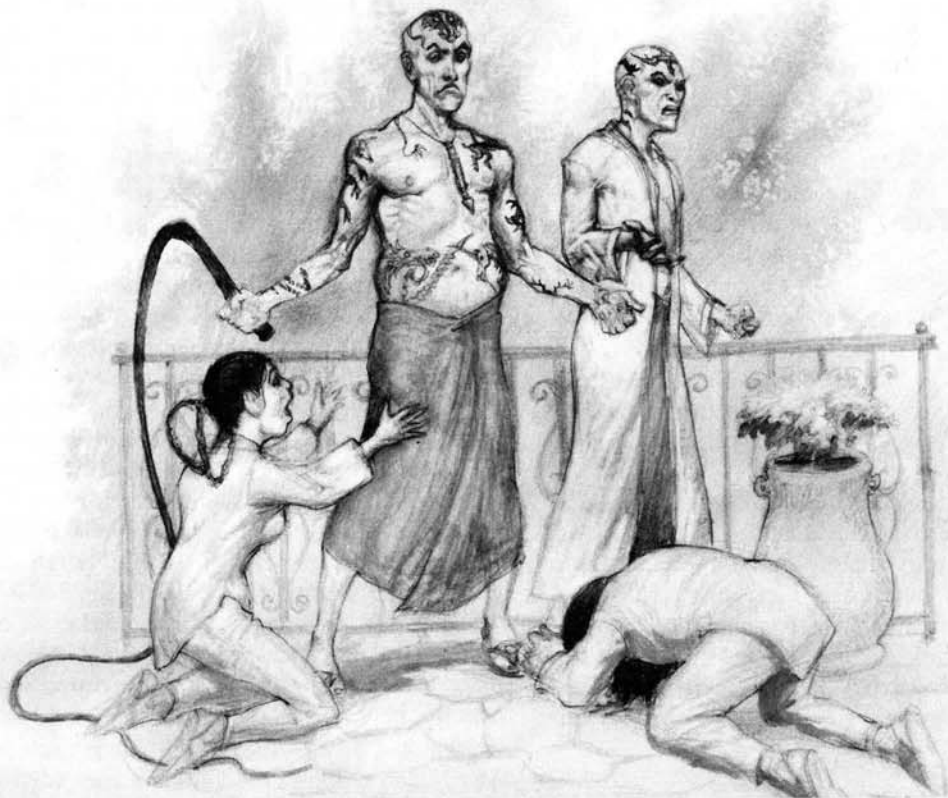
Some among the Mulan are still suspicious of this shift in attitude. While they dare not speak out against the Red Academy or its wizards, they scrupulously avoid any hint of the arcane or those who practice it. Most Mulan see arcane magic as potentially a key tool in maintaining their control over the Rashemani. The Rashemani want little to do with arcane magic, having seen too many of their kinfolk taken to the Tables for experimentation. Those who do travel to the Red Academy to study wizardry become outcasts among their peers. The dogma of the Lawgiver claims that Hazlik received a divine revelation when the Lawgiver returned following the Great Upheaval. Only the Red Wizard knows the exact nature of the revelation, but most of the Lawgiver's faithful believe that arcane magic will somehow be crucial in preventing future catastrophes.

Hazlani attitudes toward divine magic vary. The Mulan consider the Lawgiver the only true god. Clerics of other gods are believed to be in league with demons or to be arcane spellcasters in a religious guise — a not uncommon ruse for foreign mages to adopt prior to the Upheaval, apparently. Anyone proclaiming to follow a god other than the Lawgiver finds himself the target of harassment, even imprisonment. The Rashemani have a more ecumenical attitude. Most of them follow the Lawgiver, but many also quietly offer worship to other deities. Divine spellcasters of any kind typically garner respect from the Rashemani.

## Religion

Most Hazlani are deeply religious. The Mulan are almost desperate in their service to the Church of the Lawgiver, also known as the Iron Faith, hoping their continuous devotion will convince Him to maintain His favor and keep them in power. The Rashemani turn to religion as an escape from the toil and drudgery of their material lives. Even the oppressive dogma of the Lawgiver provides them with some hope, as it promises them that their endless obedience and toil will be richly rewarded in the next life. Not all Rashemani are





satisfied with these promises, however, and some seek salvation elsewhere.

The Hazlani concepts of heaven and hell are based in the dogma of the Lawgiver's church. The Iron Paradise is the destination of loyal souls who follow the Lawgiver's tenets in life and respect their station. After death, those souls who have earned a place in the Iron Paradise are filled with the holy truth of the Lawgiver under the tutelage of his divine servitors and ennobled as vassals of the Black Lord. Those who fail to obey the Lawgiver's commandments (as well as all unbelievers) are cast into the Hell of Slaves. In this burning land of red skies and black stone, the unfaithful are forced to toil under the whips of cruel demonic overseers, while biting, squealing packs of rats crawl everywhere.

By tradition, the Hazlani bury their dead in catacombs. These affairs range from elaborate family crypts among the Mulan to simple covered holes cut into a convenient outcropping of rock for the Rashemani.

**The Iron Faith (The Lawgiver):** The Iron Faith is the state religion of Hazlan and the only organized church permitted to act freely and openly. Membership in the church is not mandatory, but strongly and sometimes forcefully encouraged. The church's teachings are vital to the Mulan's power, and they will not permit any other institution to challenge the Lawgiver's supremacy. In fact, church leaders in Hazlan and Nova Vaasa convene a Council of Imperial Divinity each time the Lawgiver's clerics encounter a new religion. The goal of such councils is to determine the newly discovered god's exact position in the divine hierarchy — over which the Lawgiver naturally reigns supreme. In practice, however, these councils invariably serve to denigrate rival faiths and reinforce the Lawgiver's superiority. Tellingly, the goddesses Ezra and Hala are both portrayed in church canon as the Lawgiver's concubines.





## The Lawgiver Revisited

This section expands upon the information presented in the **Ravenloft** setting book.

### The Lawgiver

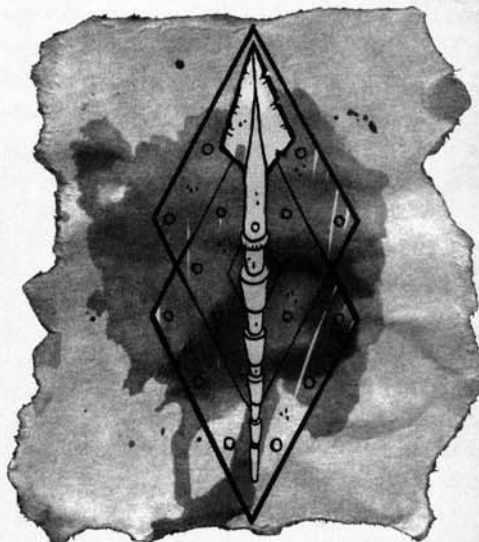
**Symbol:** An iron spear bound in bronze coils

**Alignment:** LE

**Portfolio:** Law, fate, judgment, obedience, order, rulership, tyranny

**Domains:** Bindings (see page 114), Death, Evil, Law, War

**Favored Weapon:** Whip; clerics who select the War domain can select the flail (light or heavy) instead



The Iron Faith is organized along strict hierarchical lines. At the top of the hierarchy is the *Himmelsk Naeve*, or "Divine Fist," who resides in Nova Vaasa. The *Himmelsk Naeve* is served by two *Paves*, one in Hazlan and one in Nova Vaasa, each of which wields ultimate religious authority within his respective domain. Pave Haakon Aramsen (male human Clr15, LE) is the leader of the Hazlani Church of the Lawgiver. He is known as a formidable and uncompromising man despite his advanced age, and only the Red Wizard himself has both the authority and strength of will to challenge him. Below the Pave are the *aerkebiskops*, each of whom is given authority over a geographical region within a domain. There are four *aerkebiskops* in Hazlan. Each *aerkebiskop* is served by a group of *biskops*, who in turn have authority over numerous *dommers*, who perform most of the administrative duties within the church. *Kontors* preside over individual fanes and perform the actual worship ceremonies.

Clerics of the Lawgiver pray for their spells at noon, when the light of day leaves them most fully exposed to the Lawgiver's scrutiny. Worship services are held every evening at the Lawgiver's fanes, after the working day is ended. Attendance at least twice a week is mandatory for the faithful. The church observes many holy days. One of the

most important is the Day of Penance, held on New Year's Day, in which the faithful lament their failings of the previous year and resolve to do better the next. The second is the Celebration of the Reemergence, observed on the first full moon in August. This holiday marks the end of the Grand Conjunction in 740 BC and, more importantly, the end of the Lawgiver's period of silence and withdrawal during that disaster. Official church dogma credits the Lawgiver with the end of the Great Upheaval, and the holiday is one spent in praise, thanks, and feasting. Clerics of the Lawgiver rarely multiclass. When they do, it is most often as fighters.

**Dogma:** The state of all things is mandated from above and is not to be questioned. The Lawgiver gives rulers their station; disobedience is a sin against divine will. The will of the Lawgiver is expressed through the laws of the land. Failing to uphold any law, no matter how minor, is sinful. Those who properly observe their station and follow the laws in this life will be rewarded in the next. Labor hard in service to your master, and you may receive temporal rewards. Those who live as rebels or lawbreakers will be damned to an eternity of torment. Consorting with those outside your station is discouraged; marriage outside your station is prohibited. Rulers are expected to keep order and



enforce the laws. Anarchy is blasphemy. It is right and natural to use force to maintain order and spread the will of the Lawgiver.

The official position of the Hazlani Church is that the Lawgiver's silence during the Grand Conjunction was a test for the faithful. The conflicting

belief that the Lawgiver was harmed or incapacitated is considered heresy.

**Ezra:** Clerics of the Iron Faith, perhaps rightfully, view the Church of Ezra as their primary rival for spiritual control of the Core. Thus, the Church of the Lawgiver is bitterly unforgiving toward the Church of Ezra's efforts to spread its message into the Vaasi Plateau. Ezra's anchorites face withering oppression, and their presence in Hazlan is accordingly limited to one or two *wardens*, or traveling anchorites.

Normally, such a meager presence would preclude inclusion in this report, but one such anchorite may be of interest: a naively charitable woman named Tara Kolyana. Warden Kolyana claims to be a native Hazlani, though her ethnicity is difficult to discern. She bears a striking resemblance to the subject of a crumbling sketch I examined in the Teodorus Archives — a sketch taken in 351 BC of Tatyana Federovna, she of the infamous Ravenloft wedding. I suspect that Kolyana warrants further examination, so I have included additional thoughts in the Attached Notes.

*Could it be that Strahd's perpetual victim has somehow slipped the bonds of her destiny? How desperately he must long for her. How delightful it would be to prolong his agony indefinitely.*

### **Secret Society: The Iron Inquisition**

While the Church of the Lawgiver believes it has a divine mission to ensure the spread of law and order, it takes this responsibility too seriously to trust in the professed obedience of the faithful. The Iron Inquisition was established to monitor the Lawgiver's followers and uncover those who are less than sincere in their faith.

Iron Inquisitors are selected directly by the Pave, usually at the recommendation of an *aerkebiskop*. Candidates must have been in the clergy for at least five years and must display an unswerving devotion to the Lawgiver and a willingness to betray the wrongdoings of their fellow clerics. Inquisitors scrutinize others for impiety, blasphemy, lawbreaking, insubordination, excessive mercy and charity, fraternization with inferiors, or criticism of superiors. Any violations they uncover are reported directly to the appropriate *aerkebiskop*, who determines the appropriate penance. The clergy at large are unaware of the existence of Iron Inquisitors among them.

The Pave would like to involve the Iron Inquisitors more deeply in secular matters in Hazlan, but for the moment he fears overstepping his bounds and provoking the anger of Hazlik. Iron Inquisitors are usually multiclassed clerics/rogues, and are the only clerics of the Lawgiver likely to take rogue levels. Their rogue abilities are focused on observation and avoiding detection rather than theft or defeating locks and traps.

**Hala:** The Church of Hala has found many eager followers among the oppressed Rashemani. Hospices devoted to Hala are found in nearly every Rashemani community, and even those Rashemani who do not follow the witch goddess are grateful for the respite these places provide. Followers of Hala in Hazlan are even more secretive than in any other realm, save perhaps those in Tepest. The Mulan seek to stamp out the religion wherever they can find it, fearing the hope it offers and the feelings of community and equality it generates. The Rashemani protect the locations of the Halans as much as they can, however, and the religion has continued to thrive in secret.





## The Hazlani Hero

**Races:** Humans are by far the most common race in Hazlan, but nonhumans are better represented here than in most of the Core. Gnomes and halflings are commonly found in Hazlan, though actively discouraged from mingling socially with their human "betters." Calibans were once virtually unknown in Hazlan. Since arcane practice became legal, they have been born with exponentially greater frequency.

**Classes:** Clerics, fighters, rogues, sorcerers, and wizards are the classes most likely to be encountered in Hazlan. Clerics, who must follow the Lawgiver if they expect to worship openly, are given wary respect and a wide berth. Fighters are considered necessary but not particularly desirable; most fighters eventually find themselves recruited as retainers for a Mulan family. Rogues are common only among the Rashemani; the prosperous Mulan detest thieves and their ilk. Wizards and sorcerers have rapidly risen in standing in Hazlan, at least among the Mulan, since Hazlik rescinded the prohibition on arcane magic. Monks are slightly more common in Hazlan than in the rest of the Core domains, but still quite rare; Hazlani monks subscribe to an odd mix of Lawgiver theology and arcane mysticism. No other class finds significant representation in Hazlan.

**Recommended Skills:** Alchemy, Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Craft (calligraphy, leatherworking, sculpture, tattooing, weaving), Diplomacy, Intimidate, Knowledge (arcana, law, religion), Profession (apothecary, farmer, herbalist, herdsman, scribe, stable hand, tanner), Ride, Scry, Sense Motive, Spellcraft.

**Recommended Feats:** Combat Casting, Jaded, Iron Will, Mounted Combat (plus derivatives), Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (Conjuration, Divination, Evocation, Transmutation), Toughness, Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (dagger, falchion, quarterstaff, whip).

**Rashemani Male Names:** Alpagu, Cengiz, Doukan, Haydar, Kubilay, Mengu, Nizami, Ozalan, Ragap, Toktamop.

**Rashemani Female Names:** Adelet, Cemiyet, Cemre, Bengi, Feyza, Gunay, Julide, Roxelana, Sobehat, Zumurut.

**Mulan Male Names:** Balser, Enevold, Hassan, Kyrill, Marcus, Momme, Ossur, Preben, Taico, Zoltan.

**Mulan Female Names:** Alvina, Cattia, Elida, Helma, Kaisa, Leila, Malvina, Neya, Trine, Zilla.

## Outcast Ratings in Hazlan

The Mulan are highly ethnocentric. Non-Mulan humans, including the Rashemani, increase their Outcast Rating by +1 when dealing with the Mulan. Half-elves and half-Vistani without a Mulan parent also increase their OR by +1 when dealing with the Mulan. The OR of other races remains the same.





## The Realm

**H**azlan has demonstrably existed scarcely more than four decades, and Hazlik the Red Wizard has ruled it all the while. Although they speak of it only in whispers and behind closed doors, most Mulan find Hazlik unpleasant and faintly indecent, due to his unseemly, effeminate tattoos. Hazlik seems to have avoided the truly monstrous rumors that plague his neighbor Strahd von Zarovich, however. Despite his considerable arcane powers and reclusive, cruel nature, I encountered no whispered talk claiming that Hazlik is anything more than a feeble old man, more interested in his arcane experiments than day-to-day rule of his realm.

Hazlik has in recent years devoted most of his time and energy to his newly constructed wizard's academy in Ramulai. For decades, Hazlik strictly forbade wizardly magic in his domain, ordering the execution of any who were found to be practicing the arcane arts. Following the Great Upheaval, however, the Red Wizard reversed his decades-long policy and ordered the construction of a wizard academy and the village of Ramulai, institutionalizing magic instead of outlawing it. Hazlik himself trains those who show exceptional promise in the wizardly arts, and in recent months students replaced two members of his council of governors. Much to the chagrin of the Mulan, Hazlik has even taken on Rashemani apprentices, though his council of governors remains exclusively Mulan.

## Government

Hazlik the Red Wizard is Hazlan's absolute and unquestioned master. A Mulan, he is feared and respected by all of his people, apologizes for nothing, and answers to no one. Twice a month, he meets with a small council of Mulan governors, or *vraylok*. Each *vraylok* oversees a separate section of Hazlan, enforcing the law and executing Hazlik's will. In turn, the *satrap*s, land-owning Mulan nobles, answer to the governors. All the governors are the heads of their families, though not all family heads, called *rishads*, are governors. The towns of Toyalis and Sly-Var and surrounding lands are each controlled by a governor, but Hazlik controls Veneficus and Ramulai directly.

The governors' council has eight seats. Appointment to such a position is the height of political power for a Mulan, second only to Hazlik. In recent years, though, the governors have found

themselves taking orders from the Red Wizard's chief apprentice, a Rashemani woman named Eleni. Hazlik has made it known that her word carries the same weight as his. Eleni is, if anything, even more scandalous than her master. It is a testament to Hazlik's power as a ruler that the nation did not rise up in revolt when Eleni, mere weeks after becoming Hazlik's apprentice, scandalized the entire population by shaving and tattooing her body in the fashion of Mulan women.

The *vrayloks* and *satraps* are in turn aided by troops of enforcers. Although rarely encountered outside Hazlan's major settlements, the enforcers are a threatening and omnipresent fact of life for Hazlan's folk. All Hazlani, no matter what their class, obey Hazlik's agents without question, for resistance inevitably spells a trip to the Tables.

## Law Enforcement

A typical Hazlani enforcer is a Rashemani thug in the direct employ of a Mulan *rishad* (including *vrayloks* and *satraps*). Their primary responsibilities are to protect their master, enforce their master's commands, and keep the peace, in that order.

**Hazlani Enforcer:** Human War1; CR 1/2; Size M humanoid (human); HD 1d8+3; hp 7; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 10, flatfooted 15); Atk +2 melee (1d8, crit x3, warhammer), +1 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

**Skills and Feats:** Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +4, Ride +2, Spellcraft +1; Toughness, Weapon Focus (warhammer)

**Possessions:** Scale mail, small wooden shield, warhammer, light crossbow, 10 bolts.

## Economy

Hazlani pride themselves on their self-sufficiency. Nearly every basic cereal crop is grown in the eastern plains. In addition, many Mulan estates include groves and vineyards to produce olives, grapes, hazelnuts, and numerous varieties of tea. A few more exotic crops also thrive in Hazlan's long summers, such as cotton, tobacco, and the bane of the Vaasi Plateau's back alleys, opium poppies. Rashemani herdsman raise a range of livestock,





including goats, sheep, and cattle, all of which are used for their dairy, meat, and leather goods, as well as swine and poultry. The pollen of certain Hazlani wildflowers makes a fine quality honey, and apiaries are not uncommon in the western hills.

A few scattered copper, lead, and iron mines dot the slopes of the Balinok foothills, but — aside from a wealthy Mulan copper mine or two — most of the mineral resources are sparse and unremarkable, allowing the Hazlani to just scrape by on their own means. Similarly, the crafted goods produced by the Hazlani are ordinary enough, neither superior nor inferior in quality despite their distinctive, swirling designs. In fact, despite efforts to upgrade their abilities as craftsmen, the Hazlani still import from Immol the finely crafted bowls and other implements needed for many magical rituals. The Hazlani are dedicated to changing this. The only people who serve as a steady source of income for traders from other domains are the citizens of Sly-Var, who have a taste for clothing and foods from Nova Vaasa, which they consider exotic.

Hazlan's most significant export in the past decade has undoubtedly been esoteric arcane knowledge. Should one of Hazlik's apprentices at the Red Academy not be granted a position of political power upon graduation, it is not uncommon for the young wizard to seek his fortune in other lands, at least for a time. Hazlani mages often seek positions as advisors and court mages for powerful patrons in other realms.

Hazlani coins are the soulorb, moondagger, and bloodpenny. Each of these coins has a small sphere of colored glass at its center, clearly distinguishing it from the plainer coins of other realms. These glass pieces come in a variety of colors, including red, green, blue, and clear, depending on the whims of the minter. The gold soulorb is the only circular piece among Hazlani coins; silver moon daggers are triangular in shape, while the copper bloodpenny is square. Mulan coins are comparable in value to gold, silver, and copper pieces in other realms, respectively, but most merchants proved unwilling to accept my foreign currency. Instead, I was directed to the local moneychanger who charged the standard 10% fee.

## Diplomacy

In different hands, Hazlan's rich natural resources might allow it to wield considerable power over its neighbors. Instead, the Hazlani use their self-sufficiency to turn their back on the world.

Hazlan engages in some minor trade with its northern neighbors, but for the most part the Hazlani are generally not eager to invite "inferior" foreigners into their realm.

**Barovia:** Immol engages in steady trade with Hazlan. Other than this isolated case, the Hazlani prefer to think about the Barovians as little as possible. Barovians are seen as unsophisticated, ignorant peasants. The Lawgiver has consistently failed to make inroads among the faithless Barovians, so the Hazlani dub them heathens as well.

**Forlorn:** Hazlani shun Forlorn as an accursed no-man's land. One settlement in Hazlan, Forfarmax, hugs the Forfar border. Forfarian expatriates settled Forfarmax, however, and culturally speaking it has virtually nothing in common with the rest of the realm. For this reason, I include Forfarmax in my next report.

**Kartakass:** Hazlan has shared a border with Kartakass only since the Great Upheaval and has never established any significant trade. The Kartakan woods are said to be exceptionally dangerous, and the Kartakans are generally viewed as frivolous and egotistical fops. To make matters worse, they have steadfastly rejected all efforts by the Church of the Lawgiver to spread the faith to their land.

**Nova Vaasa:** Nova Vaasa is Hazlan's most significant trading partner. Even so, trade remains limited; Prince Othmar Bolshnik exacts extortionate sales taxes and tariffs on all goods in his lands, and his collectors and enforcers are notoriously corrupt. Hazlani boatmen occasionally sail down the Saniset River to reach the coast of the Nocturnal Sea. The Nova Vaasans have caught on to this, however, and now charge a toll on all river traffic.

## Sites of Interest



oth Toyalis and Sly-Var share one feature of note: the Tables. A squat, domed stone fortress surrounded by towering minarets sits at the heart of each settlement. They resemble prisons more than they do the laboratories of a wizard-tyrant, and in some sense prisons are exactly what they are. When away from Veneficus, the Tables are Hazlik's bases of operations. Hazlik often uses the Tables to meet with his Mulan governors or local satraps, but they have other, darker purposes. The Tables reputedly have dungeons that extend well beneath Hazlan's surface, and these dungeons hold fodder for Hazlan's





cruellest experiments. These fortress-laboratories apparently took their name from Hazlik's actual experimentation tables in Veneficus; apparently, the Red Wizard frequently works on unwilling subjects strapped to such tables while addressing his governors. One wonders whether these displays are meant to teach the governors the fate of those who cross him, or whether they simply indicate the Red Wizard's true interests.

## Toyalis

Located a day's hard ride down the rugged Warlock's Road from Immol, Toyalis stands atop the successive ruins of many cultures from Hazlan's dim past. Men are compelled to build on this site again and again. Some believe it has to do with the fact that the entire city is built within the bowl of a vast crater. Rough walls of dark stone have been built on the crater's lip; beyond these, the city slopes downward, with the Tables lying in the city's center.

Toyalis is the center of Mulan society, housing a number of powerful families and enjoying brisk trade with Immol to the west in Barovia and Sly-Var to the east. Toyalis is home to Creshcen Hall, the most famed haebstzarn and abhaebstza theatre in Hazlan. Near the western edge of Toyalis stands the Iron Citadel-Fane, seat of the Iron Faith in Hazlan. Within its walls is a self-contained community, populated by clerics of the Lawgiver and the Pave of Hazlan. Though impressive, the great Black Citadel-Fane in Nova Vaasa is said to be far more extensive. Hazlik's apprentice, Eleni of Toyalis, keeps a large estate in the heart of the city near the Tables, where her family and other Rashemani live in opulent comfort equal to that found in any Mulan estate.

## Where to Stay in Toyalis

Toyalis features three inns worthy of note. The best is undoubtedly the Blushing Swan (good quality food, good quality rooms), that caters to Mulan and wealthy foreigners. Every room is spotlessly clean, white with silks and ivory, and the beds are feather soft. The inn has no dining hall, but meals are delivered to guests' rooms with free pitchers of sweetened tea. More suited to rugged adventuring types is the Krenshar's Cub (common quality food, common quality rooms), where merchants and satraps in need of able bodies frequently post employment notices. Finally, the Sorcerer's Head is a dusty den filled with Rashemani thugs,

## Dread Possibility: The Lodestone

A powerful artifact lies buried deep beneath the Toyalis crater. Constructed by the alien El-Koth, this towering basalt obelisk was a depository for the accumulated knowledge of their lost civilization. The obelisk pulses with arcane energy, faint traces of which emanate all the way to the surface. Intelligent creatures who sleep in the crater often wake with a subconscious sense of superiority and security. No wonder, then, that the site has drawn so many settlements over time.

Local sages are currently organizing an excavation at the crater's bottom, hoping to uncover the buried secrets of older settlements. The dig will include both Mulan overseers and Rashemani laborers, and heroes may be recruited for their minds or muscle.

To reach the El-Koth lodestone, the explorers must first penetrate several layers of semi-collapsed ruins. Explorers will discover that each level they reach is more ancient than the last and was constructed by and for creatures that were progressively less human. Monstrous constructs and bizarre arcane traps may still guard these crumbling ruins.

The lodestone is located at the very bottom of the ruined complex, in a vast chamber littered with the bones of inhuman explorers. Any intelligent creature that touches the lodestone seeking to unlock its knowledge must make a Madness save (DC 30). The madness effects imposed by a failed save are permanent, but those who fail immediately gain enough XP to gain one or more sorcerer levels: one level for a minor effect, two for a moderate effect, and three for a major effect.

harlots, and bandits. The Sorcerer's Head features a variety of vices, and the opium den hidden in its basement may be Toyalis's most poorly kept secret. A band of mercenaries calling themselves the Bone Daggers frequent this place; a beautiful but silent





mercenary named Loie Hunn has led the group since the death of their previous leader, Bonespur, a man who was said to have unwisely entered into bargains with the eldritch inhabitants of Bluetspur.

**Toyalis (small city):** Conventional; AL LE; 15,000 gp limit; Assets 6,150,000 gp; Population 8,200; Isolated (human 89%, halfling 5%, gnome 4%, other 2%).  
**Authority Figures:** Cael Galt the Greater (vraylock), male human Ari14/Wiz1; Aerkebiskop Verzin Lols, male human Clr10; Pave Stavroz Vatsisk, male human Clr12.  
**Important Characters:** Verenza Lols (crime lord), female human Rog14; Itran the Badger (ruin explorer), male human Ftr8/Rog6.

## Veneficus

Introduced to Hazlik's chief apprentice Eleni in Toyalis, I was granted a brief tour of the Red Wizard's private estate, Veneficus. The estate's southern end contains fields and grazing areas that make the estate self-sufficient. The Rashemani peasants who tend the fields and animals live in a

small cluster of huts on the estate's southern edge. The grounds at the estate's center are covered by a vast garden filled with unusual and beautiful examples of horticulture. In addition, many of the plants here were bred, designed, or created by Hazlik himself. Flowers with deadly perfumes, vines with snapping maws, trees with razor-sharp leaves, and more are on display — an exquisite means to destroy unwanted intruders.

These lethal gardens surround the manor itself, a sprawling structure where Hazlik lives with Eleni — who divides her time almost equally between here, Toyalis, and the Red Academy in Ramulai — and a number of servants and bodyguards, not all of whom are entirely natural. The manor is a bustle of activity both day and night, with messengers mundane and supernatural constantly coming and going. I was granted a brief tour of the estate's outer portions, revealing dark opulence amid evidence of the wizard-king's arcane prowess. The tour went well enough — I have established a solid rapport with Eleni; even so, on several occasions I discerned the signs of arcane forces attempting to probe my thoughts.





## Sly-Var

Located in eastern Hazlan where the Mirror River flows into the Saniset, Sly-Var is situated amid the Lonely Plain, and the dust and heat conspire to keep the villagers close to the cooling spray of the rivers. Sly-Var has no fortifications, but two of the wedge-shaped town's three sides are bordered by water.

Sly-Var is a prosperous mercantile center, with nearly all trade to and from Nova Vaasa coming through here via the Iron Road and the Saniset. As an important trading location, it naturally attracts more than its share of thieves and smugglers. Soldiers are constantly on patrol, rounding up criminals and delivering them to the Tables. No one I interviewed knew of anyone escaping once delivered to such a fate.

Aside from the merchants, most of the residents of Sly-Var are simple farmers and herders. They have a slightly more open and friendly attitude than the rest of the Hazlani people, thanks no doubt to their increased contact with foreign travelers. Still, while they may not immediately assume the worst about a traveler, they still retain the instinctual superior Hazlani attitudes.

## Where to Stay in Sly-Var

Sly-Var's most popular inn is the Hacking Mule (common quality rooms, good quality meals), a Rashemani establishment that boasts fine food as well as a secluded location on the edge of town, well away from the shadow of the Tables. This seeming distance from Hazlik's authority is no more than a façade, but it is comforting all the same. The *boza* at the Hacking Mule is excellent. Mulan frequent almost exclusively a second inn near the marketplace, the Painted Man (good quality rooms, good quality meals). This inn is expectedly lavish but quite small; a mere eight rooms surround an open-air atrium, which guests use as a lounge during clement weather.

**Sly-Var (large town):** Conventional; AL LN; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 675,000 gp; Population 4,500; Isolated (human 90%, halfling 5%, gnome 4%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Helenah Kerpatis (vraylok), female human Rog8/Wiz4; Aerkebiskop Melkior Vadnais, male human Clr8.

**Important Characters:** Duygu Izmir (Rashemani smuggler), male human Rog5.

## Dread Possibility: The Double-Dealer

Vraylok Kerpatis is a former student of the Red Academy, a papery-skinned Mulan beauty recently appointed by Hazlik. Rumor has it that Kerpatis was arrested by the former governor for wrongdoing and sent to the Tables. Hazlik declared her innocent, however, and accepted her as an apprentice in his new academy. The governor took Helenah's place in the Tables.

Helenah Kerpatis leads two lives. As vraylok, she is a competent governor and a loyal servant to Hazlik. She is a true friend to Eleni, but is otherwise an advocate of Mulan superiority in all things. Behind closed doors, however, she is also the leader of a small band of thieves. When acting as a crime lord, she uses *alter self* and similar spells to assume the identity of Kemen Kerbasi, a spidery male caliban.

Hazlik is well aware of Kerpatis's double identity. Although "Kerbasi's" brigands still engage in minor thievery from caravans and extort protection money from Rashemani merchants, the thieves also disrupt the efforts of local smugglers and act as spies against the other governors.

## Ramulai

Ramulai is a center of power entirely disproportionate to its size. Ramulai did not even exist two decades ago, being founded at Hazlik's direction in 740 BC, almost immediately after the Great Upheaval ended. Most accounts agree that Hazlik wielded great magics before the assembled prospective citizens of Ramulai, carving the entire hamlet from the living earth in a single day. Indeed, many of the buildings in Ramulai rise seamlessly from the vale's living stone, and many of the streets are actually channels cut into the bedrock. Ramulai's sole purpose is to provide a supply and support network for the Red Academy.

Ramulai sits in the Wizard's Vale at the foot of Mt. Soren. Its homes are constructed through the practical use of arcane power upon stone magically quarried from the Balinoks. The hamlet's streets are laid out in complex, disquieting patterns. A







common rumor insists that Ramulai's builders were instructed to adhere precisely to Hazlik's designs under penalty of death and that the completed streets form a huge magical rune. Ramulai is surrounded by a stout stone wall that possesses a single gate of cyclopean proportions. On the whole, Ramulai is larger than its population demands and many buildings lie empty. One soon finds that a pervasive loneliness fills the town's silent places and that the air is greasy with mystic energies.

*Attempting to use an entire village as a conduit for magical energy? An interesting experiment. I sincerely doubt, however, that the little red mage can make these efforts pay dividends.*

Nowhere is the plight of the Rashemani more apparent than in Ramulai. The villagers toil endlessly to grow food and provide goods for the Academy, all the while under the constant threat of abduction by magelings in need of fresh bodies for their latest trials. While elsewhere the Rashemani have managed to maintain their pride and dignity, here they are reduced to fearfulness and obsequiousness. Those who plot against the Mulan find no allies here; the Rashemani of Ramulai are so desperate that they will turn on anyone if it will find them favor, and the Rashemani apprentices are no less cruel than their Mulan counterparts.

Eleni of Toyalis was my guide for most of my journey through Hazlan, and she escorted me about Ramulai. Those without the benefit of such a guide are advised to make their visit to Ramulai brief. It is not a destination for travelers, but a retreat for Hazlik and his apprentices to advance their art and perform their magical experiments in peace. Students stay at the Red Academy itself. Those with business in Ramulai may enter the hamlet, but are strongly encouraged to make their duties quick. The inner grounds of the Academy are closed to all save Hazlik, his students, and rare guests.

Occasionally, the Red Academy receives requests for the services of its wizards. Should Hazlik or Eleni deem the request worthy, a few of Hazlik's apprentices are sent in exchange for specific compensation—generally items of arcane significance. One such assignment has been the protection of

Lord-Speaker Mason of Har-Thelen by an ever-present rotating guard of four Red Academy apprentice wizards. These guards are all that has kept the elven noble alive several times in recent years, due to his opposition to the rampages of the dwarven despot Azrael Dak.

## Where to Stay in Ramulai

Zravgev (good quality rooms, good quality food) is Ramulai's sole inn, providing for the needs of those delivering goods to the mage village. Guests of the academy are housed in dormitories within the school. Zravgev is luxurious in the Mulan style, and the food is varied and sumptuous. Unusually, the inn is not separated into Mulan and Rashemani wings, as most Hazlani inns are.

**Ramulai (hamlet):** Magical; AL LE; 100 gp limit; Assets 1,500 gp; Population 300; Isolated (human 97%, gnome 2%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Hazlik; Eleni of Toyalis.

**Important Characters:** Captain Asgar Bertilsen (captain of the guard), male human Ftr6.

## Final Thoughts

Hazlan could hold remarkable potential in the right hands. Although the realm is generally poor in natural resources, it harbors a wealth of advanced arcane lore, and more ancient secrets may yet be buried beneath its largely unexplored wilds. Although Mulan control over Hazlan appears to be ironclad, a few exceptionally well-planned acts of disobedience could easily incite the Rashemani into a revolt that would quickly and permanently cripple the Mulan power structure.

Like Count Strahd, Hazlik has retained his position at the center of Hazlan's power structure since the region first appeared, so it strikes me as somewhat self-evident that Hazlik is the dread lord at Hazlan's heart. Unlike Strahd, however, the Red Wizard seems to be truly mortal, and thus a group of capable rebels could topple him without undue difficulty.

Tomorrow morning I must set forth from my inn here in Toyalis, headed to the border town of Forfarmax—and the twisted realm of Forlorn.





# Report Three: Forlorn

*He that lacks time to mourn, lacks time to mend.  
Eternity mourns that. 'Tis an ill cure  
For life's worst ills, to have no time to feel them.*

— Sir Henry Taylor, *Philip Van Artevelde*, Part I.  
Act I. Sc. 5.





## Introduction

**F**orlorn struck me as wretched and forsaken when first I set eyes on it, and it proved me correct. On the second day out Toyalis, I crested a rock-and-heather-strewn hill and gazed upon a rising highland of dark forests shrouded beneath drizzling clouds. A squalid little hamlet huddled upon the open space of the lowest slope, still a distance back from the glowering forest. A crude palisade wall shielded the hamlet. To the west, fog shrouded rising hills and the black slopes of Mt. Mathonwy rose into the cloud cover to the north. Through the fog, I could see that patches of forest had been uprooted on the more distant slopes, exposing swaths of black mud. Shortly, a low rumble of thunder broke from the clouds, prompting a chorus of wolf howls from the forest below. With this cheery greeting, I proceeded toward the village below and Forlorn proper.

The Forfarians, the ethnic group once native to Forlorn, refer to the region as the Barony of Forfar or the Western Highlands. Most others call this region the Forlorn Wilderness or the Forlorn Highlands—or, simply, Forlorn. The land does its name justice, proving itself to be lonely and miserable, deserted and abandoned.

### Forlorn at a Glance

**Cultural Level:** Iron Age (3); the ruins in Forlorn indicate a Medieval (7) culture.

**Ecology:** Full

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate forests, hills, and plains

**Year of Formation:** 547 BC

**Population:** 2,025

**Races:** Goblins (94%), Humans (6%)

**Languages:** Forfarian

**Religions:** Forfarian druidism

**Government:** Anarchy

**Ruler:** None

**Darklord:** Tristen ApBlanc

## Landscape

**S**ince the Mists rolled back to reveal Forlorn, those who dwelt near these wilds have come to know the region as the home of marauding wolves, grotesque goblinfolk, accursed castles, innumerable ghosts, and worse things. One would not be remiss in dismissing the region as a no-man's land, bleak and miserable in the extreme and possessing no strategic value whatsoever. My employer's instructions, however, were explicit on the point of giving Forlorn the same depth of examination as any of the realms that surround it.

Indeed. While that wretched little patch of land seems insignificant, it too is a prison, though one of a particularly pathetic lord. Still, one must be thorough, lest one overlook a critical detail.

Forlorn lies in the southern Core, at the very southwestern edge of the Balinok Mountains. Forlorn is highland country, with a height above sea-level ranging from 825 feet at the lowest point, where the Gundar River passes into Barovia in the Gorge of Passing Sorrow, to the peak of Mt. Arawn (4,580 feet). The climate of Forlorn is overcast and damp year round, characterized by constant drizzle and the low rumble of thunder. Drenching downpours seem to occur weekly. In the depths of winter, occasional snowfalls quickly turn to lingering piles of dirty slush. The southwestern hills of Forlorn, called the *Mar Shred Cnoc*, or the Shroud Hills, are eternally shrouded in dense fog. Only in the height of summer does the sun burn through the persistent cloud cover, and then only for a short while. Even in rare moments of sunshine, Mt. Arawn remains wreathed in dark clouds and its own fumes. While Barovia may be gripped in blizzard or Hazlan bent beneath drought, Forlorn lies beneath skies drear and damp.

Forlorn's wilderness is composed of rocky hill-sides and forested upland regions surrounding a pair of low mountains, Mount Arawn and Mount Mathonwy (4,010 feet), called *Beinn Arawn* and *Beinn Math Mathonwy* by Forfarians. Mount Arawn is volcanic, as evidenced by the sickly yellow fumes that leak from the Maw of Arawn, a fissure within the mountain's caldera. The mountain is littered with caves the goblins use to inter their dead, as



well as steam vents, hot springs, and geysers. Several salt caves can be found here. Arawn's slopes are the barest region of Forlorn, lacking the dense forest that blankets the rest of the domain. Instead, barren fields roll down from the mountain, filled with outcroppings of granite and purple with heather and thistles rooted in the rocky soil.

These heaths are locally called the *Leapaidh na Marbh Daoine*, the Beds of Dead Men. Once the site of centuries of warfare against invading lowland clans, the weathered bones of warriors lie thick in the soil or heaped in mossy piles behind boulders. Unlike Mt. Arawn, Mt. Mathonwy is covered in tangled forests thick with black pines. Mathonwy is of note due to its unusually rich mineral wealth. The remains of ancient Forfarian mines still exist (including a number of mining trails), scattered across Mathonwy's flanks, although many collapsed during the seminal event the Forfarrians call the Year of Woe. According to the Forfarrians' oral histories, the mining operations in Mt. Mathonwy produced extensive amounts of coal, iron, and granite, plus smaller strikes of gold and gems.

Less treacherous than the rest of the Balinoks, the peaks of Forlorn are not without dangers. Rock falls are frequent, often intentionally triggered by goblins, who also litter the area with their crude traps. Mt. Arawn's geothermal activity produces super-heated steam and water from steam vents; hot springs can boil flesh from the bone in mere seconds. The mines of Mt. Mathonwy are subject to cave-ins, as well as pockets of toxic gas. Additionally, angry ghosts of long lost miners and foolish, greedy treasure-seekers reputedly haunt the mines.

Forlorn's forests cloak the land heavily, their dark conifers and deciduous trees mingling with tangled undergrowth. Gundarakite loggers made persistent attempts to harvest lumber in northern Forlorn beginning in 643 BC, but in 659 BC they were suddenly all slain or driven out by goblin raiders. The blight that plagues the Tepurich Forest is believed to originate in Forlorn and spreads into the neighboring forests of other domains. Trees within Forlorn are twisted and stained with diseases, including molds, smuts, rusts, galls, and other sicknesses. Many of these diseases are found nowhere else. Dead trees pose a danger to those venturing under them: these "widow-makers" are seemingly solid trees whose dead upper reaches break off at the slightest touch, crushing those below. The undergrowth is equally unpleasant, filled with weeds and poisonous or thorny plants.

Toxic mushrooms and other fungi bloom in corpse-colored patches, poison ivy and other irritants grow in thick beds, trails become choked in briar patches, and what flowers are found here have poisonous blossoms. Occasionally, one comes across a grove miraculously free of blight. In these rare places, trees grow straight and true, lush grass carpets the forest, and mistletoe and beneficial herbs can be found. Forlorn's druids hold these small groves as sacred.

In the last thirty years, Forlorn's goblins have launched a campaign to further ruin the forests. Wielding axe and torch, these miserable creatures have systematically despoiled the landscape. In the goblins' wake, where trees once stood lies a waste of stumps, sucking black mud, and charred fragments. The foul creatures' depredations have created a swath of ruined forest surrounding Castle Tristenoira and following the Gundarak Road west along the cliffs overlooking the Lake of Red Tears. The second major cleared area lies at the domain's southern end, scarring the eastern face of Mt. Mathonwy. The goblins are fanatical in their attempts to expand these cleared areas, but an unusual kind of stalemate has fallen over their project. The reclusive druids of Forlorn work against the goblins, and several reports describe the forest's trees moving into newly cleared areas, sending goblins fleeing in terror before them. Druidic records indicate that the last goblin expansion of note occurred in 747 BC.

*Loch Dearg Deur*, better known as the Lake of Red Tears, lies beneath 1,000-foot high cliffs of red granite at the northern end of Forlorn, overlooked in the east by Castle Tristenoira. The clay-shored lake and the narrow valley in which the lake nestles were formed during the Year of Woe when landslides caused a number of smaller pools to merge. The Lake of Red Tears is the source of the Gundar River, which egresses from the northern end of the lake, passing through the red granite walls of the Gorge of Passing Sorrow. The lake is ringed with skeletal fir trees black with age. Folk belief states that the lake is bottomless, the waters bubbling up from the prisons of the *Math Muinntir*, the lost "Good Folk." The water is murky, clouded with particles of red clay from the lake's banks. The lake normally lies in deep shadow due to the looming cliffs and Forlorn's overcast weather, but when the sun pierces Forlorn's blanket of clouds, the water reflects the red cliffs above, turning the lake a deep crimson. These two elements give the







Lake of Red Tears its name, though Forlorn's druids have other explanations.

The lake's depths are believed to be the home of a legendary beast, a so-called "river horse" the druids have dubbed Agatha, called "Aggie" by Forfarrians far enough afield to lose the respect of fear. Unlike many legends, the reports of a great serpentine creature in the lake are true, as I personally spotted the creature from the cliff tops above the lake. I have included further notes on my observations of this creature in the Attached Notes.

The Gorge of Passing Sorrow is a deep canyon cut into the Forlorn highlands by the passage of the Gundar River. At the Forlorn end of the gorge, the walls become dotted with ancient Forfarrian statuary depicting ancient and largely forgotten kings, heroes, and gods. Certain of these statues mask entrances to barrows that supposedly house ancient Forfarrian lords, though I saw no evidence that the tombs exist despite searching the gorge myself. In addition to the Gundar River at Forlorn's northern end, the Kilovan River flows through Forlorn's southwestern corner, skirting the Forfarmax region.

Ruined structures are scattered among the forests, most destroyed during the Year of Woe. The largest collection of these ruins, the shattered town of Birnam, lies between the Lake of Red Tears and the cliffs where Castle Tristenoira perches. Throughout the rest of the domain, only the crumbling remains of farmsteads or low stone walls of forgotten origin remain. Menhirs, dolmens, and other megalithic structures punctuate the wilderness, but the majority have been toppled or otherwise defiled by goblins — or are haunted by restless spirits. Other ruined structures include the Tower of Disgrace, *Nàra Tir*, an ancient dueling tower carved into the cliff face above the Lake of Red Tears, and the highlands' twin haunted castles, Castle Tristenoira and Castle Forfarmax.

### flora

Forlorn's flora is characterized by dense forests of mixed evergreens and hardwoods. Oak, fir, black pine, and beech dominate these forests, with lesser quantities of rowan, willow, yew, juniper, elder, and birch also present. Small thorny locust trees grow in thick tangles in many places, and crab

## Plants of forlorn

Forlorn's bounty of unusual plant life is a blessing and a hazard. Some herbalists swear by the benefits of Forlorn's herbs, while poisons created from the same plants are some villains' stock in trade.

Poison	Type	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage	Price
Goblyn lime**	Injury DC 16	1d4 Dex + 1d4 Con	1d4 Con	1,500 gp
Raineater toadstool**	Injury DC 13	1d4 Str	1d4 Str	800 gp
Whiteshoot root	Injury DC 17	1d4 Str	2d4 Str	500 gp
Baron's bane	Contact DC 20	1 Wis* + 1 Con*	1d4 Wis + 1d8 Con	2,500 gp
Tatterleaf dust	Contact DC 16	1 Dex	1d3 Dex	300 gp
Tri-poison oil	Contact DC 11	1d2 Dex	1d2 Dex	100 gp
Deadly nightshade	Ingested DC 14	1d4 Con	1d6 Con	100 gp
Erl queen's lace	Ingested DC 20	1d6 Cha*	Unconsciousness	400 gp
Ghost threads**	Ingested DC 17	1 Con	1d4 Dex	700 gp
Goblyn lime**	Ingested DC 16	1d4 Wis* + 1d4 Con	2d4 Con	1,500 gp
Mausskul mushroom**	Ingested DC 12	1d6 Str	1d6 Str	400 gp
Mournberries**	Ingested DC 18	2d6 Int	2d6 Int	1,800 gp
Red worm mushroom	Ingested DC 15	2d6 Con	2d6 Con	1,500 gp
Weep-my-lassie	Ingested DC 17	3d6 Con	0	1,500 gp
Hag's crepe	Contact DC 16	1d6 Con 1d6	Con + 1d4 Cha	700 gp
Lung-eater puffball**	Inhaled DC 16	1d2 Con	0	750 gp
Olc-blath pollen	Inhaled DC 14	2D6 Cha	1d6 Cha	550 gp
Wight fern spores**	Inhaled DC 15	Unconsciousness	Death	1,100 gp

\* Permanent ability drain.

\*\* See notes below.

**Bòcan eye:** Ingesting this mushroom grants the ability to see *etheral resonance* per the spell (see *Van Richten's Arsenal*) for 1d6 hours. Price: 100 gp.

**Ghost threads:** In addition to the damaging effects of this plant, the victim gains the ability to see *etheral resonance* per the spell for 2d4 days.

**Goblyn lime:** This poisonous fruit may be used in two ways. First, the juice of a goblyn lime can coat a weapon, creating an Injury type poison. Second, the meat and juice of a goblyn lime are identical to a normal lime, making goblyn limes a useful Ingested poison.

**Lung-eater puffball:** When inhaled, the spores of this fungus sprout in the victim's lungs, slowly making breathing more and more difficult. Lung-eater infections are treated as a disease, requiring an additional roll for damage each day. Ability scores lost to lung-eater infection do not heal until the fungal infection in the victim's lungs is cured.

**Mausskul mushroom:** The effects of this mushroom are doubled against rodents and related creatures (such as wererats).

**Mournberries:** The onset of mournberry poisoning is delayed. Two days after ingesting the berries, initial and secondary damage take place. As time passes, following ingestion of the berries, the victim becomes increasingly depressed and moody, withdrawing from family and friends.

**Raineater toadstool:** This fungus is a hydrophage, leeching moisture from its surroundings. Creatures poisoned with this substance quickly become dehydrated, rolling for additional initial and secondary damage each day. Raineater infection is treated as a disease.

**Red worm mushroom:** These mushrooms cause red wormlike growths to sprout from the victim's skin. This disease is extremely painful and lasts 2d20 days, during which the victim is limited to bed rest.

**Wight fern spores:** Anyone killed by the spores of a wight fern has a 60% chance of rising as a wight three days later.





apple trees thrive in the unblighted groves along with infestations of mistletoe. Forlorn's open areas sport patchy growths of thistle, heather, and gorse, and bracken appears throughout the domain. In addition to bracken, forest undergrowth includes sedge, poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac, nightshade, monk's hood, holly, and a variety of briars, ferns, mosses, mushrooms and other fungi, and poisonous herbs. Slime molds are common in the damp forest floors and can grow to monstrous proportions.

Forlorn's herbal wealth is occasionally harvested by brave souls with an interest in the many toxins found among the forests and fields of the highlands, as well as by highland druids. Fungi such as weep-my-lassie, red worm, *bòcan* eye and mausskul mushrooms, rain-eater toadstools, hag's crepe mold, and lung-eater puffballs all fetch high prices from black market dealers in poison. Other poisons drawn from the plants of Forlorn include nightshade, wight fern spores, tatterleaf dust, *olc-blàth* pollen, whiteshoot root, erl queen's lace, tri-poison oil, baron's bane, mournberries, and ghost threads. Additionally, Forlorn hosts a breed of stunted citrus tree called the goblin lime, which bears a small, dark poisonous lime fruit.

In addition to more mundane flora, Forlorn is home to a number of unusual predatory plants. Of particular note are the death's head trees, twisted willows that bear decayed human heads as fruit. According to the Forfarrians, these hideous plants can grow only in earth soiled by bloodshed. Unfortunately, most of Forlorn has seen violence in various clan wars over the centuries, meaning death's head trees can sprout everywhere. Lashweeds are also common in Forlorn, and druids are their favored prey. Occasional quickwood trees, hungry for whatever animals wander into their clutches, grow throughout Forlorn. Additionally, many folk abiding in or near the highlands fear the region's living trees. I have collected numerous tales of whole hillsides of trees waking to attack loggers or goblins, or of the forests rearranging themselves to trap lost travelers. Some say that on the night of the new moon — the *craobh coisich* — the walking trees stride to their conclave in the depths of the Forlorn wilds. Further tales say that if one stands and listens in Forlorn's forests, one can hear the trees whispering of their hate for humans and warning interlopers to leave, though the druids disagree.





## Dread Possibility: The Black Grove

The lore of the druids is true: in Forlorn, the trees walk. Forlorn is home to a population of dread treants, tainted by the evil permeating the very soil of the Realm of Dread (see *Denizens of Darkness*).

The treants of Forlorn are the descendants of a great treant named Azenwrath, who protected the sacred groves of the Barony of Forfar from the armies of the lowlanders and from wicked beings who attempted to defile them. From his roots and his seeds grew the tallest oaks and beneficial herbs. The Hierophant of the Forfar druids held council with Azenwrath, and the treant celebrated the solstices and the equinoxes with the druids. This idyllic existence ended with the Year of Woe, when Forfar was wrenched into the Realm of Dread. Suddenly, the earth and air Azenwrath had always known felt tainted beyond all recognition. The land was violated, blighted, and reshaped. Hideous little monsters replaced the natural animals Azenwrath loved. The shock drove Azenwrath insane. He turned against the druids, for he knew humans were to blame for the catastrophe. From his roots and seeds sprang quickwoods, death's head trees, and young treants who grew strong and hateful in the new soil. By some accounts, all treants in the Land of Mists can be traced back to this Azenwrath.

By 739 BC, Azenwrath's treants had become enough of a thorn to prompt Tristen ApBlanc to have him destroyed. Through subtle manipulations, Tristen arranged for a wizard by the name of Kyall to discover and destroy Azenwrath. Over the next few years, Kyall used Azenwrath's body to make magic items and the finest paper. Yet Azenwrath's wickedness was too great to die. His malice lived on, and he willed a spell scribed on a scroll made from his corpse to backfire, killing Kyall. Through sheer force of will, Azenwrath drew together the shattered bits of himself that remained in Kyall's keep, forming a crude skeletal frame driven by his hate and insanity. Now, the tattered branch and paper scarecrow that is Azenwrath, a self-made golem, searches the world for the missing pieces of its body.

Azenwrath has organized his offspring into a mockery of the druidic order, which he dubbed the Black Grove, with himself as the Black Hierophant. Azenwrath's cabal works to counter the efforts of both the Forfarian druids' restoration of balance and the goblins' unchecked destruction. The treants want to pervert the natural order, remaking every living thing in their black and twisted image. On the solstices and equinoxes, while the druids work to restore Forlorn's forests, the Black Grove holds bloody sacrifices designed to blight the land further. Now that Azenwrath has been unrecognizably twisted, the eldest of his offspring, Ruinnoake, leads the Black Grove. He and his closest brothers have twisted druidic magic to become undead treants.

## fauna

The primary fauna found in Forlorn are wolves, *madadh-allaidh* in the local tongue, which roam the highland forests and fields in packs every bit as large and ravenous as those found in Barovia. Many Forfarrians, even the druids, told me of demonic wolves that willingly aid the goblins, as well as tales of shambling undead wolves that stalked those who ventured too near Castle Tristenoira. Aside from the wolves, one can occasionally find such animals as bears, weasels, deer, badgers, boars,

and foxes. Foul little rats, mice, and bats are found in abundance, and a variety of snakes, lizards, toads, frogs, and salamanders hug the damp earth. Many of these animals show symptoms of wasting diseases, however. Insects and similar vermin, such as spiders, ticks, centipedes, wasps, hornets, slugs, moths, caterpillars, and beetles, are found in large numbers, sometimes crawling over tree trunks in the hundreds and thousands, and many grow to exceptional size.







The most common form of fauna in Forlorn, though, is not numbered among such natural breeds. Instead, Forlorn's favorite children are the strange little creatures called gremishka, known to Forfarians as *bhèistie*. These vermin resemble cats or dogs crossed with monkeys and rats, with hints of reptilian features. The wretched little beasts lurk in nearly every shadowed area in Forlorn, especially near the ruins of Birnam. I found myself harassed by these vermin on several occasions before they learned their error. Fortunately, these creatures proved quite cowardly. Bright lights can keep them at bay, while my displays of arcane flame sent them screeching in terror. Even then, it was not unusual to spot gremishka observing me at a distance, scuttling through the undergrowth or brachiating through the treetops like demented little monkeys. According to the druids, gremishka first appeared when the Barony of Forfar came into the Land of Mists. During this cataclysmic event, every domestic animal in Forlorn was transformed into a squealing, vicious gremishka. To this day, the gremishka linger near the homes of their untainted ancestors.

Forfarian superstition claims that creatures other than gremishka and goblins lurk in the wilds. According to legend, Forlorn is haunted by a variety of ghosts, including folkloric creatures such as the Maiden of the Menhir, Jimmy Trotters, and the Bagpipe Man. Folk believe the fog-draped region near Castle Forfarmax is haunted by wailing ghosts known as *bean sidh* (pronounced "banshee"). Van Richten wrote of battling the Ghost Clan, a band of ancient dead brigands, just over the Forlorn border from Forfarmax, and the druids of Forlorn watch the dolmens in the deep woods carefully, claiming that wights dwell beneath those stone tables. Occasionally, a hag will take up residence in Forlorn, or a lycanthrope may cross the borders seeking to hide for a time in this forsaken land. The most feared and revered of the creatures of Forfarian superstition are the *Math Muinntir*, the Good Folk, a lost race with striking similarities to the tales of the shadow fey told in the northern Core, whom the druids claim are returning to the land. The legends of the *Math Muinntir* contain a vast variety of faerie creatures, from the *bean nidhe*, the washer of dead men's clothes, to the *rhare-ceann's* *shuile-naimh*, the black vengeance. Reverent tales are spun of the *baohban sith*, the *bùwrae*, the *amadan lòchran*, the *bànflùr clann*, the *teg*, and the *sidhe*, and dozens more, displaying either a vast array of super-

natural beings or the imaginings of simple-minded storytellers with a great deal of time on their hands.

## Local Animals and Native Horrors

**Wildlife:** CR 1/10—bat; toad; CR 1/8—rat; CR 1/6—lizard, raven; CR 1/4—owl; weasel; CR 1/3—hawk; snake, viper (Tiny); CR 1/2—badger; eagle; snake, viper (Small); CR 1—snake, viper (Medium-size); wolf; CR 2—bear, brown; boar; snake, viper (Large); CR 4—bear, black.

**Monsters:** CR 1/3—dire rat; gremishka\*; CR 1/2—geist\*, zombie wolf, CR 1—fungus, shrieker; plant, fearweed; CR 2—goblin\*; plant, crawling ivy\*; worg; CR 3—allip; assassin vine; baobhan sith; dire wolf; fungus, violet fungus; shadow; wight; CR 4—plant, lashweed\*; CR 5—hag, green; odem\*; wraith; CR 6—corpse candle\*; shambling mound; tendriculos; will-o'-wisp; CR 7—ghost; spectre; CR 8—treant (dread)\*; CR 9—plant, death's head tree\*; plant, undead treant\*; CR 10—plant, quickwood\*.

## History



he Mists revealed Forlorn in 547 BC, and for most historians this remains the only significant date of Forlorn's existence. Count Strahd VI apparently saw so little of value or interest in the blighted land that he made no effort to add it to his holdings, and no ruler of any land since has formed a contradictory opinion.

Obviously, this view of Forlorn as a land without history or meaning is woefully inadequate. The Forfarians stand as a living testament to a history that is as rich and detailed as that of any other land, and perhaps more tragic, given the sad conditions that have resulted in the present.

The Forfarians have a strong cultural identity and take a fierce pride in their history and traditions. While other lands are content to view Forlorn as nothing more than a haunted wasteland, the Forfarians remember its past glories and beauties and are careful to preserve its history in long and florid oral recitations. One questions why the Forfarians are not more frequently sought by scholars for details on the history of Forlorn. I imagine most simply believe little can be gained by delving into the past of such a desolate and forsaken region. My esteemed patron obviously takes a differing perspective.





In their zeal to preserve the memory of their homeland, the Forfarians refuse to use the Barovian calendar, instead continuing to use the calendar of Forfar. Incredibly, the Forfarian calendar marks the current year as 2,143, and the average Forfarian can relay in surprising detail the events of the 1,934 years that preceded his homeland's appearance in the land of Mists. Yet many of those details are of little interest to non-Forfarians, so I present here a condensed and distilled description of events.

The Forfarian calendar begins with the establishment of the Kingdom of FirFair by the great King Caral FirFair. Before Caral, Forfarians had no real cohesive identity. The name "Forfarians" would not be applied until long after Caral had united them. They were simply the people of the highlands. They did have some limited political organization, dividing themselves into numerous patriarchal clans, but each clan concerned itself with the others only when trade or marriage became necessary.

When the Blars ("White-Faced," a reference to the stark white war-paint the Blars applied to themselves before battle), a warlike tribe from the northwest, invaded the lands that would later be known as Forfar, the highland clans were forced to band together in mutual defense. The charismatic Caral, then chief of Clan FirFair, was largely responsible for convincing each clan to provide men for battle and for molding the fractious highlanders into an effective militia. Caral led the highlanders against the Blars in the Battle of *Deargleitir* ("Red Hillside") and slew the chief of the Blars in personal combat. The highlanders were victorious, but the cost in lives was high. Caral, whose own clan had suffered more than most, convinced the clan chiefs that continued cooperation was necessary to recover from such losses. The clans unanimously agreed that Caral should lead them forward, and thus was established what would come to be known as the Kingdom of FirFair.

The oral history of the Forfarians goes on to describe the intervening years at length. In time, FirFair was conquered by the Merionites. Over the next few generations, Merionite culture and language began to influence the Firfaireans; the Merionites knew FirFair as "Forfar" and "Bearman" as "Birnam," pronunciations that soon became the standard. After years under the Merionite yoke, the Forfarians rose up and won independence. Although the Forfarians had regained their freedom, the clans had no great desire to restore the

kingdom. There were no convincing claimants to the throne, and too much bad blood had arisen between the clans by this point for them to agree to follow a single leader. Rather than risk a war of succession, the Forfarians continued to organize themselves along provincial lines. The Barony of Forfar, several other baronies, and a few lesser holdings all continued on as independent states.

Leadership of the Barony of Forfar fell to the Clan ApBlanc, the largest and most influential of the clans within the barony. Donnan ApBlanc, head of the clan, became the first native Baron. The ApBlancs would rule the barony in relative quiet for the next 641 years.

The seeds of the ApBlancs' fall from power were sown in the winter of 1593, when the Barony of the Western Highlands went to war with the March of Goteer. Goteer was a lowland country, lying between the Western Highlands and Merion. Its proximity to Merion left the clans there in a precarious position, and they had always been the quickest to bargain with the Merionites. This made them many enemies among the other clans, especially those of the Western Highlands. Those ill feelings never diminished, and a minor territorial dispute quickly escalated into war. The Western Barony turned to the Barony of Forfar for assistance.

The war broke out at an inopportune time for the ApBlancs. The Baron of Forfar, Gillian ApBlanc, was making preparations for daughter Flora's marriage to Rivalin ApTosh. Both of the youths were wildly popular among the townsfolk of Birnam, and their impending wedding had the people more interested in fanfare than warfare. Still, the alliances between the two baronies were long-standing and not to be lightly disregarded. Baron ApBlanc reluctantly agreed to support the Western Barony in its struggle, but would send no soldiers until after the wedding took place the following spring.

The wedding occurred, and the people of Forfar celebrated, but the joy of the nuptials was overshadowed by the spectre of the upcoming war. The newlywed couple was separated after only a few weeks together, as Rivalin rode off with the other soldiers of Forfar to fight against the Goteerans.

Rivalin's skill and heroism proved to be pivotal. In his first battle against the Goteerans, he single-handedly slew Earl DunDugan, ruler of the March. The Goteeran soldiers wavered and were





finally routed when highland druids created a torrential storm. Rivalin, seeing the enemy flee, led the highlanders in charging them down. The storm proved to be a double-edged sword, however, as the highland armies became confused and scattered, losing sight of the fleeing Goteerans and of each other. Rivalin was among many lost in the storm, his death unwitnessed.

According to the Forfarrians, Flora refused to believe that Rivalin had truly died and was convinced that her husband would return to her soon. Matters were exacerbated a few weeks later when a townsman claimed to have seen Rivalin wandering the streets of Birnam at night, his clothing torn and stained and his eyes wild. Few paid any attention to his ramblings, but they were all the validation Flora needed. She took to walking the streets at night, hoping to catch a glimpse of her missing husband. Her parents, fearing that she had gone mad, tried to keep her from going on these nightly searches, but Flora would not be deterred. Her persistence paid off, as she did eventually find Rivalin, but the discovery was not the joyous reunion she had envisioned.

Rivalin had indeed died in battle against the Goteerans, but because his body was never found for proper burial he rose again as a vampire and returned to Birnam to feed on the blood of its people. When he came upon Flora, he stole her soul with his infernal powers and used her to conceal his presence from the locals. Each night thereafter Rivalin would emerge to find a victim, returning to the shelter of ApBlanc Hall before dawn. Even more foully, the unholy arrangement soon left Flora carrying the undead Rivalin's child.

*A child? A dhampire, perhaps? Bah. How could anyone think truth can be seen through such a thick lens of peasant superstition?*

The monster was too arrogant to spend much effort concealing its crimes, and the people of Birnam soon realized that an undead horror was stalking them. A group of hunters organized to find the creature. Rivalin fled into the forest outside Birnam, while the bewitched Flora went to her father, begging for his assistance. The good baron refused, and the hunters returned a





few days later with the vampire's decapitated corpse.

It was hoped that Rivalin's destruction would free Flora from his wicked influence, but it became clear that this hope was vain. When the headless body was brought back to ApBlanc Hall, Flora threw herself upon it, sobbing. Her continued loyalty to the undead beast, coupled with her visible pregnancy, convinced the townsfolk that Flora was herself now permanently tainted. The people would have destroyed Flora at that moment were it not for the baron, who, despite his own fears, was not willing to see his daughter killed. The people reluctantly left Flora alone, but their anxieties remained and began to fester.

When Flora's monstrous child was finally born in the winter of 1594, the townsfolk were no longer willing to remain idle in the face of her corruption. They stormed ApBlanc Hall, but the cunning Flora escaped with her child and fled into the surrounding forests. In her flight, she came to a sacred grove at the top of a hill, tended and warded by a group of druids. With the townsfolk on her trail, Flora desperately shoved her child into the arms of Rual, one of the druids, and begged her to hide it. What she thought handing the unnatural infant to a servant of nature and life would avail her is unknown.

The townsfolk finally caught up to her at the grove, and she faced them down, hurling horrid curses and vile epithets. Some of the townsfolk quailed at her terrible countenance, but others remained firm in their righteous resolve and closed in on her. She was hung from one of the sacred oaks, in the hope that its holiness would cleanse her soul after death. The druids took the infant away so that they could properly dispose of it, and the people of Birnam relaxed in the knowledge that the three evils that had plagued their town were finally put to rest.

Yet the curses Flora had called down took time to manifest, but when they did, they were awful. In 1609, the body of the druid Rual was found beside the oak that had served as Flora's gallows. Her throat had been torn out and her flesh was covered in terrible wounds. No murderer was found, but the people of Birnam knew that it was Flora's ghost, taking revenge on the druid for failing to protect her child. After Rual's death, a grim pall seemed to settle on the grove. The druids sensed the presence of evil and abandoned it, and with their absence the evil of the grove only grew. Phantoms were

sighted amidst the trees, and the howls of wolves echoed through the night.

Nine years later, the entire grove was engulfed in a mysterious fire. As the flames spread, a hideous, inhuman scream of pain rose above the crackle of the fire and lasted for hours. When the flames died down, every tree in the grove had been reduced to ash, save one: Flora's oak. The fires had not even touched it. After the conflagration, wolves began openly to stalk the countryside, as if summoned by the flames. These wolves were just as eager to hunt men as any other beast, and showed no fear, shadowing and attacking even large groups of people. The townsfolk sent groups of hunters to quell their numbers, but a dozen more wolves replaced each one slain, and some swore that even the dead wolves would arise again to rejoin the hunt. The plague of wolves would lessen in time, but the creatures never vanished completely.

By 1637, the situation seemed to improve. Wolf attacks became sporadic, and new trees had grown to replace those destroyed in the fire. People were beginning to forget Flora, until her parents suddenly died only days apart. Neither had shown any signs of serious illness, and it was whispered that Flora's ghost had taken two more victims. The Baron had no heir, so Blane ApFittle, lord of the powerful ApFittle family, was given the title. He and his descendants struggled to stem the resurging tide of evil in Forfar, with mixed results.

The ApBlancs, meanwhile, did not disappear entirely from Forfar's history. Though the ApBlancs of Birnam were no more, in 1809 a distant cousin from the Western Highlands came to Birnam to assert his claim to the ApBlanc holdings. Known simply as the Lord ApBlanc, this handsome and charismatic young minstrel intended to settle down and establish an estate on the outskirts of Birnam. The story of the minstrel ApBlanc is a sad and unusual one, which I have further detailed in the Attached Notes.

In 1906, a second ApBlanc came to Birnam, long after the minstrel ApBlanc had disappeared. Marc ApBlanc was the great-grandson of the Lord ApBlanc; his grandmother, Brangain ApBlanc, had apparently not been murdered by spirits or abducted by monsters, as was commonly believed, but had instead simply fled to Gilcutty to seek her own way. Marc had ample documentation to support his claim and an amazing resemblance to his great-grandfather. Baron Kyle ApFittle reluctantly





acknowledged his rightful ownership of the Lord's Tower.

Marc proved to have a treacherous streak and immediately embarked on an ambitious expansion of the Tower, already one of the largest keeps in the Barony. Again, the actions of Marc ApBlanc are worthy of record and may be found in the Attached Notes. It is Marc's tyranny, particularly the slaughter of the ApFittles to the last, that culminated in the Year of Woe. According to the druids, this seminal event was marked by eerie omens and earth tremors that built in intensity until the entire region was wrenched into our Land of Mists.

The above, at least, is the history of Forfar as told by Forfarian expatriates and settlers in the village of Forfarmax and the lands surrounding Forlorn, and the tale likely to be known by would-be scholars who never personally visit Forlorn. As their version of history makes clear, the Forfarians blame the restless spirit of Flora ApBlanc for the troubles that have plagued their homeland. The druids tell a different tale.

The druids claim that Flora ApBlanc was a hapless victim, her only crime being a naïve hope that she could bring Rivalin back to the light. Her child, which the druids insist Rivalin sired before he left for the war, was no monster, but a normal, healthy human boy. Flora named him Tristen the Fair.

On the night Flora fled to the grove, the druids claim, she laid no curses and hurled no insults, but simply prayed and begged for the life of her child. The mob would not listen, and Flora was lynched. The druids, horrified by the murder committed in their sacred grove, decided that the only way to correct matters was to raise Flora's child so he could right the wrong that had been done. The druids informed the townsfolk that they would deal with the child as circumstances dictated, which was wrongly interpreted as a promise to destroy him. Instead, the druid Rual adopted the child as her own and instructed him in the ways of Forfar's nobility, believing that someday he would return to Birnam and take his rightful place as Baron.

Sadly, this was not to be. In 1609, Rual was found dead in the grove, her throat savagely torn out. Tristen lay dead beside her. A ghostly figure attacked the druids who discovered the bodies, and the grove was thereafter abandoned. The druids are quite certain, however, that the ghost was not Flora ApBlanc. Flora's ghost does haunt Forlorn, they admit, but she is a harmless spirit, forever

doomed to relive the unjust tragedy of her death. This ghost was something far more powerful and far more sinister.

The druids believe that all the evil that has befallen Forfar is the doing of this mysterious ghost, which they know only as the *Solleyder*, "the Defiler." It occupies Castle Tristennoira, they claim, bringing doom to the foolish ApBlancs who dared claim the grove, and all the goblins and wolves of Forlorn follow its bidding. They have no idea why this ghost hates the druids and the land with such ferocity, but they have made it their mission to counteract its evil.

Ultimately, both the Forfarians and the druids blame all of their woes on a phantasmal scapegoat, with only the details differing. Having witnessed neither of these spectres with my own eyes, I have no idea whether either melodramatic ghost story resembles the truth of the matter. The townsfolk, to their credit, certainly have the more colorful tale, though, during the course of my research, I did find the druids to be marginally more knowledgeable.

As soon as Forfar joined Barovia in the Mists, many of the shaken survivors immigrated to Forfar's new northern neighbor. These immigrants were druids whose faith, already tested by the events leading up to and during the Year of Woe, was dealt a final blow by the monstrous changes wrought when their land entered the Land of Mists. These refugees initially made their way to Immol, which is still a major center of Forfarian ethnicity today. From there, the Forfarian refugees spread throughout Barovia and later into Gundarak. The Forfarian escapees left with a mixed reaction to the druids who stayed behind. Some rejected the lives they had once known, seeking to blend into their strange new homeland and keeping silent about their family origins, lest their children and their children's children attempt to return to the land that had turned against them. Most held onto the hope that one day Forfar could be reclaimed, and they slowly formed a support network for the druids. Every so often, Forfarians would make a pilgrimage back to the enclaves of the druids, bringing supplies and offering a few days of simple aid.

The Barovians greeted the Forfarians with their characteristic gruffness. Forfarian immigrants were forced to settle in ghettoized subsections of Barovia towns, and it would be several generations yet before they achieved true acceptance within





their communities. The so-called Strahd von Zarovich VI supposedly personally examined the Forlorn Highlands, though I suspect that one of his minions did the actual examination.

*Sloppy. Examining primary sources would have told you that the court wizard of the time examined that desolation. And, my little scholar, even then I was no one's minion.*

Taking a cue from the Count's disdain, Barovian civil authorities and cartographers twisted the accounts of the Forfarrians, recording their homeland for posterity as "Forlorn." Surprisingly, the name stuck, and within a generation, the Forfarrians called the region Forlorn as well—even the druids, whom one would think might wish to preserve their land's true name.

Druidic records make note of few events in the intervening years. In 622 BC, Castle Tristennoira became the center of a flurry of goblin activity as they worked to expand the structure, adding the barbican that lies at the castle's front. In 688 BC, the hamlet of Forfarmax was settled just across Forlorn's southern border. This new influx of Forfarrian blood led to a new surge of growth in the Forfarrian diaspora across the southern Core, as well as a rebirth of belief in the old gods of the druidic pantheon.

In 735 BC, a powerful band of adventurers arrived in Forlorn from Gundarak. The group attempted to infiltrate Castle Tristennoira and destroy the *Solleyder*. Three days later, two of the adventurers escaped the castle with a ravaged prisoner rescued from the dungeons in tow. Goblins and wolves closely pursued the trio. One of the men was trapped at Forlorn's borders, where goblins tortured the paralyzed man to death. The prisoner, a young woman, was able to escape from the domain with the aid of the druids and a waiting Vistani caravan. The final survivor's mind was hopelessly broken by the time the druids were able to smuggle him out of Forlorn. He died several years later in Immol, screaming in his sleep.

The most recent event in the druids' chronicle of Forlorn occurred during the summer solstice of 750, when the druid Shelaugh, then leader of the rowan faction, led an assault on Castle Tristennoira. Forty-six rowan druids, plus a contingent of 20 mercenaries, were involved in the debacle; in the

end, only twelve of the druids and three mercenaries survived, and half had gone mad. The survivors of the failed assault claim that Shelaugh had uncovered a vital piece of information about the *Solleyder* that led her to believe a critical blow could be dealt to the enemy if they struck quickly. Whatever the case, the fiasco resulted in a shift in power within druid society. Where once the rowan faction dominated, now the oak faction has the most supporters.

## Populace



Forlorn's populace is divided into two distinct groups: the savage goblin clans and the druidic Forfarrians. Unlike most lands of the Core, where humans are far and away the dominant race, here goblins outnumber humans nearly twenty to one. The two groups reportedly share a common origin, and the violent, death-oriented culture of the goblins can be seen as the rugged, nature-oriented culture of the Forfarrians viewed through a darkened, warped mirror.

## Goblins

Goblins have dominated Forlorn since it first emerged from the Mists, attacking the earliest Barovian explorers during their first expedition. Initially, Forlorn's goblins ventured into the surrounding domains seasonally, raiding farmsteads near the borders, hunting druids, and capturing victims to torment and eat. The depredations of goblin raiders led to the construction of the "Bogie-Towers" on the Barovia-Forlorn border. Today, the goblins rarely venture beyond Forlorn's borders, at least not according to any credible report since 730. They have become a nebulous bugbear to the people of surrounding countries, feared because they are known to exist but forgotten because they are so rarely encountered. Only those who walk into Forlorn itself need fear the goblins, and few are curious or desperate enough to undertake such a journey, leaving the goblins of Forlorn a poorly understood and distant menace.

Of course, it was only appropriate that a venturesome scholar such as myself take this rare opportunity to illuminate the nature and extent of this potential threat.

Based on my observations and examination of druidic records, a generous estimate of the goblins' numbers puts their population at roughly 1,400, though the druids assert that this number falls short







by nearly 500. Forlorn's goblins do not create settlements, as they never sleep and have no need of agriculture, but substantial numbers can be found in or near Castle Tristenoira or the ruins of Birnam. Otherwise, goblins spend their time roaming Forlorn, patrolling the borders, hunting druids, or gathering in the caves of Mt. Arawn.

According to the druids, the goblins were once men and women of Forfar, transformed into grotesque mockeries of humans at the culmination of the Year of Woe just as the land itself was transformed into a mockery of its former shape. The druids become more equivocal when asked to explain exactly how or why such a thing happened, but they are quite certain that it was somehow the fault of the *Solleyder*, their all-purpose bogeyman. In some manner the *Solleyder* cursed the people of Forfar, transforming them into its goblin slaves, which would seemingly make it a very powerful spook indeed.

Having resigned myself to the fact that I would not receive a satisfactory explanation of how the goblins of Forlorn came to be, I instead sought further information on how they live. The goblins appear to organize themselves along clan lines, much as the Forfarrians did. It is difficult to conceive of what value the goblins could place in clans, as the concept of family has no meaning to them; they do not marry and do not reproduce, sparing the world the existence of goblin whelps. The druids explained that the goblins remember the clans they belonged to while they were still human and that they seize on those old allegiances as a form of primitive territoriality.

The goblins wear thick woolen kilts, usually stained and tattered with years of wear, and decorated with distinctive tartans to distinguish members of one clan from another. I was shown many of these kilts by the druids, who ritually collect them from the goblins they slay as if to reclaim the humanity of the fallen creatures. In addition to these kilts, some goblins wear leather belts or harnesses from which they hang their weapons. Some wear grubby *sporrans*, fur-lined pouches worn over a belt's buckle, in which they carry various filthy trinkets or a few dirt-encrusted coins. Some of these pouches are made from human scalps, particularly those of the redheaded druids. Aside from the occasional rags that may once have been shirts or cloaks, these kilts and accessories are all the goblins wear. The goblins' weapons are gener-

ally crude or damaged, being scavenged from Forlorn's ruins or stolen from prisoners.

Goblin clans are belligerent and competitive. Each stakes out a small area of Forlorn as its own territory, and battles over minor incursions are frequent and bloody. A chief, usually the largest and strongest goblin, rules each clan, but changes in leadership are common due to death and shifting favor. The goblins are aided and abetted by Forlorn's wolves. More than once, a pack of goblins mounted on wolves raced by where I was hidden. The goblins ride bareback, clinging to the wolves' shaggy manes.

The druids claim that ultimately all goblin clans are loyal to the *Solleyder*, the ghost of Castle Tristenoira, whom the goblins refer to only as "Master." I asked the druids how they could know that the *Solleyder* is "Master" if only the goblins ever call him that, at which point they became quite irate.

After mollifying them, I asked them to explain exactly what the goblins *do* and what manner of threat they pose to travelers in Forlorn. The goblins apparently have two major purposes to their existence. The first is to patrol Forlorn in search of humans. The druids are apparently their true targets, but the goblins have as much difficulty distinguishing between humans as humans do between goblins. Therefore all humans the goblins encounter end up as their prey. In most cases, the goblins make efforts to take their victims alive, at the command of their "Master." The druids claim that the *Solleyder* seeks live captives for interrogation. The goblins, with their bloodlust and low intelligence, are not particularly skilled at capturing humans alive, so one should not count on them being merciful or restrained. In addition, goblins are incapable of fear, rushing headlong into situations that would make most beings quail.

The second task that occupies the goblins is the chopping and burning of Forlorn's trees, a task they pursue with enthusiastic glee. Again, the druids claim this is done at the will of the *Solleyder*, though apparently the perverse goblins also find the chopped and blackened stumps of trees aesthetically pleasing. Ironically, the defiled and corrupted state of Forlorn's woods has significantly hindered the goblins' efforts to destroy the forests. The damp and fetid woods burn slowly, the ubiquitous brambles slow the goblins just as they do any traveler, and the flesh-eating plants find the meat of goblins just as palatable as that of humans. Were



the forests not so wretched, they could very well have been destroyed by now.

The only craft pursued by the goblins is the production of crude torture devices using pieces of scrap iron and cast-off metal. Thus, when not harrying the druids or ravaging the forests, the goblins spend their time in leisure. Goblin leisure is, predictably, bloody and barbaric. Common sports include knife-throwing contests and gremishka fights. A particular favorite of the goblins is "arbor-hefting," a corruption of the Forfarian sport of caber-tossing (see below), in which two teams of five goblins lift heavy logs and throw them back and forth, with the aim of crushing as many members of the opposing team as possible. Another popular game is the "sword-dance," a corruption of an ancient Forfarian tradition. Goblins take up swords and form two long lines, facing each other. The goblins then lie down on their bellies, leaving a corridor between them. Bold goblins take turns dancing from one end of this gauntlet to the other, while the prone goblins swing at their legs and feet. Such games are often accompanied by the mournful wail of dronepipes, the goblins' variation on bagpipes, a traditional Forfarian instrument found also in Mordent. A dronepipe's bag is generally made of leather or a large animal bladder, and the chanter and mouthpiece are fashioned from humanoid bones. During attacks, the goblins often have one of their number play the dronepipe, adding a nightmarish droning cry to battle to demoralize their enemies.

As spellcasters who create goblin minions know, goblins require very little to survive, being immune to hunger and thirst. A goblin generally requires at most two pounds of food and one quart of water per year. They will, however, frequently eat simply for enjoyment. In these cases, goblins "feast" by biting their enemies' faces and inflicting hideous scarring with their fangs. "Feasting" is a favored combat tactic of all goblins, regardless of origin. The Forlorn goblins enjoy other "delicacies" as well. The Forfarrians of Barovia claim that the goblins delight in skinning captives and frying strips of skin in oil. The druids report witnessing goblins cracking open the heads of enemies to eat their brains, cackling over this "*heddice*." The druids have also sighted goblins eating handfuls of plants, cooked and raw fish and game, mud, and even rock.

Goblins speak a degenerate dialect of Forfarian, which speakers of pure Forfarian can understand

with effort and practice. This debased version of the language has a harsher sound, frequently punctuated with the use of the particle "*mar*," which denotes negativity or evil, mixed with the odd word of Balok or Vaasi. They rarely have anything of interest to say to humans, other than promises of death and torture and the wrath of the "Master."

They also invoke the name Arawn frequently. In Forfarian druidism, Arawn is the god of death and the underworld, a much-feared, seldom mentioned bogeyman, the only god the goblins still acknowledge. They have no clerics or adepts, serving their god only by killing and seeking violent death themselves. The goblins believe all bloodshed glorifies Arawn and all the dead belong to Arawn. Thus, goblins will eagerly murder anyone they can to swell the kingdom of their god and will happily throw themselves into gory deaths in their battles. Additionally, the goblins believe that resurrection, reincarnation, and undeath are blasphemies that rob Arawn of his subjects. The sacred site of this debased belief is Mt. Arawn. The mountain's caves are filled with the carefully sorted bones of the goblins' dead, watched over by crude statues of Arawn. The goblins believe their god dwells in the underworld of Annwn, the Isles of the Cursed, a land accessible through the fissure called the Maw of Arawn at the mountain's peak. I broached the possibility that Arawn and "Master" might be one and the same, that the goblins might be serving no one but their own evil instincts and their malformed memories of the death god, but the druids rejected this hypothesis without giving it proper consideration. The true identity of the goblins' "Master" will be difficult to determine without exploring Tristennoira in depth—a daunting task if the druids' tales are true, and one I can ill-afford to undertake at present.

## Forfarrians

Forfarrians are a hearty lot, husky at the waist and often barrel-chested. The Forfarian complexion is a creamy, pale white liberally scattered with freckles, which burns easily in the sun. Nearly all Forfarrians have red hair, ranging in color from bright auburn to dark brown with only a subtle reddish tint to carrot blonde. Forfarrians generally let their hair grow out, sometimes plaiting it into thick braids, though this unkempt style is more favored by the druids. Forfarian men sport thick facial hair, growing impressive beards and muttonchop sideburns. The druids take great pride







in their red hair, claiming it to be a gift from the fey. Intriguingly, they suggest this magical heritage is what protected their ancestors from becoming goblins in the Year of Woe.

Forfarian clothing stands out with its bold plaids and earthy greens and browns. The colors and patterns of stripes decorating Forfarian garments are *tartans*, emblematic of the various clans. A loose shirt and kilt (a skirt-like garment decorated in a plaid pattern) comprise the primary garb of males. Women wear clothing that is much the same, though women's skirts are longer than men's kilts. In addition to these basics, Forfarrians wear sheepskin vests, tartan shawls or cloaks, and sashes in greens, browns, and tartans. Men wear fur-lined *sporrans* as well. Jewelry tends to be of polished iron or finely wrought silver (usually a family heirloom), decorated with stylized nature motifs — particularly vines, oak leaves, and rowan berries.

Forfarrians in Forlorn speak their own tongue, often in exclusion of any other. Forfarrians in other realms are often taught Forfarian alongside the language of their adopted homeland. A small sampling of Forfarian terms follows.

### Language Primer

#### Forfarian

*daenacht hael*: greetings

*beannachd leat*: goodbye

*nae*: no

*seadh*: yes

*cuidich!*: help!

*rach air falbh!*: go away!

*bòcan*: ghost

*ghaidhealtachd*: highlands

*nàdur*: nature

The lot of the Forfarrians is a humble one. Virtually all Forfarrians pursue agriculture or simple crafts for a living. Forfarian herbalists and healers, however, are considered some of the best at their art in the Core. Most expatriates live within Barovia, owing fealty to Count von Zarovich. Even the MacGranins of Forfarmax rule that hamlet under the yoke of a Hazlani governor. Being commoners, Forfarrians therefore tend toward large families and early marriages. In Forlorn, the druids live almost

exclusively in carefully concealed warrens of hand-dug tunnels. They call these miserable caves their Sanctuaries, using them to hide from goblin patrols.

The Forfarrians' diet is similar to that of Barovians, though they do lean more toward potatoes and turnips as staples and season their meals with fewer spices. During holidays, Forfarrians eat two particularly unusual foods: *haggis* and *hetchil dhoar*. Haggis is a large boiled sheep stomach sausage filled with sheep liver, heart, lung, and meat, plus oatmeal, onion, and spices. Hetchil dhoar is a meat pie made with freshwater eel, potato, apples, and rich brown gravy made from venison drippings.

Like most peasants, Forfarrians take a dim view of arcane magic. Forfarian wizards and sorcerers are nearly unheard of, and those that exist are generally related by blood or marriage to the ApMorten clan. Divine magic is similarly rare, for while the veneration of the old Forfarian gods has experienced a surge since the settlement of Forfarmax, few have felt the divine calling to become clerics. Druids often overlap their duty to nature with faith in the gods Belenus and Daghdha. Further, druidic magic has an extensive role in Forfarian society. All Forfarrians are aware of the struggle to restore balance to Forlorn, whether they approve of it or not. Each generation, young Forfarian idealists enter the ranks of the druids, continuing the traditions of their forebears.

Druidic society currently suffers an internal schism loosely based on religious lines. Two schools of thought on the best manner to approach restoring balance to Forlorn have arisen. One school, the oak faction, believes bringing more goodly creatures into the land can restore balance. The opposing rowan faction believes that only by actively destroying evil beings can balance be restored.

Maeve, a pleasant woman in her late middle age, currently leads the oak faction, which worships Daghdha and takes the oak leaf as its symbol. Maeve explained to me that the oak faction had for the past ten years worked to bring back the *Math Muinntir*. She claimed success in drawing a number of the euphemistic "Good Folk" here from the north and provided further evidence of the benefit of her faction's efforts, showing me a most astonishing creature in her Sanctuary — what I took to be a psuedodragon, a beast thought to be entirely mythical. Yet having dispatched certain shadow fey in the past — fey creatures suspiciously similar





## The Forfarian Pantheon

Bolstered by the influx of believers in Forfarmax, the old gods of Forfar are occasionally venerated by Forfarrians at large. Druids serve as clerics of the Forfarian gods Belenus and Daghdha at times, but outside of the druidic society there are less than a dozen clerics of the old gods.

The druids of Forlorn hold sacred Belenus, the god of sun and fire, and Daghdha, the god of fertility and chieftain of the gods. In addition, non-druidic Forfarrians worship Brigantia, a triple-aspect goddess who governs livestock, blacksmithing, and motherhood, and Forfarian healers invoke the spirit Diancecht. The ApMortens of Forfarmax have a shrine to the god of sorcery, Math Mathony. The Forfarrians also fear two beings little mentioned — Arawn, the death god, and Morrigan, a bloodthirsty warrior-hag.

The Forfarrians believe that after death, the souls of the good, just, and wise pass into the west to the Isles of the Blessed, a shining realm of plenty and peace. Wicked souls descend through the Maw of Arawn into the bleak islands of Annwn.

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol	Favored Weapon
Arawn	Neutral evil	Death, Evil, Repose	Skull wearing antlered helm	Scythe
Belenus	Neutral good	Fire, Good, Sun	Sunburst	Sickle
Brigantia	Lawful good	Animal, Good, Protection	Woman holding a hammer	Warhammer
Daghdha	Chaotic good	Good, Plant, Trickery	Cauldron	Club
Diancecht	Neutral good	Good, Healing	Leaf	Dagger
Math Mathony	Lawful evil	Knowledge, Magic	Iron scepter	Quarterstaff
Morrigan	Chaotic evil	Destruction, Evil, War	Crossed swords	Greatsword

to the legends of the *Math Muinntir* — I must point out that the title of “the Good Folk” is more likely assigned out of fear than truth.

The rowan faction worships Belenus, a god who is also worshipped in Tepest and the Shadowlands, and takes the berries of the rowan tree as its symbol. Led by a young firebrand by the name of Fionna, the rowan faction actively seeks to destroy the evil that is unbalancing Forlorn. In the year 750, Fionna’s mother, Shelaugh, led the rowans in a disastrous assault on Castle Tristennoira, tipping the balance of power away from the rowan faction. Today, the rowan still hunt goblins as they did before the raid, but they also aggressively pur-

sue another option. Fionna hopes to enlist the aid of the Wild Hunt in finding and slaying the *Solleyder*. According to druidic legend, the Wild Hunt is a pack of ghostly huntsmen and hounds that ride through the night, preying upon evil beings. The Hunt consists of a pack of baying, ghostly mastiffs with green glowing eyes and breath of green flames, followed by the horned god, the Master of the Hunt, who rides a ghostly steed behind his hounds. The Wild Hunt frequently has other ghostly riders and followers who race behind the Master of the Hunt, eager to help capture the Hunt’s wicked prey.



## Dread Possibility: The Wild Hunt

This pack of shadow mastiffs and ghostly huntsmen is not the true Wild Hunt of other worlds, but a corrupt manifestation created from the Mists by the Dark Powers. The Wild Hunt can appear in any temperate land in Ravenloft, but most often remains in or near the domain of Forlorn.

Each night, the Mists rise somewhere within the Realm of Dread and the Wild Hunt rides forth, searching for prey. Unless the Hunt has other prey to catch (see the *Horn of the Sacred Grove* on page 118), it seeks out the nearest intelligent being with an alignment other than true neutral and hunt it down. The belief that the Hunt targets only evil beings is a fallacy. Anyone who hears the baying of the hounds of the Wild Hunt, regardless of distance, must make a Fear save (DC 10). Those targeted as the night's prey by the Wild Hunt must make a Fear save (DC 25).

Any creatures who see the Wild Hunt after it has chosen its prey must succeed at a Will save (DC 20) or be compelled to join the Hunt in their chase (a compulsion effect). Those caught up in this bloodlust return to their senses with the dawn. Often, memory of the night's bloody events will prompt a Horror save.

The Wild Hunt never targets darklords as prey, and darklords are immune to the call to join the Hunt; thus Fionna's hopes of using the Wild Hunt to destroy Tristen ApBlanc are futile. At certain times, evil beings are called to ride with the Wild Hunt. In the dark of the night, one of the ghostly horses of the Wild Hunt will appear to them. Should they accept, they spend the night riding alongside the Master of the Hunt, killing and reveling with joy. Beings such as hags, fey, lycanthropes, and all manner of undead are commonly called to ride with the Wild Hunt. To be invited to ride with the Hunt, a being must have failed at least one powers check.

Forfarian culture holds several unique institutions. In particular, the complex oral history of the Forfarrians finds a singular place in the community. Each Forfarian enclave has a venerated elder, generally a woman, whose duty is to keep and pass on the people's oral history. These *tanists* are generally considered the community's wisest members, and accordingly community leaders rely heavily on their advice. Often, the *tanist* is the de facto leader of a Forfarian community, especially those in which the Forfarrians are a small part of a larger settlement.

The Forfarrians' way of dealing with matters of personal honor is unlike any other. Aggrieved Forfarrians engage in a "tower's duel," a one-on-one duel at a *claidemh-tùr*, or dueling tower, a tower with a flat, ledgeless roof. This serves as a dueling arena, with the combatants attempting to knock each other from the roof. The broad ring of flagstones encircling the tower ensures a permanent resolution of the matter, so few Forfarrians engage in a tower's duel lightly.

Also unique to the Forfarrians are a pair of sports that they play during the solar holidays and other festivals. The first is caber-tossing, called *craolhuasgannach* in the Forfarian tongue. Competitors take turns lifting and hurling a massive log, attempting to set a record in both height and distance thrown. Only the strongest of the strong excel at this sport, and many Forfarian males consider caber-tossing prowess a point of pride. The second Forfarian festivity is both a game and an art. *Claidheamh danns*, the sword dance, is a beautiful and dangerous art in which dancers negotiate a corridor of "instructors" who wield swords in a rhythmic pattern. The sword-dancers work their way between the flashing blades, leaping and tumbling in time to the music. This breathtaking and daring act is also used in the Forfarian fighting style. The (in)famous swordsman Bantur, who aided Van Richten against the Crimson Arcanus and later fell victim to the oblivious doctor's curse, was a master of the *claidheamh danns*. Forfarian celebrations also feature bardic music, particularly that of the bagpipe, drums, flute, lute, fiddle, and bones.

Each year, the Forfarrians hold holidays during the vernal and autumnal equinoxes and the summer and winter solstices. On these holy days, Forfarrians spend the day outdoors, communing with nature and gathering for large open-air community meals. Those Forfarrians who still follow the old gods recite prayers and make small offerings.



Within Forlorn, the solstices and equinoxes are important days for the druids, for they claim that only on these days do new seedlings sprout in the forest. Further, the druids claim that during these solar holidays, the new seedlings grow at a fantastic rate, springing from seed to four-foot-tall sapling in the course of the day. Therefore, the druids devote themselves on the turning points of the seasons to

transplant newborn trees to the safety of the unblighted groves. Fortunately, the goblins are oddly inactive on the solstices and equinoxes, making the druids efforts far easier. Whether these claims are merely tall tales or druidic truths is left to my employer to decide; sadly, my journey took me through the region in late summer, so I could not observe these proceedings.

## The Forfarian Hero

**Races:** Forfarrians are almost exclusively human. A half-elf or half-Vistani of Forfarian descent might be encountered, but this would be extremely unusual and such individuals would undoubtedly find themselves shunned by their fellow Forfarrians.

**Classes:** Bards, druids, fighters, rangers, and rogues are the most common classes among the Forfarrians. Forfarian bards are highly respected, not just for the entertainment they provide but for their role as historians and storytellers. All Forfarrians in Forlorn are raised with the expectation that they will become druids, and this is the most common class found there by far. Druids are also well respected by Forfarrians in other lands, but also feared due to the primal nature of their power. Fighters are readily embraced, as the Forfarrians still hearken back to a time when they were feared warriors defending a highland kingdom. Rangers have been valued by the Forfarrians ever since the wolf plague began centuries ago, but those who choose that path are often seen as having a death wish. Rogues are generally despised for their reliance on cunning and stealth over honor and directness. Barbarians are uncommon, but garner more respect from Forfarrians than they do from most other peoples; the wild warriors hearken back to the Forfarrians' ancient heritage. Clerics are rare but not unheard of; most Forfarian clerics follow the Morninglord, though the old gods have recently made a resurgence. Sorcerers are usually redheaded, as red hair and a talent for magic seem to go hand-in-hand among the Forfarrians. Monks, paladins, and wizards are virtually nonexistent.

**Recommended Skills:** Balance, Bluff, Climb, Craft (blacksmithing, carpentry, weaponsmithing, weaving), Handle Animal, Jump, Knowledge (history, nature), Perform (dance, drums, epic, fiddle, harp, pipes, storytelling), Profession (brewer, farmer, fisher, guide, herbalist, herdsman, lumberjack, miller, miner), Sense Motive, Use Rope, Wilderness Lore.

**Recommended Feats:** Alertness, Courage, Dead Man Walking, Dodge, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Run, Toughness, Track, Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (battleaxe, dagger, halberd, handaxe, longsword, shortspear, throwing axe). All druids native to Forlorn have the Redhead feat.

**Forfarian Male Names:** Bran, Brian, Caral, Conan, Donnach, Fionn, Garbhan, Kenneth, Kyle, Lachlan, Malcolm, Nioll, Ross, Sionn, Taran, Wallace.

**Forfarian Female Names:** Agatha, Arline, Bonnie, Colina, Dona, Edana, Fenella, Fiona, Greer, Heather, Ina, Kenna, Morna, Nessa, Rhona, Una.





## The Realm

**T**o call Forlorn a "realm" is vastly to overstate matters. Indeed, it is the lack of anything that a sane man would deem law or order that gives the land its unique charm. There is nothing in this blighted region that I would go so far as to call a civilization, with only the primitive, half-formed societies of the aforementioned goblins and druids even coming close. Only fear and desperation rule this land. The druids would disagree with me, but I put little stock in their superstition and mysticism.

This lack of any recognized central authority has led some desperate individuals to seek refuge in the forests. Though tales of the horrors that haunt Forlorn are common in neighboring realms, for many people they remain only tales, and the threat posed by a few ghost stories must surely seem small when one is pursued by more tangible threats. Thus, bandits and insurgents from neighboring lands occasionally seek to elude justice by braving

the wilds of Forlorn. Most of these fugitives are not seen again; whether they managed to cross through Forlorn and into safe harbor or ended up sating the hunger of goblins and wolves is never revealed.

Of course, even where law fears to tread, economics strides boldly forward. With the absence of any organized government to inhibit their greed, merchants and adventurers alike have turned their eyes toward Forlorn with the notion of plundering it for the wealth it must surely contain, and indeed Forlorn appears to teem with valuable resources.

Timber is the most prevalent. Despite the goblins' mysterious program of deforestation, the land continues to be dominated by forest, and these vast stretches of unclaimed trees are a tempting target for enterprising lumberjacks. Unfortunately, anyone actually taking a walk among the woods of Forlorn, as I have, will see that they do not hold as much value as they appear to from a distance. Many of the trees are stunted and rotting, many others dry and dead. Healthy trees can be found, but they are





usually under the care and protection of the druids, who will certainly not cooperate with any effort to harvest them for lumber.

Minerals are Forlorn's other untapped resource. As previously noted, Mt. Arawn is littered with salt caves, Mt. Mathonwy is known to be rich in valuable metals and stones, and the Lake of Red Tears is an ample source of red clay. Anyone who could establish a mining operation at any of these sites would surely become rich, most think, and many have tried. I imagine the bones of some could still be found if one searched long enough.

Though all sustained logging and mining efforts in Forlorn have thus far met with disaster, there always seems to be another fool in line, convinced that he has the perfect plan to turn a profit. The goblins, wolves, and various other monstrosities make any such endeavor fruitless; if it were otherwise, Count Strahd would surely have stripped it bare by now.

Adventurers, of course, need only hear that Forlorn boasts not one, but two haunted castles to provide all the motive they need to pack their bags, hoist their swords, and charge blindly into danger's claws. Whether there are in fact mounds of treasure lying deep in the dungeons of Castle Tristenoira or Castle Forfarmax I can neither confirm nor dispute, but rumors of such run rampant.

## Sites of Interest



While Forlorn lacks any true communities within its borders, there are a very few sites worthy of note.

### forfarmax

Located just over the Forlorn border in Hazlan, the hamlet of Forfarmax is the sole settlement known to be populated nigh-exclusively by Forfarrians. Only in this isolated place can one observe the Forfarrian culture without the muting influences of the Barovians, Gundarakites, and Thaani. The settlement of Forfarmax occurred quite recently in comparison to other events in Forlorn's history. In 688 BC, Hoder MacGranin, the younger son of Fainal MacGranin, wandered out of the Mists along with a company of settlers, having initially set out to establish a new fiefdom near the northern borders of the Kilovin March. Guided by some inner vision, Hoder led his follow-

ers to the edge of the Forlorn highlands. The discovery of the long-lost Barony of Forfar and the ancestral castles ApBlanc and Forfarmax inspired the Forfarrians to settle nearby.

Little of note exists in Forfarmax, save the hamlet's status as the primary source of *fo mhisg*, the famous Forfarrian whiskey given a distinctive flavor by infusing the mash with peat smoke. It is perhaps worth noting that the current Lord Forfarmax is Niall MacGranin, Hoder's son. A well-educated man with a passion for astronomy, Niall desires to secure Castle Forfarmax for himself and expand his fief, a goal that has eluded him for years. Additionally, a clan of wizards, the ApMortens, resides in Longshanks Hall, a rambling and ramshackle affair situated at the settlement's outskirts. This sprawling family of mages has an unsavory reputation, despite being invaluable defenders of Forfarmax against goblin raiders, their vast store of Forfarrian lore, and their tradition of many happy marriages into the family with the attendant lavish weddings and generous dowries. Personally, I found them entirely agreeable.

### Where to Stay in Forfarmax

The hamlet's sole inn is *Dà Sgarbh*, the Two Cormorants (good quality rooms, poor quality meals). The Two Cormorants is a surprisingly comfortable place for such a minor settlement, but the cozy leather chairs, thick blankets, fur rugs, and roaring fires do an admirable job at keeping out the damp, as do the local hard cider and *fo mhisg*. The inn's menu, however, is less welcoming, consisting of the daily stew with bread, cheese, and a mug of watery ale three times a day.

**Forfarmax (hamlet):** Conventional; ALLE; 100 gp limit; Assets 1,720 gp; Population 344; Isolated (human 98%, other 2%).

**Authority Figures:** Lord Forfarmax, Niall MacGranin, male human Ari2/Exp2.

**Important Characters:** Ceridwen ApNir (village taniest), female human Drd4; Dane MacGolan (brewer and caber champion), male human Ftr8/Exp4; Lionna ApMorten (wizard and head of the ApMorten clan), female human Wiz9.



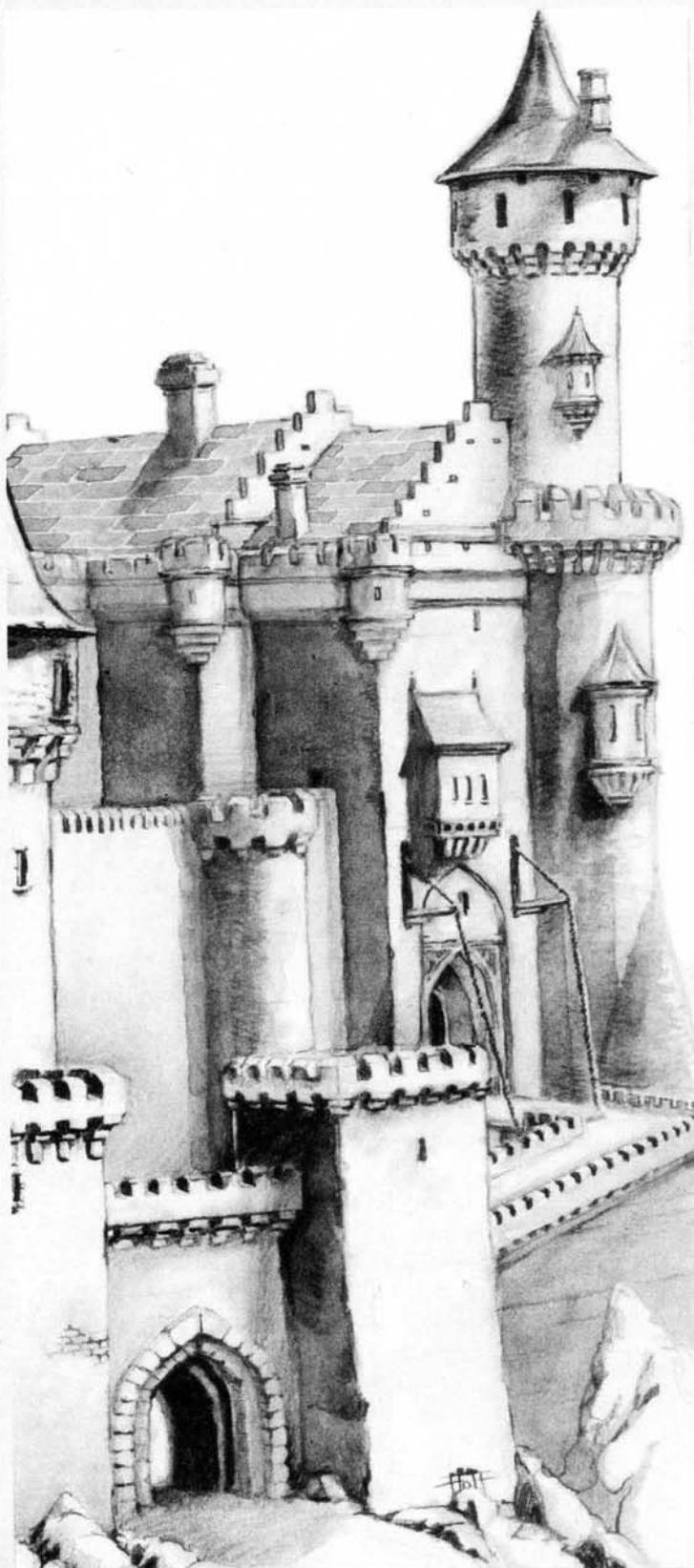


## Castle Forfarmax

According to the tanist of Forfarmax, long before the Mists revealed Forlorn, Clan MacFarn ruled the Kilovin March from the Seat of Farn in Castle Forfarmax. In time, the Seat of Farn was contested between Donal and Duncan MacFarn, twin brothers. Duncan invited his brother to dine in his new feast hall. Donal came with twenty men, and Duncan and his soldiers slew them all, raining arrows from murder holes in the hall's ceiling. A year to the day later, when Duncan MacFarn and his new bride stepped into the hall for their wedding feast, the door to the hall slammed shut and the stones of the floor rose up, flying through the air to smash the life out of all present. Since that day, Castle Forfarmax and the land around it have been cursed and cloaked in fog. Now, Castle Forfarmax is a crumbling ruin, but within its walls, the stony ghosts of hospitality wait.

## Castle Tristenoira

Castle Tristenoira is a brooding structure, looming above the ruins of Birnam. In the courtyard stands Flora's Oak, strangely vital despite the many centuries that have passed, jutting like a stake in the heart of the beast that is Forlorn. This ancient ruin is supposedly home to the druids' *Solleyder* and the goblins' "Master." More certainly, ghosts and goblins haunt Tristenoira, and few that enter its crumbling walls ever leave. Those who return from the castle rave about horrific spectres, and claim that the evil within its halls has grown so corrosive that time itself has begun to decay.



## Dread Possibility: Time and Tristenoira

Tristenoira is the lair of the darklord of Forlorn, Tristen ApBlanc. Over the centuries, the tragic and horrific events that resulted in the fall of the clans and Tristen's damnation have produced ethereal resonance of such magnitude that Tristenoira and, to a lesser degree, the whole of Forlorn has become unstuck in time. As Tristen and those around him endlessly repeat the actions that doomed them all, the resonance is renewed night after night.

Those unfortunate enough to venture within the walls of Castle Tristenoira soon find themselves drifting back and forth through time, revisiting key moments in Forlorn's history. Souls lost in the castle may find themselves wandering into the era of the Minstrel ApBlanc and his family, the war between Marc ApBlanc and the ApFittles during the Year of Woe, the lynching of Flora ApBlanc, and other times before snapping back to the present. If unwise adventurers inform Tristen in an earlier era of future events, he retains this information and can try to use it against them in later eras, but his knowledge always fades when time next loops around, like a dreamer slipping out of a moment of lucidity.

This unnatural temporal distortion reaches beyond Castle Tristenoira, afflicting every being within Forlorn as well. Those who dwell within Forlorn soon find themselves unconsciously repeating their actions. No matter what their efforts, the natives of Forlorn are doomed always to become part of the cycle of repeating time. Similarly, natives of Forlorn never personally experience the time shifts within Castle Tristenoira.

Only foreigners can break the cycle of misery that grips Forlorn; only they can alter the chain of events that lead from one twisted era to another. Free of the ethereal resonance that the natives of Forlorn are mired in, they hold the key to the eventual freedom or downfall of Tristen ApBlanc. Tristen was given an object lesson of this fact when, in 735, adventurers from beyond Forlorn's borders rescued his daughter, Brangain ApBlanc, from a lightless cell in the distant past, somehow smuggling her to freedom.

## Final Thoughts

Despite its untapped natural resources, Forlorn remains a land best avoided. Between the land's inhospitable natural elements, monstrous inhabitants, and the hermetic struggles of the druids, Forlorn's dangers vastly outweigh its potential benefits. Indeed, the Land of Mists would little suffer were every being within Forlorn put to the sword. As to what manner of being is the spiritual heart of Forlorn, it is difficult to say. Perhaps it is the shade of Flora ApBlanc, the druids' *Solleyder*, a goblin clan leader, one of the domain's many ghosts, the water-horse of the Lake of Red Tears, or some entirely unknown entity. In the end, I imagine it matters little.





# Report Four: Kartakass

*"Why should there always be this fear and slaughter between us?" said the Wolves to the Sheep. "Those evil-disposed Dogs have much to answer for. They always bark whenever we approach you and attack us before we have done any harm. If you would only dismiss them from your heels, there might soon be treaties of peace and reconciliation between us." The Sheep, poor silly creatures, were easily beguiled and dismissed the Dogs, whereupon the Wolves destroyed the unguarded flock at their own pleasure.*

— Aesop, "The Wolves and the Sheep"



**N**ot long after I slipped free of Forlorn's blight and into the deep, shadowy woods of Kartakass, I nearly tripped over the ravaged corpse of a large stag. I examined the ragged remains, as well as a few tracks I spotted nearby, and suddenly realized exactly what a fool I was being. The game trail I had so naively followed all day was the stalking ground of savage wolves — surely the only creature that would roam so freely between these lands. Already the sunlight was dwindling, and as the moon rose at my back, it was greeted with an orchestra — of baleful howls. The goblins might have been behind me, but wolves surrounded me still. I marked this moment as my official introduction to Kartakass, and any sense of respite I had felt at finally leaving Forlorn dissolved at once. I was now entering the vast forests that blanket the southwestern Core, a region widely regarded to be lawless and backward, where humanity still lives at the mercy of the wilderness.

Fortunately, I soon heard a different sort of night music faintly echoing through the trees: the hymns of a family sitting down to a humble supper. Hurrying toward the source of these songs, I came to a small compound enclosed by a timber palisade.

As I sighted the compound, I heard a sudden excitement enter the wolves' baying — they had found my trail. Thus it came as no small relief when the compound's inhabitants heard my anxious knocking and allowed me to share their hearth for a few days. For the first time in weeks, I could enjoy proper food, a relaxing fire, a soft bed, and a warm bath.

Make no mistake, Kartakass is an ignorant backwater shaped by a bizarrely credulous culture. Yet with the slime of Forlorn still fresh on my boots, Kartakass provided just the rejuvenation I needed.

## Landscape

**K**artakass lies right at the southernmost Core's center, nestled against the foothills of the Balinoks. The hilly regions to the west are particularly rugged; it is not uncommon for a hillside to collapse into a sinkhole, creating short box canyons. Local woodsmen warned me never to enter these ravines, for wolves steer their prey into them, penning them against the broken cliffs. Such sinkholes often expose entrances to the vast networks of natural limestone caverns that riddle the earth. The caves I examined were impressive, large enough to house

## Kartakass at a Glance

**Cultural Level:** Medieval (7)

**Ecology:** Full

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate forest and hill

**Year of Formation:** 613 BC

**Population:** 5,000

**Races:** Humans 94%, wolfweres 4%, half-elves 1%, other 1%

**Languages:** Vaasi\* (Kartakan dialect), Old Kartakan, Balok, Sithican

**Religions:** The Ancestral Choir\*, Ezra, Hala

**Government:** Meritocratic independent settlements

**Ruler:** None; autonomous meistersingers

**Darklord:** Harkon Lukas

a bear, but accounts claim that some caves open into vast, remarkable labyrinths.

Kartakans say that, not so long ago, their land was blanketed by unbroken woodlands. Generations of eager lumberjacks have done little to weaken the woods' grip on the region. Most logging has centered on the rivers that flow through Kartakass, dividing the primordial wilderness into three vast forests. Grassy dales where herdsmen tend their flocks divide these woodlands. The dales are dotted by smaller, scattered groves where the trees have already started to reassert themselves.

The scars of extensive logging mark the edges of the three vast forests, but if one delves just a few hundred feet past that line, the woods still loom tall, dark, and pristine. Despite the Kartakans' adventurous spirit and the relatively small size of their homeland, most folk I spoke to insisted that human eyes had never seen the hearts of these untamed wilds.

Travel through any of these forests quickly proves laborious. Only narrow paths that wind from one tiny settlement to another, as well as deceptively similar wild trails that lead only to lurking predators, crisscross the woods. Numerous gullies add to the traveler's burden, carved into the rocky ground by burbling brooks and streams. Mists rise from the earth as the sun sets, settling in the





gullies and other low places. Folk who dare travel by night often vanish forever. While it seems likely that these unfortunates simply become lost in the fog and darkness, Kartakans claim that wolves and other cunning beasts hide in the foggy crevices, waiting for foolish travelers to stumble over them.

For such a fanciful culture, the Kartakans are amusingly prosaic when it comes to naming their untamed wilds. Of the three great forests, *Ulvskoven* ("the Wolfwood") is the largest, extending nearly unbroken across the region's entire northern half. The Wolfwood looms similarly large in the Kartakan imagination. Virtually unpopulated by mankind, it is said to be the home of Kartakass' largest and most fearsome beasts. According to tradition, a wide clearing, created when the roots of the massive tree at the clearing's center choked the life from all of its neighbors marks the Wolfwood's heart. Kartakans call this dead tree *Bedstefader Trae* ("Grandfather Tree") and claim that the great wolves of the woods gather every night beneath its branches.

According to this fanciful tale, anyone brave enough to climb the great tree and eavesdrop on the wolves can learn all their secret plans. In another version of the tale, however, Grandfather Tree is actually a blood drinking, undead horror, grown so huge it has become permanently rooted to the spot and must wait for victims to wander into its clutches. I know which version of the tale I am inclined to believe.

I share your suspicions, my little scholar. I should not be surprised to discover that the entire legend is the invention of Lukas, created to eliminate those whose curiosity outweighs their good sense.

*Rodskoven* ("the Redwood") climbs the foothills between Kartakass' two rivers. Supposedly named for the ruddy tint found on the bark of its largest trees, some Kartakans suggest it earned the name for the splashes of blood often found on the roots of those trees. To remind my patron, these woods house most of the natural cul-de-sacs I warned of earlier. The wolves share these woods with logger camps and a number of hermits, who build their reinforced cabins atop the hills, where they can keep a watchful eye on the shadowed valleys below. Few of these recluses struck me as

interesting, but I was told of a monastic order living in a wooden palisade atop a large hill near the Hazlan border. The walls of this compound apparently have no gate, and the robed inhabitants supposedly come and go through natural caverns that open out into the surrounding forests. Sadly, the locals I spoke to knew nothing of the monks. It may be that I have discovered the existence of yet another enclave of the reclusive Guardians, and my inability to find their compound frustrates me to no end. It must be well hidden indeed.

The last, and arguably least, of Kartakass' great forests is *Fekleskoven*, "the Mistwood." The Mistwood stretches along the southern banks of the Musarde River, separating it from the Misty Border. The Mistwood takes its name from the omnipresent fog that drifts through its trees. The region is virtually uninhabited, though occasional tales speak of insane mystics and the like. The region is further shunned due to its proximity to the Arkalias Hills, often referred to as *den Livlos Bakker*, the Dead Hills.

The Arkalias Hills occupy Kartakass' far southeastern corner. Until the Great Upheaval, this region of Kartakass bordered on Bluetspur, and exposure to that alien realm seems to have drained the very life from the soil. This is a remarkably barren region, with the thick forest of the Mistwood abruptly giving way to feeble shrubs and dusty gorges carved by storms from pale, sun-baked clay. All sensible Kartakans shun this region, even the wolves. Said to have once been home to a wicked mistress of the undead, reputedly the ravines are haunted still.

The caves in this region plunge unfathomable miles beneath the surface. Before the Great Upheaval, these tunnels supposedly wound their way into the heart of Bluetspur. Should this be true, they would form a most intriguing sort of mistway: I hereby dub it the Worm's Path. Whether or not the mistway exists, countless horrors are said to slither through these caverns.

Two rivers divide the forests of Kartakass, both of which originate in Hazlan. The Kilovan River follows a winding, southwestern course through the hill country, separating the Wolfwood from the Redwood. After flowing past the town of Skald, it continues on its way, fed by several brooks before merging with the Musarde.

The Musarde River flows westward across southern Kartakass, passing the town of Harmonia before merging with the Kilovan. Both of these





# Kartakass



## Secret Society: The Howling Clan

The Howling Clan was founded a decade ago by a powerful werebeast called Mother Fury (female true mountain loup-garou, Clr7 of the Wolf God, CE). A tall woman with brown hair prematurely streaked with silver, Mother Fury grew up in Verbrek, where she spent her early years roaming the woods as a fearsome dire wolf. She had little use for her other forms until, near her twentieth year, she barely survived an encounter with a band of highly trained wolf hunters. Her contempt for humanity now replaced by intrigue, she embraced her human side, hoping to utilize the strengths of all of her aspects. She became a devoted follower of the Wolf God and even started to initiate humans into her growing cult.

Mother Fury soon came to the attention of Alfred Timothy, who was both disgusted by her "perversion" of his faith and fearful of her growing influence. Mother Fury and her cult were forced to flee Verbrek and soon settled in Kartakass, finding the land to their liking despite the antipathy of the native wolfweres.

The Howling Clan is founded on Fury's control and her followers' mutual love of cruelty. Mother Fury recruits new members by finding violent and sadistic humans and afflicting them with lycanthropy. The would-be recruit is released into the wild and a random member sent to hunt him. If the recruit survives to see the dawn, the cultists recapture him and Fury initiates him with her bite. The cultists engage in hunting rituals each month, and on the night of the full moon they engage in the ritual feast of a captured human. To date, the cultists have tried to avoid the wolfweres' attention, but the time is coming when Mother Fury will begin to crave Lukas' power for herself.

All members of the Howling Clan are afflicted mountain loup-garou (see **Denizens of Darkness**) and wear hooded brown robes lined with wolf fur. All share a single trigger: the sound of Mother Fury howling in her dire wolf or hybrid form. To be affected, her progeny must hear the howl and be within one mile of her position.





rivers enter Kartakass as narrow whitewaters. Though unfit for any true river traffic, loggers use the rapid current of both rivers to transport their stripped trees to the waiting mills in Skald and Harmonia. Down river from these two settlements, the rivers grow large and calm enough to allow for most forms of traffic.

Often forgotten, the *Mørkendre* (or "Black Heart") sits deep in the Wolfwood, near the Barovian border. Two creeks feed this remote lake, which in turn forms the headwaters of the Nharov River. Although river traffic arguably could reach this lake, it has little reason to do so. There are no settlements to be found here, and as a major watering hole, the woods surrounding the lake are particularly treacherous. In Zeidenburg this past spring, though, I encountered one old boatman who claimed he sailed up the Nharov to see the lake. If his tale is true, the lake's peat-choked waters conceal a scaly creature that attempted to slaughter his entire crew.

Fortunately, the region maintains a handful of true highways. They turn into morasses following Kartakass' infrequent but violent thunderstorms, however, and are often snowed in during harsh winters.

The Crimson Road continues south out of Barovia, gently winding through the Wolfwood before reaching its end in Skald. This long, remote stretch of road is blessedly free of bandits, but only because wolves have likely eaten them. One or two ramshackle roadside inns break the monotony of the woods. Travelers with no desire to feed their horses to the wolves should use these inns' fortified stables. I cannot vouch for the safety of the guests, however; these lonely inns strike me as prime hunting grounds for the *narrulve*, of which I shall soon write.

The Road to Harmony covers the short jaunt from Skald to Harmonia. The journey is too short to warrant a roadside inn; travelers seeking to reach one town by sunset should leave the other as early as possible.

Lastly, the Merchant's Way runs west from Skald to Sithicus, skirting the Wolfwood's southern border. Seldom used, it has no inns, though farmers and herdsman sparsely populate the grasslands to the south. As the sun sets, most travelers hasten to the nearest farmstead and haggle over use of the barn.

Kartakan buildings are massive log lodges with broad façades, though in Skald and Harmonia

exterior walls may be coated in stucco with exposed timber supports. Both styles feature rows of narrow, arched windows with heavy blue or green painted shutters that can be barred from the inside. The fronts of homes and shops feature rough wooden carvings of legendary heroes, animals, or delicate floral patterns. Most buildings have steep thatched roofs. The homes and businesses of the affluent are usually covered in red tiles or slate. In Kartakass, the nickname "redcap" is applied to those who have come into money; the Kartakans seem blissfully unaware of the terror this name can evoke in the northern lands surrounding the Shadow Rift.

Natural surroundings are frequently incorporated directly into Kartakan architecture, such as a living tree used as a central support pillar for a logging camp's dormitory. The most striking example I found was undoubtedly the Crystal Club in Harmonia, carved directly into a natural cavern of glittering crystals.

In rural areas, wooden palisades against Kartakass' notoriously fearless wolves typically surround buildings. Owners stable animals and livestock inside their houses in separate compartments at the back. All doors can be barred and, if the owner can afford it, locked. Interior walls are often smoothed with lathe and plaster, and most homes, inns, and taverns feature enormous central fireplaces ringed by a raised dais for musical performances and storytelling.

All Kartakan communities are built around a public amphitheater to house the annual singing contests so vital to their culture. No settlement can match the acoustical wonder of the amphitheater in Harmonia. Skald and Harmonia also feature impressive fortifications, including towering stone curtain walls, catapults, and, in Harmonia, a moat lined with crude iron spikes. The locals insisted that the so-called Invidian oppressors who once ruled here built these defenses. Kartakans today have little interest in the fortifications, maintaining them only to prevent their collapse.

## flora

Kartakass' flora is defined by the dense, towering forests that blanket the region. The rare evergreen, particularly black pine, can be found, but hardwoods (beech, oak, ash and red birch) predominate. Grassy dales explode with wildflowers every spring and summer. Plants with bulbous roots, such as beets and radishes, thrive in the rich, black soil.





Kartakans sing the praises of one plant above all others: *meekulbern*, a fickle plant that thrives in some spots while refusing to take root just a few paces away. When the plant flourishes, its narrow vines cling to every upright bit of timber in reach. Several times each year, these vines produce a few small flowers, bearing a sickly-sweet odor, and numerous crimson berry clusters. These berries are distilled into a heady, bitter brew called *meekulbrau*. Meekulbrau supposedly relaxes the throat and calms the nerves, improving the imbiber's singing voice. Kartakans admit that meekulbrau is an acquired taste. Meekulbrau is in great demand among the Kartakan elite and wealthy minstrels throughout the Core. As such, a single bottle of good vintage can fetch up to 400 gp.

I discovered another plant as I entered the Arkalias Hills. Only one plant still thrived in that wasteland, a small herb bearing pale blue and white blossoms. It appeared to be some offshoot of wolfsbane, but locals call it *nightblight*. They claim that wolves are repelled by its foul stench, which only they can detect. If true, this plant would go far to explain how the Dead Hills can remain so blessedly free of wolves. Unfortunately, my own attempts to cultivate nightblight proved futile. The bloom's potency withers quickly once picked, and all attempts to transplant a sample failed.

## fauna

The temperate wilds are home to all manner of creatures, from field mice to badgers, deer, and bears. Wild boars are common and a staple in the diet of the fearless wolves that truly own these woods. They have been known to chase carriages down the Crimson Road. In communities that lack barricades, they pad through the streets at night. Each year sees a few people dragged off, though these victims are usually children, the infirm, or travelers.

Kartakan legend tells that deep in the woods, in the untamed regions, animals grow abnormally large and powerful. The Kartakans call these fearsome creatures "grandfather animals," an aspect of their creation myths that bleeds into the present.

*These "grandfather" creatures sound suspiciously like dire animals embellished through the peasants' fears.*

## Meekulbern and Nightblight

**Meekulbern:** Meekulbern vines germinate only in soil that has been soaked in the life's blood of a humanoid slaughtered by wolfweres. Thus, they tend to grow in clusters in the killing grounds of these creatures. A flagon of meekulbrau provides an extraordinary +1 competence bonus to the drinker's vocal Perform checks for one hour. Meekulbrau also stains the lips, teeth, and anything else it touches a deep crimson for roughly the same length of time, after which the stain turns brown and flakes away. Wolfweres caught with blood on their lips often cite meekulbrau as their excuse.

**Nightblight:** This strange form of wolfsbane repels all wolves and wolflike creatures, including dire wolves, worgs, winter wolves, shapechangers with wolf like forms such as werewolves and wolfweres, many vampires, and even spellcasters *polymorphed* into lupine forms. To any of the above creatures, nightblight carries an overwhelmingly putrescent stench. Such creatures must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 30) to approach within 30 feet of the bloom. Nightblight is odorless to all other creatures. Nightblight refuses to grow anywhere but the Arkalias Hills, and if picked, the DC to resist its stench drops by -2 with each passing day.

The three most common species are said to be the grandfather boar, the grandfather owl, and, of course, the grandfather wolf. I can confirm that these creatures do exist. While exploring the Wolfwood, I examined the tattered corpse of a boar the size of a wagon. Judging from the bite marks, the massive swine was killed by several canines, each of them at least eight feet long.

Of the grandfather animals, the cruel and cunning grandfather wolf represents the only true threat. The owls are rarely seen, though I did hear occasional tales of great owls that had swooped down from the nighttime sky to snatch up a lamb, child, or halfling. The boars can be extremely dangerous when provoked, but prefer to keep to themselves deep in the woods, where they use their tusks to uproot trees to get at fungi. Kartakan woodsmen enjoy hunting these tusked horrors for







sport, carting as much of the slain boar's meat as they can back to their campsites to engage in boisterous feasts. As it is with their smaller kin, grandfather wolves also prey upon these massive boars.

Kartakan bards use these mythic creatures as characters in their *mora*, or moral tales, which I will speak of in detail later. Three characters are particularly prominent in these old tales. Central to Kartakan legends is *Bedstefader Ulv*, or Grandfather Wolf, a trickster and antihero whose insatiable appetite always leads him into trouble, but whose immense charisma and cruel cunning usually see him through. He can assume any form, and his songs can charm the forests themselves. Grandfather Wolf tales invariably mention his "fickle and avaricious" nature, and his misadventures speak to the fate of deceitful, hedonistic folk, as well as predators in both the human and natural realms.

*Bedstefader Råd* (Grandfather Boar) is Grandfather Wolf's perennial prey. Grandfather Boar is a stubborn, lethargic, dimwitted beast, but when he is provoked, he rages like a thunderstorm. Many tales use Grandfather Boar to warn against provoking unnecessary trouble.

*Bedstefader Ugle* (Grandfather Owl) sees all from his high perch but seldom intervenes in the world beneath him. When Owl does deign to swoop down to assist Wolf or Boar, he is inevitably revealed to be manipulating all involved to further his own ends. Intriguingly, I find that Kartakans speak of Grandfather Owl in virtually the same terms I have often heard expressed to describe the Vistani.

Dependable reports indicate that kobolds and goblins frequently migrate through the Wolfwood, using the natural caverns as their lairs. Bloated, spider like creatures spin vast webs between the Mistwood's trees. The occasional odd statue found in the woods lends credence to tales of cockatrices, although I believe the stuffed cockatrice on display in Skald's Fireside Feeshka Inn to be a clever forgery.

At last I come to the *narrulve*, or "trickster wolf." Fearsome creatures of myth, they are said to be shapeshifting wolves that can assume pleasing human forms to move among their prey. Many folk believe that *narrulve* in human form can be detected only by their dark tresses, and my raven hair did little to help me gain the locals' trust.





At first I assumed that legends of the *narrulve* referred to werewolves, but the folk I interviewed stressed that this was a distinctly different horror, a sort of animalistic shapechanger that van Richten once prosaically called a "wolfwere." Within a few weeks, I felt ready to experiment. During a visit to a logging camp in the Redwood, I expressed my interest in seeking out the lair of one of these "werewolves." The loggers scoffed, but I showed them the silver bullets for my snap-lock and assured them that I would be ready for any trouble. This seemed to amuse a young lumberjack named Jainos, who volunteered to act as my guide.

We two ventured alone into the deep woods, and Jainos led me into a box canyon. The cul-de-sac was littered with bones and choked with meekulbern vines. When I asked Jainos if I would find my werewolf here, he merely chuckled, then told me, "You should use your silver now, for all the good it will do you." With that, he started to sing in an eerie, plaintive voice that threatened to lull me to sleep, and as he did so, he transformed into the tall, gangly form of what I can only describe as a goblin wolf.

I doubt that Jainos expected me to shrug off the effects of his lethargic song, and he seemed most surprised when I ignored my pistols and paralyzed him with a spell. With the monster rendered helpless, I unrolled my dissection kit and got to work. My time was limited, but before I was forced to kill the creature, I learned a great deal about its weaknesses. Wolfweres have nothing to fear from silver, but a blade of cold iron cleaves neatly through their supernatural defenses. I was also able to debunk the common Kartakan belief that wolfweres in human form still wear their pelt beneath their skin.

From the lore I have collected, wolfweres seem to be talented shapechangers, able to assume nearly any humanoid form, even so far as to switch genders. Wolfweres can tailor their appearance to seem most appealing to their intended victims, but fortunately they cannot mimic specific individuals. This humanity is merely a façade, however. Wolfweres enjoy dabbling in the pleasures humanity can give them, but they are truly at home only in the wild. Based on observances of particular physical and behavioral traits, I estimate that Kartakass may be home to as many as two hundred of these "trickster wolves," few of whom live in human settlements. Conversely, I believe that as many as *half* the lumberjacks toiling in the Kartakan woods may be entirely inhuman.

## Local Animals and Native Horrors

**Wildlife:** All animals are under Lukas' influence. CR 1/8—rat; CR 1/6—donkey; CR 1/4—cat; owl; pony; weasel; CR 1/3—dog; hawk; snake, viper (*Tiny*); CR 1/2—badger; eagle; CR 1—horse, heavy; horse, light; mastiff\*, mule; wolf; CR 2—bear, brown; boar; wolfverine; CR 4—bear, black.

**Monsters:** CR 1/6—kobold; CR 1/4—goblin; CR 1/3—dire rat; dire weasel; gremishka\*; CR 1—bakhna rakhna\*, razorback\*, subhuman\*; CR 2—dire badger; ogre; *worg*; CR 3—assassin vine; baobhan sith\*, cockatrice; dire wolf; drowning\*, giant owl; lycanthrope, wereboar; CR 4—dire boar; ettercap; mimic; wolfwere\*; CR 5—lycanthrope, mountain loup-garou; winter wolf; CR 6—troll, dread\*; CR 7—ghost; wolfwere, greater\*; CR 8—treant, dread\*; CR 9—treant, undead\*; CR 10—quickwood\*.

## History

**T**he Kartakan people do not differentiate between myth, legend, and historical fact. They chronicle their lives in the form of songs and bard's tales, both highly allegorical and written with an eye for the dramatic. When I turned to contemporary sources to study past events, I merely traded the rumors of today for the gossip of prior generations. When I interviewed Meistersinger Harkon Lukas of Skald, I asked him how he could not find the amorphous nature of Kartakan history maddening.

"What does history matter?" was his reply to me. He continued, "What is done is done. Once a deed slips into the past, it affects us today only in the way that it is remembered. Many events that never happened continue to shape us today, and many events that *did* happen have long since been forgotten. What power has *fact* in the face of *significance*?"

Thus, I must warn my patron that I cannot vouch for the authenticity of the following account. When possible, I attempted to solidify facts by comparing the oral tradition with the only reliable Kartakan records I could find: the accounting ledgers kept by merchants and town treasurers. Careful scrutiny can find many telling clues hidden in these dry columns of sums and debits.





Kartakan "history" begins in the timeless realm of creation myth. Kartakans speak of the "First Days," when the sun first rose from the Mists to reveal a dark and endless forest. Humankind did not exist then, and the beasts that roamed those woods grew huge and wise. Grandfather Wolf was the master of the dark forest, and he spent his days hunting Grandfather Boar. Then, according to legend, the wolves simply entered a meadow and discovered humans already there.

Kartakans claim that their ancestors lived for untold ages as simple farmers and herders, learning music from the sounds of nature. They could not live in communion with nature — the primal beasts were far too powerful and resentful of the human intrusion for that; instead, they learned to *respect* the wild, and soon most beasts left them alone. Humankind and Grandfather Wolf soon became enemies, for both hunted everything else in the dark forests, and each was the only creature that did not fear the other.

Nebulous as these creation myths are, Kartakans tell that the era came to an end roughly 250 years ago, when armies of a new human tribe swept in and conquered the simple Kartakans. Today, Kartakans allege that these invaders hailed from Invidia and thus call the century that follows the Invidian Occupation. According to Kartakan lore, the Invidians were gifted engineers who raised great walls around their settlements to shut out the ravaging wolves. The Invidians were no more kind than Grandfather Wolf had been, however, and brutally oppressed the native Kartakans, forcing them to labor as slaves and servants. The heart of Invidian control was Dargacht Keep, a dark citadel of stone and timber from which the town of Skald would grow.

I do not believe this tale. While *someone* built the extensive fortifications that protect Skald and Harmonia, I doubt that the Invidians were involved. To the best of my knowledge, the realm of Invidia first emerged from the Mists in 603 BC, a mere decade before Kartakass itself would appear, and the two realms have never shared a border. Crumbling songs written near the time of the event never specifically identify the occupiers, instead commonly calling them the "Dark Men."

By all accounts, though, the Occupation ended rather spectacularly in 613 BC, in the seminal event that marked the realm's emergence: the fall of Dargacht Keep. According to tales, Invidian soldiers captured a minstrel in the woods and

dragged him to the keep to execute him for sedition. The Invidians regularly flexed their power by conducting brutal public executions for the benefit of the terrorized Kartakans, whose attendance was mandatory. The captured man was the bard Harkon Lukas — yes, apparently that one — and his captors made the fatal error of allowing him to deliver his "final words" to the crowd.

Rather than plead for his life, Lukas delivered a speech of such stunning power that the lowly people of Skald rose up as one to throw down their despised oppressors. By the end of the night, Dargacht Keep was collapsing in flames and all Invidian control over Skald had been broken. The uprising spread to the rest of Kartakass like wildfire, and within days the shattered Invidian Occupation was forced to retreat into the wilderness.

The fall of Dargacht Keep makes for compelling drama, and I found enough reliable accounts both in Kartakass and in Barovia to ensure that it did in fact exist. The tale leaves one compelling enigma, however: Harkon Lukas. Bards adhering to his exact description have been a prominent part of Kartakan culture ever since the uprising. If this Lukas is one man, he must be nearly two hundred years old. When I posed the issue to various Kartakans, most supposed that "Harkon Lukas" is himself a legendary archetype like Grandfather Wolf, and a series of bards have adopted his persona over the decades to build on his reputation. When questioned himself, Lukas merely grinned and quipped that his reputation precedes him considerably. This did nothing to assuage my suspicions. Could it be that this personable minstrel is the dread lord at the heart of the realm? When Kartakass first appeared, it had three neighbors: Gundarak to the northwest, Forlorn to the northeast, and Bluetspur to the east. Fortunately, all three largely ignored their new companion. The Misty Border hugged Kartakass to the south and west; Sithicus would not join the Kartakan border for more than a century, and Hazlan would not border Kartakass until after the Great Upheaval.

The remainder of the seventh century would prove relatively quiet for the young realm as the newly freed Kartakans solidified their new culture. This is not to say that *nothing* occurred, but none of it apparently had any lasting effect on this rustic realm. The most significant event of the century was a religious revival that briefly swept through the region in the 650s. The one surviving remnant of this passing fancy, the cult of the Ancestral



Choir, sank into obscurity, kept alive for eighty years in a dilapidated temple by a handful of followers until its recent revival.

With the coming of the current century, Kartakass drew the attention of covetous foreign powers. Following his disastrous Dead Man's Campaign, Vlad Drakov attempted to establish a number of Falkovnian "trading enclaves" in countries throughout the Core known to have weak or non-existent central governments. These "enclaves" are ruled as tiny extensions of Falkovnian territory, and the program has proved moderately successful. When Drakov attempted to establish an enclave in Kartakass throughout the 710s, however, he met with complete failure. The citizens of Skald and then Harmonia rose up in turn to cast out his "diplomat." Drakov's final attempt came in 709, when he ordered a palisade fort built along the Crimson Road, intended as a chokepoint through that he could control the passage of all trade into and out of Kartakass. As the tale goes, within a few weeks of the fort's completion, a minor gate was "accidentally" left open overnight. Wolves swarmed

in and slaughtered the soldiers in their beds. Today, the fort is abandoned and overgrown.

A second attempt to steal Kartakan power came in 736 BC: the Gundarakite Conspiracy. Details remain unclear even twenty years later, but the common version holds that Duke Gundar ordered one of his servants, Dr. Henrik Dominiani, to conquer Kartakass with the use of an accursed artifact capable of creating a monstrous army. Dominiani seduced a prominent young Kartakan woman named Akriel of Skald (widely rumored to be one of Lukas' illegitimate children). Dominiani and Akriel conspired to assassinate Harkon Lukas, who at the time was merely a popular bard. Popular opinion states that the conspirators hoped to break the Kartakans' will by striking down one of the country's most beloved figures. Fortunately, a band of heroes foiled the evil plot and forced the conspirators to flee into exile.

The assassination plot makes no tactical sense whatsoever unless the bard Lukas hides a great deal more power than he reveals. The case for Lukas being the dread lord as the realm's heart grows. Foreign tyrants are not the only ones to covet







Kartakass. Zhone Clieous reigned as Meistersinger of Harmonia for twenty years, from 717 to 737 BC. Toward the end of his reign, it is widely held that he planned ways to expand his control to all of Kartakass. Yet in Harmonia's fateful meistersinger contest of 737 BC, Meistersinger Clieous faced down a mysterious contender: a masked bard with a glorious singing voice who called himself only Sundered Heart. Sundered Heart mysteriously lost his voice in the final, crucial round of the contest; had this cruel fate not befallen him, it is believed that he would have won the meistersinger's title. The very night of Clieous's victory, Harmonia's orphanage burned to the ground.

A week later, when Meistersinger Clieous took the stage in Harmonia's amphitheater for his weekly public address, the scorned Sundered Heart returned and revealed a laundry list of Clieous' crimes. Sundered Heart was a local orphan named Casimir. Zhone had killed Casimir's mother years earlier and put the orphanage to the torch to silence his vengeful foe. Then, so every witness swears, Casimir attacked Clieous and revealed his most terrible secret: the meistersinger was a monstrous werewolf. Casimir pursued the monstrous Clieous into the Crystal Club and there single-handedly destroyed the beast.

As the first runner-up in the singing contest, Casimir declared himself the rightful meistersinger, his claim bolstered by support from, shockingly enough, Harkon Lukas himself. Meistersinger Casimir ruled Harmonia for a nearly a year. He proved to be a capricious ruler and openly contemptuous of Harmonia's wealthier citizens. During his reign, his most significant act revived the floundering Ancestral Choir cult, declaring it Harmonia's state religion.

Before the year was out, though, Meistersinger Casimir was publicly exposed as a werebeast. The most common account holds that Clieous had afflicted Casimir with lycanthropy during their final confrontation and that Casimir's increasingly erratic behavior had masked his descent into corruption. Casimir was forced to flee. Most accounts claim he died soon after, but some say he roams the wilds to this day.

The repercussions of two monstrous meistersingers in as many years rattled Harmonia. Eldon Comistev was named the interim meistersinger. A successful merchant, Meistersinger Comistev endured a short, troubled reign. In 741 BC, Eliska Vokrona won the office away from him,

and in the years since has done much to restore Harmonia's tarnished glory.

Casimir's pet project, the cult of the Ancestral Choir, managed to survive, but it too has suffered a troubled past. The state church's first high priest was murdered soon after temple renovations began. The elderly priest's successor, an orphan named Thoris was pious enough, but little more than a boy. After the apparent demise of his friend Casimir, Thoris threw himself from the cliffs, his final, despairing words being, "The angels have fangs."

Luther Bedarik reigned as the meistersinger of Skald for a full decade, from 733 to 743 BC. He gained the office in no small part due to the public support of Harkon Lukas and in some circles was rumored to be one of Harkon's puppets. Over the years, many folk noted that power seemed to breed true ambition in Meistersinger Bedarik's heart, and his public relationship with Lukas visibly soured; apparently, the puppet wished to cut his strings.

In the autumn of 742 BC, Luther penned and publicly performed an original ballad — performed in a local style akin to a one-man opera — that would prove extremely controversial. Berdarik's epic tragedy, *The Soulless Crown*, told the tale of an elderly Grandfather Wolf who has lived as a *narrulv* among Mankind for so long that he has been tainted by human dreams of power. Grandfather Wolf schemes to conquer Mankind entirely, but he is blind to the fact that he has poisoned two of his own cubs with twisted ambition. First, Grandfather Wolf's daughter conspires with the Dead Man to steal her father's power. In the next act, Grandfather Wolf places his son in a position of power over humans, but the spiteful child simply uses all his might to strike against his sire.

The ballad's themes are ancient, but in presentation it became obvious that Berdarik's Grandfather Wolf was a thinly disguised version of Harkon Lukas himself; the two treacherous cubs were Akriel and Casimir. The ballad's scandalous message was clear: Berdarik was claiming that all three were trickster wolves.

The resulting outrage motivated Harkon Lukas to enter the next Meistersinger Contest in the summer of 743 BC. He won the contest handily and restored his reputation. Humiliated, Luther Berdarik retreated entirely from public life, not seen since the night of Lukas' victory.

Having toppled Skald's rulers nearly a century and a half earlier, Harkon Lukas finally claimed the throne for himself. Meistersinger Lukas has suc-



cessfully defended the title ever since, but current gossip holds that he does so purely out of a sense of territoriality.

## Populace



artakans comprise a homogenous ethnic group that claims to have resided in the region since the beginning of time. Kartakans are a lean and graceful people blessed with long limbs and angular, handsome features. Both men and women tend to be tall and statuesque, and most possess the sort of rich, melodious voices usually ascribed to angels or sirens. The Kartakan complexion is generally fair and creamy, sometimes dotted by a few scattered chestnut freckles. Their eyes are almost always a striking shade of blue-violet, though eyes of pure blue or violet appear on rare occasion. Wavy, flaxen blond hair is the norm, but sometimes a child is born with dark brown or black hair. Brunettes are widely assumed to have brooding natures (earlier I noted the common Kartakan belief that the *narrulve* invariably feature raven tresses in humanoid form). Men wear their hair roguishly long and wild, often growing it past their shoulders, and favor neatly trimmed goatees and long, full moustaches. Women frequently allow their hair to hang all the way to their waists and, like the men, allow it to grow untamed.

Kartakans dress for attention, favoring comfortable but dashing fashions. Men and women alike wear blousy shirts and trousers, the latter tucked into high black riding boots — whether or not the individual could possibly afford a horse. Women tend to wear short vests over their blouses, while men prefer full coats with wide cuffs on the sleeves. Women don dresses and gowns only on highly formal occasions. As summer cools to winter, Kartakans often add half-capes to their attire, graduating to full-length, fur-lined cloaks when the snows fall. Wide-brimmed hats are popular with men year-round, particularly with woodsmen and travelers. A long plume is considered especially jaunty, particularly if plucked from a Grandfather Owl.

Rich and poor alike dress in vibrant colors. Brilliant reds, yellows, and blues are the most popular, followed by hues such as burgundy, gold, and turquoise. Delicate embroidery is frequently used for decoration, and sleek, form-fitting elven fabrics are highly sought after on the rare occasion that a shipment arrives from Sithicus. Jewelry is

used only sparingly; the sparkle of a single ring or earring is considered most attractive. Further adornment usually takes the form of precious accessories such as silver or gold buttons, buckles, or clasps.

The dominant language of Kartakass is Vaasi, but the Kartakans have assimilated a great deal of the Elven tongue of their western neighbors, resulting in a distinct dialect with a lyrical cadence that sounds best when sung. I am told that Sithicans can often piece together the gist of a Kartakan's words. I also found that most merchants are at least casually conversant in Luktar and Balok.

Kartakass also possesses its own, entirely distinct language known as Old Kartakan. This difficult language was apparently the common tongue of the Kartakans prior to the Occupation, though today it is all but extinct, spoken only by the elderly or to add an air of dignity to formal affairs. In a sense, it has become the language of secrets.

## Language Primer

Having already sampled the basics of the Vaasi tongue in my Hazlan report, here I expand upon that vocabulary. The Kartakan dialect incorporates many synonyms, and Kartakans typically use whatever word produces the most melodious effect.

### Vaasi

*meneskene*: man  
*kvinde*: woman  
*barn*: child  
*liv*: life  
*endeligt*: death  
*elske, have kaer*: love  
*musik, noder, tonlist*: music  
*tømmer*: timber

### Old Kartakan

*pozdrav*: greetings  
*zbogom*: goodbye  
*o*: yes  
*ne*: no  
*pomoct!*: help!  
*pocte stran!*: go away!  
*lubezen*: love  
*loviti volkove*: wolf  
*glasba*: music





Most Kartakans live in poverty, but they claim to be content and are fiercely proud of the freedoms their homeland affords them. Kartakan culture is remarkably egalitarian and incorporates regular recreation, and these folk seem to fear nothing but the wolves. All Kartakans are freemen, and most support themselves as farmers, herders, or loggers; craftsmen stay close to the larger settlements.

Young couples frequently marry for love, though many admit to a certain pressure to “trade up,” improving their own social standing by marrying into a family with better positioning. Due to this social opportunism, it is common for parents to establish nuptial “labors” that the suitor must fulfill before they will grant their blessing for marriage. The nature of these tasks varies as widely as the families that issue them. Some families simply demand dowries, but other suitors have been required to work the parents’ farmstead for a season, to complete training at a bardic hall, or in one case simply to travel abroad for a year. Despite this apparent variety, I note that all of these “labors” inevitably boil down to the suitor proving his or her worth, a situation with which I currently sympathize.

*Do not be too quick to deem yourself worthy of my respect, little scholar. Your labors are far from complete.*

Couples typically marry in their late teens to early twenties. Upscale, urban couples tend to have small families, while couples in agricultural regions produce as many children as they can support. Medicine is no better in Kartakass than in Barovia, so childhood death rates remain high. Infant mortality commonly remains the work of disease, but once a child learns to walk, the odds shift considerably in favor of his doom coming in the form of a ravenous beast. Divorce and remarriage are both permitted, but are considered mildly scandalous.

Kartakass possesses no true formal schooling. Parents teach their children the rudiments of literacy in both Vaasi and musical notation. The community meistersinger provides the child’s moral and ethical education through recitals of divine songs called the *mora* (see below). The only structured educational system I could find are the bardic halls of Harmonia and Skald. These halls admit children as young as ten, but only if the child possesses noteworthy vocal talent and the child’s

parents can pay annual tuition fees. These halls provide a reasonably rounded education that can last up to ten years, but the focus remains on creating gifted performers, not philosophers.

Kartakass’ soil is extremely fertile, so even impoverished commoners tend to eat fairly well. The dark red bulbs and leafy green tops of the region’s oversized beets are a daily staple of the Kartakan diet, whether baked, broiled, pickled, jellied, or glazed with honey. A popular recipe is *borscht*, a thick soup that combines beets with cabbage, apples, onions, and molasses. Kartakans usually supplement their diet with goat or beef; dairy, fish, eggs, and poultry dishes; and tart, sour-dough bread. Local wine, ale, or hard apple cider accompanies most meals. Kartakans typically sample meekulbrau only as a rare delicacy.

Folk with greater resources usually spice up their meals with lamb, beef, or pork, usually served as thick steaks or spicy sausages. Even those of lesser station can usually afford these heavier foods as an occasional treat. Sweets often come in the form of crisp gingerbread or hazelnut tortes.

The defining cultural trait of the Kartakans is their boundless love for music and stories, which forms the core of their mystical philosophies. Kartakan settlements ring with music and are usually heard before they are seen. This music is called the *mora*, an ever-expanding body of divine songs written by the Kartakans’ revered ancestors, called *den Anen Prima*, or “the Ancestral Choir.” Kartakans have songs for every occasion, ranging from simple children’s ditties to bawdy drinking songs to profoundly dramatic ballads and arias. An individual who goes to his grave without penning a single new song — that is, without contributing to the culture — is considered to have wasted his life tragically.

Most *mora* teach in the form of allegory, underlining cultural lessons the Kartakans deem significant. Most of these musical fables concern a regular stable of recurring, archetypal characters. Many of these characters are loosely based on famous historical figures — the bard Harkon Lukas is nearly a legend himself in this respect — but the oldest and most revered songs feature the Grandfathers as reflections of both humanity and nature.

Gossip is also a vital component of Kartakan interaction. Telling a Kartakan a juicy secret is considered a challenge for him to reveal one in turn. Kartakans gleefully swap rumors among close friends and colleagues, but try to avoid engaging in these games with strangers.





I should note that the Kartakans may not be quite as childishly credulous as I have depicted them. Kartakans occasionally reveal a smirking approach to their own myths and folklore, indicating that they do not take it all as seriously as it may seem. This is most clear in their tradition of telling *feeshka*, or “little lies.” Kartakan families gather around their hearths at night to trade these tall tales, whiling away the dark hours as wolves prow outside. The Kartakans are fond of spinning these tales to lead gullible friends and strangers alike on wild goose chases. No reputable Kartakan would ever send anyone off on a chase that would strand him in the wilderness overnight, however.

Kartakans have an extremely animistic, primal view of nature. They believe that in the heart of the forests, the First Days have never truly ended. True magic is seldom witnessed, but is held to be a primal force of nature. Magic is not seen as inherently evil, but believed to be extremely dangerous; calling upon these primal forces is to beckoning wolves to one’s doorstep.

Kartakans are not terribly religious. They pray to no gods, and marriages and funerals are usually secular affairs overseen by family members. A few true religions have surfaced in Kartakass, however, including a theological offshoot of their native mystical philosophies.

**The Ancestral Choir:** The tiny cult of the Ancestral Choir is a local phenomenon currently enjoying a minor revival in Harmonia. Unlike most Kartakans, cult members believe in the Ancestral Choir as a tangible entity: the Kartakans’ revered ancestors not only watch over their living descendants, but can intervene on their behalf as well. The faithful believe that offering proper veneration to these ancestors can earn them divine favor in life and guarantees they will reach the eternal haven of the Ancestral Choir after death. Beyond this tenet, the cult’s beliefs closely mirror that of mainstream Kartakans, who generally view the cult with a smirk. The cult seems to appeal most strongly to Harmonia’s most desperate and disaffected citizens. In fact, many current cult members are orphans who were taken in by the temple as children after their orphanage nearly burned down.

Kartakan afterlife beliefs do not feature any concept of a hell. Instead, they speak of two rival “heavens” — one for humankind and one for animals of nature.

For humans, “heaven” means that one’s spirit joins the Ancestral Choir and adds one’s voice to

## The Ancestral Choir

**Symbol:** A flute; clerics “present” their symbols by playing them.

**Alignment:** N

**Portfolio:** Wisdom, foresight, protection, truth, beauty

**Domains:** Knowledge, Luck, the Mora (see page 114)

**Favored Weapon:** Battleaxe

Clerics of the Ancestral Choir, called *choirmasters*, pray for their spells at sunrise and wear vestments of red and gold. They are expected to have clear, pleasant singing voices, necessary to teach the *mora* to the children’s choir.

A tiny congregation meets each morning in Harmonia’s Temple of Divine Song for brief services, lifting their voices in praise, singing different *mora* every day to demonstrate their admiration for the wisdom of their forefathers. The faithful are expected to attend services at least once a week.

its eternal music. There is no true judgment involved here, no realm of punishment for the wicked, and all human souls are free to join the Choir. Those who have led morally unacceptable lives are simply fated to have their music forever ignored, drowned out by more worthy songs. Of course, to the prideful Kartakans, to be eternally ignored is considered a form of oblivion and might as well be hell in their minds. In Kartakass, to say that someone has “joined the choir” is a pleasant euphemism for death analogous to the common “passed away.”

The second Kartakan afterlife is usually called *den Mørk Skov*, “the Dark Forest.” This is heaven for the beasts of the wilds, where the only music is the chirping of crickets, croaking of toads, and the howling of wolves. All animal spirits come here after death to spend the rest of eternity doing whatever beasts enjoy. Unfortunately, so Kartakans assert, what wolves enjoy most is preying upon humans. Human souls are supposedly safe once they reach the Ancestral Choir, but the wolves of heaven are said to hunt the souls of the recently departed. If these *engelulve* — or “angel wolves” — catch a human soul, they drag it back to the Dark Forest, where the hapless spirit is stalked forever.





People who die alone are thought to be at dire risk of being found by the angel wolves. The same is true of those who do not believe in the Ancestral Choir and those who are driven to suicide by despair, for neither is likely to seek out the Choir before the wolves find them. The surest sign that a soul has been lost, however, is if wild animals feed on the corpse — wolves in particular.

Kartakans have developed a handful of funereal traditions to prevent this dreadful occurrence. Kartakans bury their dead in deep graves, and instead of using headstones, they confound scavengers by covering the grave with a stone slab or, occasionally, a latticework of cold iron bars.

Kartakan families who cannot afford such costly measures often resort to a lengthy, esoteric ritual. Mourners gather in the deceased's home, where the body lies on display. The mourners take turns singing odes to the dead man, lauding his life and the quality of his soul. After an hour or so of these dirges, the funereal party splits into two groups. Half fall silent, standing watch over the corpse as its physical guardians. The rest of the mourners venture out into the woods, tugging a young goat along with them. Walking a fair distance into the wilds, they tie the helpless creature to a tree and abandon it, all the time continuing to sing odes to the deceased. Although the songs have not changed, the mourners' gestures make it clear that their high praise is now directed at the sacrificial animal, singing for the benefit of unseen wolves assumed to be listening to their every word.

After spending the night in silent vigil over the deceased, if the corpse is intact and a quick check reveals that nothing remains of the goat save a frayed rope and the coppery smell of blood, the relieved mourners bury the dead man with no further ado. As it was explained to me, the angel wolves were fooled into taking the goat's spirit, thus buying the soul of the deceased enough time to reach the Ancestral Choir. Had the corpse been ravaged before the goat was taken, the soul would surely be doomed.

Lastly, the undead hold a particular role in Kartakan folklore as rather pitiful spirits who have either refused to join the Ancestral Choir or been expelled for unfathomable reasons. Forever hunted by the *engelulve*, these wretched creatures steal mortal lives to throw the angel wolves off their scent. Because the undead have no place in the Ancestral Choir, most Kartakans have developed

the belief (without merit, unfortunately) that the undead cannot sing.

## Kartakass in the Spirit World

Kartakan campfire tales are shaped by the nature of the creatures said to lurk in their Near Ethereal — or perhaps it is the other way around. When grim reapers (see **Denizens of Darkness**) manifest in Kartakass, they often take the form of ebon, winged wolves (make the cosmetic change of replacing the scythe attack with a bite attack).

Animal ghosts are as common as humanoid ghosts in Kartakass. Ghosts can also choose the following as one of their special abilities:

**Songstealer (Su):** If the ghost makes a successful melee touch attack, the victim must make a successful Will save or be instantly rendered mute. The victim cannot vocalize in any way, including casting spells with vocal components. The victim remains mute for a number of days equal to the ghost's rank or until the ghost is destroyed. As long as the victim is mute, the ghost can speak in the victim's voice, if it wishes. *Dispel magic* cast by a cleric or paladin can lift the effect. The ghost can use this attack a number of times per day equal to its rank.

**Ezra:** The Church of Ezra has never found a strong audience in Kartakass, no doubt because it represents exactly the sort of centralized, foreign power the Kartakans abhor. The presence of Ezra's clergy is limited to a handful of proselytizing *wardens* (traveling anchorites) who drift from hamlet to hamlet, catering to their scattered handful of followers.

**Hala:** Likewise, the Church of Hala maintains an unobtrusive profile in Kartakass. The witches keep a few humble hospices, usually located within a day's walk of the larger settlements. Most Kartakans know virtually nothing of these veiled witches beyond their role as healers.



## The Kartakan Hero

**Races:** Humans are by far the dominant race in Kartakass. Half-elves are usually the product of the Kartakans' limited interaction with their Sithican neighbors, and as such display their elven parent's silvery hair. Other races are extremely rare. Kartakans are quick to believe even the wildest tales told about nonhumans, though they are somewhat accustomed to Sithican elves.

**Classes:** Bards, fighters, rangers, and rogues are the most common classes encountered in Kartakass. Unsurprisingly, bards form the backbone of Kartakan culture; bards throughout the Core dream of performing at Harmonia's amphitheater. Rangers are considered the defenders of Kartakan settlements against nature and are generally well regarded. Rogues are also respected for their resourceful cunning, a trait common to the heroes of Kartakan *mora*. Kartakans are notably noncommittal toward fighters; while they recognize the need for brawn, they see nothing particularly praiseworthy in it. Barbarians are uncommon and usually appear as wild men, shunning the larger settlements. With the exception of the handful of followers in the Ancestral Choir cult, Kartakans have little respect for organized religion; clerics are rare and are sure to face frequent good-natured ribbing. Druids and sorcerers are also rarely encountered and poorly understood, having been entangled in many wildly inaccurate tales, though the Kartakans (with a few exceptions) are not overtly hostile toward them. Wizards and monks are virtually unknown, and the former are frequently confused with sorcerers. Any that appear will be the students of an isolated, secretive teacher. Paladins are seen as figures of legend, the archetypical doomed hero.

**Recommended Skills:** Craft (carpentry, weaving), Gather Information, Knowledge (nature), Perform (ballad, harp, lute, ode, storytelling), Profession (brewer, farmer, lumberjack), Wilderness Lore.

**Recommended Feats:** Expertise (plus derivatives), Lunatic, Skill Focus (Perform), Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (rapier).

**Kartakan Male Names:** Akil, Castor, Erik, Joshua, Kyros, Laszlo, Petros, Sandor, Theon, Zev.

**Kartakan Female Names:** Akrynna, Aleris, Henrika, Julianna, Katalyn, Kolette, Lelia, Meleda, Odelle, Zeta.

## The Realm

**N**o one lords over Kartakass. United by a common culture, each settlement — from the major towns of Skald and Harmonia down to the handful of tiny thorps scattered across the countryside — exists as an independent city-state. Although communities frequently attempt to outshine their neighbors through prestigious performances or similar displays, none of these chest-thumping rivalries have ever escalated into violence.

### Government

Each permanent settlement in Kartakass is ruled by a meistersinger, who can be thought of as a sort of singing mayor. A meistersinger wields considerable power within his community, being

largely free to rule however he sees fit. Meistersingers personally oversee nearly every aspect of government: they mete out criminal justice, adjudicate civil disputes, oversee public works, fund the town guard, and appoint lesser officials. Most importantly, to the Kartakan point of view, meistersingers are seen as cultural and moral leaders, charged with ensuring that the youngest generations learn the *mora*. Most meistersingers provide *Primae Consularae*, weekly public forums in which they entertain, dispense wisdom, and address the concerns of the crowd, offering a general review of the current state of affairs.

In return, the meistersinger is comfortably housed and treats the community's coffers as his own. Kartakan communities derive most of their







revenue from various taxes and entry tolls. The more prosperous the community, the more prosperous its leader.

Meistersingers are chosen in an annual singing contest, starting on Midsummer's Day. This amusingly quaint system is remarkably egalitarian, at least in theory. Anyone is free to enter the contest, be they man or woman, rich or poor, Kartakan or outlander. Winners are chosen by audience response, however, and in practice, Kartakan audiences tend to be conservative. Political outsiders definitely start with a strike against.

Festivities begin at midday, when lesser performers — commonly apprentices, talented amateurs, and the like — play for the gathering crowds throughout the afternoon. As the sun touches the horizon, the reigning meistersinger takes the stage. Hushing the crowds, he opens the proceedings by reciting a ritual greeting in Old Kartakan. The meistersinger switches to Vaasi to offer a brief introduction, then calls for the contest to begin. The contest is divided into three rounds, split over two nights. The first round is called One Voice Among Many, and is a contest of both pure singing talent and vocal stamina. As this round begins, the contenders take the stage one at a time, each one performing any song he wishes. Each contender's goal in this round is simply to win as much of the audience's attention as possible through the power and clarity of his voice.

This round can last up to an hour. Contenders who are clearly outclassed are expected to leave the stage and join the audience. When the herd has been sufficiently thinned, so to speak, the meistersinger retakes the stage and declares the round over. He uses audience applause to select the five most popular contenders, who proceed to the second round.

After a brief intermission to allow the contenders to rest their voices, the second round begins: the War of Words. The five contenders retake the stage for a duel of insults, intended to test the contenders' rhetoric, creativity, and ability to weather abuse. The meistersinger opens the round by addressing a contender by name and asking the question, "What makes you fit to rule?" The addressed contender must justify his claim to the office, defending his justification against the barbs — hopefully witty, often cruel — of the other four contenders with witty repartee of his own. Whenever the pace sags, the meistersinger steps back in and asks the same question of a new contender.

The round continues in this manner until all five contenders get their chance to promote themselves and belittle the others.

At the end of the round, the meistersinger again calls for the audience to select the contender who has demonstrated the most cunning, poise, and civic pride. As the crowds applaud their favorites, the meistersinger declares a winner, bringing an end to the second round and the night's festivities.

The third and final round begins at sunset the following night. This time, just two performers take the stage: the surviving contender and the reigning meistersinger, who must at last actively defend his title. The final round is quite simple. Each performs a single song of his choosing, drawn from any source and performed in any style. The meistersinger goes first, followed by the contender. In his one song, each performer must express the depth of his emotions, wisdom, and knowledge, as well as demonstrating his strengths while pointing out his opponent's flaws.

As always, the audience decides the winner with their applause. Whoever takes the contest leaves the stage as the community's new meistersinger.

Obviously, the system favors the incumbent. Once in office, most meistersingers enjoy a reign that lasts for many years before they peacefully choose to retire. Aberrations do occur, but meistersingers who prove themselves to be truly incompetent or corrupt seldom last more than a year.

Supernatural forms of enhancing one's performance are strictly forbidden, but I have heard many accounts of contenders who tried covertly to utilize such deceit anyway. On the other hand, all contenders are traditionally offered a complimentary goblet of meekulbrau before each round.

I gained a modicum of confidence in these popularity contests when I learned that an untested meistersinger's power is not absolute. Meistersingers typically rely on the counsel of a handful of advisors, civil servants who swear an oath of loyalty to their community, not their meistersinger. Well versed in the realities of power, they often outlast the meistersingers they advise. In fact, during the tumultuous 730s, three advisors in Harmonia managed to serve four successive meistersingers, including the two publicly unveiled as monsters.





## Meistersinger Contests

Because of the unusual nature of Kartakan elections, it is entirely possible for a PC to enter a contest one night and find herself the ruler of one of Kartakass' communities the next. The life of a meistersinger does not lend itself well to adventuring, but should the need arise, the Dungeon Master can use the following system to adjudicate meistersinger contests. Of course, this framework should be fleshed out with plenty of roleplay.

**Round One: One Voice Among Many.** Victory here simply requires a successful song-based Perform check. The five contenders with the highest Perform checks proceed to round two. The number of contenders in a given contest is usually equal to 1% of the community's total population. It is extremely rare for wolfweres to enter these contests; most have no thirst for power and no love for the endless formalities inherent to the position.

To determine the skill ranks of each NPC contender randomly, roll  $3d4+3$  and add the community modifier found on Table 4-45 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Each contender can also be assumed to have a positive Charisma modifier equal to  $+1d4$ .

**Round Two: War of Words.** The five contenders must now rely on their Bluff skill. Use the system above for randomly determining the NPC contenders' Bluff and Knowledge (local) ranks, as well as their Intelligence and Wisdom modifiers. For the purposes of this insult duel, each contestant is considered to have a "Dignity" score equal to her Wisdom.

Each round, each contender can attempt to insult any other contender. The insulter and defender make contested Bluff checks. Any contender who also succeeds at a Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) crafts a particularly pointed barb and receives a +2 synergy bonus to her next Bluff check. If the defender's Bluff check wins, then she has deflected the insult with a witty retort, and the insulter loses one point of Dignity. If the insulter's Bluff check wins, then the amusing insult hits home, and the defender loses one point of Dignity.

When a contender is reduced to zero Dignity, she has been humiliated and the audience knows it. That contender must step down, and the round ends when one contender is left standing.

**Round Three: Dueling Hearts.** The final round comes down to a contested Perform check between the reigning meistersinger and the lone contender, winner take all. In the case of ties, the performer with the highest Charisma wins. If the results are still tied, the round repeats until a winner emerges.

If a performer makes a successful Knowledge (local) check (DC 20), she can select a particularly poignant and appropriate *mora* to sing, granting a +2 synergy bonus to the Perform check. Reputation is important to the Kartakans, so the following circumstance modifiers also apply. All modifiers stack.

Modifier	Circumstance
+2	Performer is member of the local bardic hall
+1	Performer is member of any other Kartakan bardic hall
-1	Performer's identity is unclear or concealed
-2	Performer is not Kartakan
-OR	Performer's Outcast Rating





Meistersingers also assign a captain to oversee the town guard and maintain order. Regrettably, town guardsmen, like the mastersingers they serve, are often motivated primarily by self-interest. The average guardsman can be counted to protect the citizenry, but he is not above a bit of bribery or minor extortion. The guardsmen manning the toll bridges leading into Skald and Harmonia proved to be the worst in this regard. Bridge guards typically treat their own citizens fairly, but an obviously foreign traveler such as myself can expect to be presented with all manner of imaginary tolls and fees. The most egregious of these, reserved only for the wealthy, is the "Allegiance Tax," in which a traveler is charged anywhere up to 5 gp if he cannot sing the community anthem.

## Economy

Like most of the countries of the southern Core, Kartakass' economy is overwhelmingly agricultural, with most of its natural resources tied into the region's dense woodlands. Kartakass has no aristocracy, so most true power here falls to the mercantile elite. Kartakan merchants are a cun-

## Law Enforcement

A typical Kartakan guardsman works under a captain of the guard to enforce laws and keep the peace. The captain reports to the mastersinger in turn.

**Kartakan guardsman:** Human War1; CR 1/2; Size M humanoid (human); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (touch 10, flatfooted 12); Atk +1 melee (1d6, crit 19–20/x2, short sword) or +1 melee (1d10, crit x3, halberd) or +1 ranged (1d8, crit 19–20/x2, light crossbow); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

**Skills and Feats:** Intimidate +2, Listen +2, Sense Motive +1, Spot +2; Dodge, Endurance.

**Possessions:** Leather armor, short sword, halberd, light crossbow.







ning lot, known to conceal their nearly predatory greed behind a smiling, amiable demeanor. Within settlements, these merchants' taxes fill most of the town coffers, so meistersingers must be careful to keep their wealthy citizens appeased. Outside these settlements, loggers and trappers are policed only by the capricious cruelties of nature. Kartakan merchants conduct most of their commerce with Barovian and Invidian traders.

Timber is Kartakass' most significant export. Logging is physically demanding and dangerous work, but lumberjacks seem to enjoy what is often called "logger's luck." Simply put, it is extremely rare for a lumberjack to be attacked by wolves while on the job. I have already noted that the logging camps scattered at the edges of the great forests may have been thoroughly infiltrated by the *narvulve*. I deduce that the wolfweres protect their human colleagues to ensure that their preferred source of income does not falter. Lumberjacks are not immune to tragedy, however. Loggers die every year in accidents while sawing trees or floating them downriver, and the stereotypical logger — be he wolf or man — is a lawless, temperamental sort, who lives in the wilds because civilization has proven a poor fit.

Once cleared for farming, the soil produces lush crops. During the warmer months, farmers grow rye, barley, oats, cabbages, beets, radishes, and potatoes.

Herdsmen raise hogs, sheep, or cattle, particularly in the grassy dales that surround Skald and Harmonia and follow the Merchant's Way. Many maintain flocks of *teksel*, a long-tailed breed of sheep that produces particularly fine wool. Children are never sent out to watch over the flocks alone; herdsmen watch for wolves in teams, often with the assistance of sheepdogs. Some herdsmen bring along a mastiff or two for additional protection. Livestock is always herded into secure shelters by nightfall. The rivers in Kartakass teem with fish, and one commonly sees fishermen and children along the Kilovan or Musarde, rod fishing for trout or salmon.

Kartakass is poor in mineral resources, and mining is rare. Although the occasional vein of iron ore or natural crystals may be found, the caverns beneath Kartakass are prone to collapse, turning mining into a particularly dangerous pursuit for meager rewards.

Kartakass' major settlements house secondary industries such as wood and grain mills, slaughter-

houses, and distilleries. They are also home to skilled craftsmen and artisans. Although a niche industry at best, the musical instruments produced in Kartakass are widely regarded to be without peer. A performer who comes to Kartakass is likely to find a craftsman skilled in creating a musical instrument of any stripe, no matter how exotic — so long as he is willing to pay the master craftsman's price.

Skald and Harmonia have occasionally minted their own currency, usually to mark the election of a new meistersinger, but Kartakan merchants routinely accept foreign currency. Most Kartakan coins are foreign coins that have been re-stamped. As a gesture of cultural unity, both settlements share the same design for their currency. The head sides of Kartakan coins feature a lyre, while the tail sides feature musical notations of increasing complexity. The Canticle is the copper piece, the Dirge is the silver, and the Ballad is the gold. Barter remains common in lesser settlements but is seldom accepted by the prestigious establishments in the big towns.

## Diplomacy

Kartakass engages in lively trade with its neighbors to the north, but lacks the strong, centralized power base necessary to exert any real influence. Historically speaking, Kartakass' neighbors have been of two stripes: those that ignore Kartakass and those that covet its natural resources.

Few Kartakans travel, and they tend to believe whatever bizarre tales their wandering minstrels bring home to them. Kartakan accounts of Barovia and Hazlan were wildly exaggerated in comparison to my own findings; I suspect the same holds true for its westerly neighbors.

**Barovia:** Gundarak was the only land route into Kartakass for decades, but the stiff levies Duke Gundar imposed on all goods passing through his realm greatly stifled trade. Relations with Gundarak might have deteriorated further had the Kartakans learned of the plot to conquer them before its apparent instigator was assassinated. Kartakans celebrated when Gundar met his doom, and they consider it a great tragedy that the Gundarakites have again fallen under a tyrant's shadow. Although Kartakans will not involve themselves directly in the uprising, they often sing the praises of the "freedom fighter" Ardonk Szerieza. These songs incorporate the local belief that Barovia's aristocrats — from Strahd and Gundar down to the







lowliest boyar — are vampires literally draining the life from their peasantry.

**Forlorn:** As with all of Forlorn's other neighbors, Kartakans consider it a haunted wilderness, overrun with corrupted savages and best shunned and forgotten. For once, the Kartakan view of reality strikes close to the truth.

**Hazlan:** The border between Kartakass and Hazlan is marked by rugged foothills and nearly closed off by the twin barriers of Forlorn and the Dead Hills. The two countries have virtually no formal interaction. Kartakans imagine that the Hazlani must live much as they do: huddled in their villages, hiding from the twisted creations of foul magic said to roam the wilds.

**Invidia:** Although Kartakass and Invidia have never shared a common border, I consider the two realms' relationship to be suitably complex to war-rant inclusion. Due to the Kartakan belief in the so-called Invidian Occupation, Kartakan reactions toward Invidia were understandably frosty for more than a century. When the tyrant Bakholis was killed and his militaristic regime overthrown in 729 BC, however, the Kartakans were quick to embrace the newly liberated people of Invidia, viewing the Invidian uprising as a mirror of their own. In the years that followed, opportunistic Kartakan traders established informal mercantile allegiances with Invidia's communities, and each fall eager bards and the idle rich would charter riverboats to take them to the famed harvest festival in Karina.

The sudden ascendance of Malocchio Aderre nearly a decade ago put a damper on this exuberance. Relations have not been improved by the widespread acceptance of Vistani legends that paint Aderre as a literal demon. Trade continues for now, but the Kartakan mood has turned tentative. For Kartakans, the burning question is whether the Invidians will rise to strike down this tyrant as they did Bakholis, or whether they will revert to their ancient, warlike ways.

**Sithicus:** When Sithicus appeared on Kartakass' border thirty-six years ago, curious Kartakans were quick to explore its forests, hoping to use its rivers as an alternate trade route. A few of these explorers settled down, and to this day most of the humans in Sithicus are of Kartakan descent. Kartakans commonly believe the reticent elves to be immortal, fey creatures, and their fascination with the alien culture was great enough to rival their fear of the wailing ghosts said to blanket the

countryside. Within a decade, Sithicans had absorbed many Elven turns of phrase into their language. For their part, the Sithicans seem to be far less enamored of the Kartakans. When I spoke to Coraline, a Sithican emigrant now living in Skald, she offered the opinion that the elves would likely have acted to repel the human intruders by now were their own political situation not in such disrepair.

Fascinating. It occurs to me that the ruler of every country that had extensive dealings with the Kartakans has met a violent end.

*Just what is my little scholar implying here? A network of saboteurs who have slipped free from the pages of history? Preposterous! Even the most secretive rebels seek glory once their deed is done.*

## Sites of Interest

**I** arrived in Kartakass in late summer as the season's sweltering heat was ending. I wound my way south, visiting a number of inconsequential hamlets and logging camps. By the time I reached the literal end of the world — the Misty Border — autumn appeared and the trees dropped their leaves, leaving me to backtrack to Harmonia through black and skeletal woods.

## The Ambrose Compound

Located in the foothills of the eastern Wolfwood, the Ambrose compound was the first sign of Kartakan civilization I encountered. The compound is composed of a two-story lodge house and a few outbuildings, including stables and the small, drafty cabin where I slept. A crude looking but solid palisade keeps the wildlife at bay. I saw several similar constructions during my trek through the region, and as such the compound itself is not particularly noteworthy. Its inhabitants, however, may prove of great interest to my patron.

The master of the compound is an elderly widower with a frosty demeanor named Jonathan Ambrose. From the man's simple brown robe, I might have judged him to be some manner of scholarly monk, but the tightly knit family of servants working for him informed me that in his







younger days, Ambrose was a swordsman of remarkable skill. Over the course of several days of conversation, I gradually learned that Ambrose is a member — perhaps even a leader — of an organization they called “the brotherhood.” Fortunately, I concealed my alarm when I learned that the goal of this “brotherhood” is to hunt down and destroy all who wield magic. They claim to hunt only “evil” spellcasters, but I find it unlikely that these ignorant vigilantes would distinguish between true villainy and, say, my scholarly research techniques.

Adding to my confusion, I also discovered that Ambrose’s adopted daughter of sorts, a woman in her mid-thirties named Elaine Clairn, possesses notable sorcerous talents of her own. When I somewhat tenderly pressed Ambrose to explain this discrepancy, he claimed that not *all* magic is inherently evil, and that Elaine uses her gifts for good. Yet I could sense that the man simply did not quite believe what he was saying, and I dropped the subject lest he be tempted to press me for personal details in turn.

## Skald

After excusing myself from the Ambrose compound, I spent time exploring the Wolfwood, gradually working my way south to Skald, the largest and in many ways most powerful settlement in Kartakass, though in cultural matters it is widely considered to fall in Harmonia’s shadow. Skald is a crossroads: to the north, the Crimson Road stretches to Barovia and beyond; to the south, the Merchant’s Way cuts west to Sithicus, and the Road to Harmony leads to Harmonia.

Skald is bordered to the east by overhanging cliffs and to the north and west by the Kilovan River (or Sing-Song River, or *Afsyngesang Floden*) as it curves southward. The Sing-Song plunges sixty feet off the cliffs into a churning basin that throws up a fine curtain of mist year round. Locals call this basin the Cauldron, due to its boiling appearance. The Sing-Song flows out of the Cauldron into a stretch of white water, but quickly settles into a smooth, rapid, current.

## Secret Society: The Brotherhood of Broken Blades

The Brotherhood of Broken Blades is a loose confederation of “mage-finders,” founded nearly sixty years ago by the late Kartakan bard and adventurer Calum Songmaster. Although the Brotherhood opposes all evil creatures, it is primarily dedicated to the destruction of evil spellcasters, ranging from villainous wizards and sorcerers to more monstrous foes such as liches and hags. Unfortunately, the typical Brotherhood mage-finder believes that magic inherently corrupts the soul, and thus all witches and arcane spellcasters are viewed with deep suspicion.

Brotherhood mage-finders usually work in pairs, though they often enlist aid from non-members. Mage-finders see their mission as honorable and vital, and are not secretive as an organization; neither do they advertise their membership or goals, lest the information reach the wrong ears. Jonathan Ambrose (male human Ftr9, NG) is the closest the Brotherhood has to a leader, though he last lifted a sword years ago. His compound serves as the Brotherhood’s headquarters. Over the course of his long life, Ambrose has lost many loved ones to evil mages, but fifteen years ago one of his wards, Elaine Clairn (female human Sor4, CG), developed arcane powers of her own. Jonathan’s bitter hatred of magic continually duels with his love for his adopted daughter, leaving him deeply conflicted.

The typical mage-finder is neutral good, chaotic good, or chaotic neutral. Fighters, rangers, and rogues are most common, although witch-hunters (*Secrets of the Dread Realms*) and avengers (*Van Richten’s Arsenal*) are also frequently found. Bards are seen as dabblers at best and thus tolerated, but more potent spellcasters are never counted among the Brotherhood’s members.





Curtain walls 25 feet tall mark Skald's southern border. Built by the so-called Invidian occupiers, they once radiated out from Dargacht Keep. Today, this razed citadel and its outer curtain wall are little more than a shattered outline of rubble surrounding a wide gravel plaza. Locals maintain that ghostly soldiers still patrol the keep's walls, but I could find no first-hand sightings. Skald's annual meistersinger contest is held in Dargacht Plaza, where the picturesque ruins and their eerie shadows greatly enrich the ambiance. Intriguingly, despite the lack of outer walls, the locals insist that no meistersinger contest has ever been marred by a wolf attack.

The southeastern curtain wall runs to the cliffs, where it meets a tower built into the cliff face itself. This Great Tower runs up to the Meistersinger's Keep atop the cliffs. Another relic of the Invidian occupation, the keep is a dark, ominous structure, though its glowering atmosphere is blunted each night when flocks of sheep shelter between its curtain walls. The keep serves as the official home and offices of the meistersinger and town guard, but Meistersinger Lukas is rumored to spend most of his evenings elsewhere.

Another wall runs north through the heart of the town, dividing it into two quarters: Upper Skald to the east and Lower Skald to the west. Upper Skald is an affluent neighborhood, with cobblestone streets and frequent patrols by the town guard. It is home to the town's most prominent establishments, most of which are clustered around the Cauldron. The Grand Hall of Song and Dance, led by an affected minstrel named Vadick Trillingway, is the largest standing structure in Skald after the Meistersinger's Keep. The locals consider it a failed attempt to rival Harmonia's Harmonic Hall. One of the Grand Hall's close neighbors is the Clock Tower Mill, a grain mill owned by Madam Lupapus, an aging matron long held to be hopelessly smitten with Harkon Lukas. A waterwheel powers the mill's eponymous clock tower, which engenders great civic pride.

Lower Skald radiates from an attractive park, but the surrounding neighborhoods are largely slums. The streets here are narrow, winding, and poorly patrolled by the watch. The quarter's only major business is the Skald Saw Mill, which bustles with activity from spring through fall. Most river traffic moors at Lower Skald's wharves, though the neighborhood often floods during the spring over-flow.

Two shantytowns that lie beyond the safety of its fortifications about Skald. The larger of the two, known as Out Town, hugs the roads leading out of Dargacht Plaza. This is a dangerous place at night: crime-ridden; stalked by wolves; and inhabited only by eccentrics, criminals, and those too poor to move into the town proper. The smaller shantytown sits just north of the Cauldron. Its shacks have been vacant for decades, and the whole area is positively overrun with meekulbern vines.

## Where to Stay in Skald

Skald's most illustrious accommodations are undoubtedly the Old Kartakan Inn (good quality rooms, good quality meals), which sits on its own island in the middle of the Cauldron. Many prestige-minded Kartakans save their coppers to indulge in a fine luncheon in the inn's spacious dining halls. Most locals avoid the inn at night, however, when it is said to draw a rougher crowd: assorted woodsmen who trek down from the north to partake of drinking contests and debauchery.

For travelers looking to avoid the inn's unsavory nocturnal reputation, or who simply need to conserve their coppers, I recommend the Fireside Feeshka Inn (common quality rooms, common quality meals), which faces Lower Skald's large open-air market. I can heartily recommend this inn for those who seek to socialize, but less so for those who simply seek quiet. The patrons' ale-soaked revelry grew louder as the hour grew late, usually forcing me to wrap a pillow around my head as I tried to sleep upstairs.

A third inn, the Split Boar (poor quality rooms, poor quality meals), can be found along the Road to Harmony in Out Town. I do not recommend this hovel for any guest who intends to wake up in the morning. Someone who wishes to ensure that someone *else* never wakes up may find its clientele amenable, however.

**Skald (large town):** Conventional (Monstrous); AL NE; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 420,000 gp; Population 2,800; Isolated (human 97%, wolfwere 1%, half-elf 1%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Meistersinger Harkon Lukas, male human Brd8 (Harkon Lukas, male wolfwere Brd8).

**Important Characters:** Madam Lupapus (Clock Tower Mill owner), female human Exp10; Vadick Trillingway (Master of the Grand Hall of Song and Dance), male human Brd7.





## Harmonia

Hiking south from Skald, the Road to Harmony soon delivered me to Harmonia, the only other Kartakan settlement of note. Although Harmonia is relatively isolated, it is widely considered the cultural center of Kartakass and features several impressive feats of engineering.

The road crosses the Musarde River via the Whirling Bridge, which consists of a stone tower that uses twin drawbridges to span the river. In times of trouble, or when affluent-looking travelers balk at the stiff tolls, the guards manning the Whirling Bridge can raise both drawbridges, then pivot the tower itself a full 90 degrees to block all access. The bridge is closed at night, so travelers must signal the guards and convince them to send a boat across.

Cliffs 45 feet tall border Harmonia to the northeast. The town guard lights a series of bonfires

along the cliff tops during festivals. A handful of guard towers watch the town, accessed by a hand-winch lift. A huge catapult that overlooks the Whirling Bridge and can also swivel to fire upon the town itself joins the towers in Skald's defense. More relics of the Invidian Occupation, the current town guards staff these structures with a skeleton crew whose primary task is to prevent unauthorized access. A moat and 15-foot-high curtain wall protects Harmonia to the south and west. The small South Gate opens out into farmland, while West Gate opens directly into a large paddock where the town's sheep are sheltered at night.

The Meistersinger's Mansion sits atop a low hill at the center of Harmonia, looking over the town's rooftops. This fortified manor serves as the home and offices of Meistersinger Eliska Vokrona, an alumnus of Harmonic Hall whose fifteen-year reign has been competent and blessedly





uncontroversial. Harmonia's main street circles around the manor and is dubbed "the Loop."

The streets grow ever more affluent as one moves east, culminating with South Hill, home to the manors of the elite. Next to South Hill stands Harmonia's greatest source of civic pride, the outdoor amphitheater. The amphitheater is carved into the living rock of the cliff face, and its acoustics are superb. A performer who sings on this stage can be clearly heard halfway across town. The stage is ringed by a series of four tiers, with patrons expected to pay a donation for the honor of sitting in each tier: 1 cp for the fourth, outer tier; 1 sp for the third; 1 gp for the second; and 5 gp for the first. The tiers are always packed during the weekly performances, with audiences spilling out onto the grassy lawn, where seating is free. Harmonic Hall, widely regarded as the finest musical academy in the Core, earns most of its income from these performances and sits at the far end of the amphitheater's lawn. The entrance to the prestigious Crystal Club is located on the fourth tier; patrons must pay 5 gp to enter, but within all drinks are free.

The western end of Harmonia is a poor neighborhood dedicated to agricultural industries, including a wind- and water-powered grain mill that sits on its own island. West Harmonia also houses the Temple of Divine Song, the only active temple of the Ancestral Choir cult. Although the

temple is in poor repair, its pipe organ has been lovingly restored, and the *mora* of the congregation float out over the town every morning. The current First Voice, or high priest, of the Ancestral Choir is Tibor Bellock, a thirty-year-old man with a resonating, baritone singing voice. Taken in by the cult when just an orphan, Bellock struggles daily to keep the fledgling faith alive, and the stress shows.

### Where to Stay in Harmonia

The only establishment of note in Harmonia is the Longhorn Inn (common quality rooms, good quality food), located at the western end of the Loop within earshot of the temple of the Ancestral Choir. The food is heavy, but surprisingly delectable, with thick steaks garnished with minted beets served as the nightly meal.

**Harmonia (small town):** Conventional; AL CG; 800 gp limit; Assets 60,000 gp; Population 1,500; Isolated (human 97%, wolfwere 1%, half-elf 1%, other 1%).

**Authority Figures:** Meistersinger Eliska Vokrona, female human Exp11.

**Important Characters:** Captain Attis Lannik (captain of the guard), male human War7; Rurik Deeptimbre (owner of the Crystal Club), male wolfwere Brd6; Tibor Bellock (First Voice of the Ancestral Choir), male human Clr4.

### Dread Possibility: The Crystal Club

Standing in the Crystal Club is like standing within a vast geode, and the crystals resonate when performers take the stage at the amphitheater, as if singing back to them. Dining here is a symbol of social prestige, but it might not be so if patrons knew that the staff and regulars were all wolfweres or shapechangers of similar bent. When patrons visit the club, the regulars slowly approach them, trying to learn more about their social standing—primarily, whether or not they would be missed. Patrons who are deemed to be suitable prey are wine and dined with all the meekulbrau they can drink. Once the hapless soul is giddy with wine, she is led into the labyrinthine passages and back rooms, where the games begin. The wolfweres can track their way through these tunnels by scent, but for humans the effect is much like a maze of mirrors.

One-tenth of the Crystal Club's income goes to support the Harmonic Hall. The rest goes toward the club's expenses and the coffers of Harkon Lukas. Lukas is a secret co-owner of the club, but visits only rarely. His business partner and underling is Rurik Deeptimbre, a boisterous and unambitious wolfwere who enjoys the perks of his position. Rurik ensures that no performers at the amphitheater or members of Harmonic Hall are ever harmed.





## The Catacombs of Kartakass

As if the Arkalias Hills were not desolate enough, roughly forty years ago they became home to a woman named Radaga, supposedly a terrible priestess who drew her power directly from the undead. She was apparently also the descendant of a mythical necromancer named Daglan Daegon, and the guardian of his most terrible creation, the *Crown of Souls*, which could turn men into her monstrous slaves.

Radaga was supposedly slain in 736 BC, but many tales claim she soon rose from the dead and led her fleshless army into the Misty Border, where the new realm of Daglan suddenly appeared. Daglan soon dissolved back into the Mists, seemingly destroyed along with its spiritual master.

Twenty years later, the Dead Hills are still littered with signs of Radaga's occupation: mummified corpses laid to rest in numerous small, outlying caves, and upright stakes driven into the ground along the tops of many ridges. Bleached human skeletons are shackled to each post, apparently those of victims left to die. Each stake lies planted in the ribcage of a skeleton buried just a few inches below the surface. If the stake is jostled, this minor guardian attacks.

Radaga made a warren of caves now known as the Catacombs of Kartakass into her center of power. From the surface, only a squat ziggurat topped by the weathered statue of a great raven marks the catacombs' entrances. Bards' tales hold that Radaga retreated from the catacombs with such haste that many of her grim treasures were left behind. The same logic would suggest that the supernatural traps said to guard those treasures also remain intact. I ventured far enough into one cavern to see a passageway still guarded by a pair of 12-foot tall burning skeletons. Having no concrete reason to delve farther, I considered my curiosity sated.

The catacombs were long considered to be uninhabited by any creatures save the dregs of

Radaga's mindless retinue, but trappers in the bordering Redwood and Mistwood claim that a new tenant appeared about three years ago. They dub this creature the Beast of the Hills. It has only been glimpsed from afar, and many locals fear that Radaga has returned. She would not be the first ruler to defeat death twice, as I suspect my patron well knows. That said, the accounts I collected describe a rather different threat entirely. They say the creature has black, scaly skin and hair as thick and knotted as tree roots. Some accounts claim the Beast is female; others say it has wings. Whatever the "Beast" may be, it proved most reclusive, as I never saw it during my expedition.

## Final Thoughts

Kartakass is easily ignored. Its few strategic resources and remote location ensure that it remains of little interest to any but glory seeking artistes. Count von Zarovich has shown no interest in further expanding his borders, and, ironically, his merciless grip over western Barovia now shields Kartakass from other powerful despots who might seek to claim its timber assets and fertile soil. By apparent design, the realm has no strong leaders. Were the priestess Radaga not long dead, I would tentatively point to her as the realm's dark lord. In her absence, I can only make guesses about the remarkable longevity of Meistersinger Harkon Lukas and his possible connections to the *narrulve*.

If I have identified my patron correctly, I suspect that Ambrose's "brotherhood" of mage-finders may be of most interest to him. The mage-finders currently lack the power to pose a true threat to Azalin Rex, however, and I humbly suggest that they should be wiped out lest they ever become one. Regards,

S

Do not be so quick to destroy that which can be controlled, my little servant.







# Attached Notes (DNR's Appendix)

*But you — you know — ay, ten times more; the secrets of  
the dead,*

*Black terror on the country-side by word and whisper bred,  
The mangled stallion's scream at night, the tail-cropped  
heifer's low.*

*Who set the whisper going first? You know, and well you  
know!*

— Rudyard Kipling, "Cleared"





This section offers new game material for the Dungeon Master to include in her campaign. If you are a player, you should stop reading now.

## Prestige Class: The Herald of Dawn

The Herald of Dawn prestige class is available to members of the Morninglord's clergy who also belong to the ranks of the Dawnslayers. The Midnight Clarion is only revealed to those clergy who exhibit unwavering faith in the Morninglord's imminent arrival and, more vitally, a zeal for exterminating the undead. Though nearly all Heralds are clerics, many have a few fighter, ranger, rogue, or wizard levels.

**Hit Die:** d8.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a Herald of Dawn (HrD), a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Neutral good or chaotic good

**Base Will Save:** +5

**Knowledge (religion):** 6 ranks

**Knowledge (undead lore):** 4 ranks

**Sense Motive:** 4 ranks

**Feats:** Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Weapon Focus (shortspear)

**Spellcasting:** Ability to cast 2nd-level divine spells

**Special:** Ability to turn undead. The character must be a member in good standing of the clergy of the Morninglord and a current Dawnslayer must advocate her membership in the secret society.

### Class Skills

The Herald of Dawn's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Knowledge (undead lore) (Int), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

### Class Features

All of the following are features of the Herald of Dawn prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** A Herald of Dawn is proficient with simple weapons and all types of armor and shields. Armor check penalties

for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

**Spells Per Day:** A Herald of Dawn continues advancing in divine spellcasting ability as well as gaining the abilities of her new class. Thus, when a new Herald of Dawn level is gained, the character acquires new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in her original spellcasting class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit from her original class (such as improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead). This means that she adds her level as Herald of Dawn to the level of her other spellcasting class and determines her spells per day accordingly.

*Example:* If Ignatius, an 8th-level cleric, gains a level in Herald of Dawn, he gains new spells as if he had risen to 9th level as a cleric, but uses the other Herald of Dawn aspects of level progression such as base attack bonus and save bonuses. If he next gains a level as a cleric, making him a 9th-level cleric/1st-level Herald of Dawn, he gains spells as if he had risen to 10th level as a cleric.

If a character had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a Herald of Dawn (such as a cleric/druid), the player must decide which class to assign to each level of Herald of Dawn for the purpose of determining spells per day.

**Soul of Burnished Bronze (Ex):** At 1st level, a Herald of Dawn receives a +2 sacred bonus against a vampire's domination gaze and any other vampire or vampire spawn supernatural special attacks requiring a Will save. This bonus increases by +2 every other Herald of Dawn level thereafter.

**Bane of the Blood-Drinker (Ex):** At 1st level, all Abjuration, Conjunction (Healing), and Necromancy spells cast by a Herald of Dawn become more potent, forcing vampires and vampire spawn to add 2 to their DC for saving throws against these spells. The DC increases by 2 for every other Herald of Dawn level thereafter.

**Banish the Bestial Children (Su):** At 2nd level, a Herald of Dawn may turn (but not destroy) any animals, beasts, magical beasts, or vermin called forth by a vampire's *children of the night* ability as if turning undead of the same type. Each HD of such creatures turned counts as only half a HD for the purposes of turning damage. Thus, a Herald of Dawn who rolls 12 HD worth of turning damage could turn a 6th-level vampire and 6 of its wolf minions.







**Strike of the Rosy Dawn (Su):** At 2nd level, a Herald of Dawn scores critical hits against vampires and vampire spawn despite the normal immunity of undead to critical hits. At 4th level, both the critical multiplier and critical range of any shortspear wielded by a Herald of Dawn increase by one against vampires and vampire spawn. Thus, a normal shortspear would have a critical of 19–20/x4. At 6th level, any shortspear wielded by a Herald of Dawn ignores a vampire or vampire spawn's damage reduction, regardless of the shortspear's material or magical bonus, if any.

**Cockerel's Crow (Su):** At 4th level, a Herald of Dawn can unleash a terrifying shriek as a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. The sound convinces a vampire that it has scant minutes to reach safety before dawn. Though normally immune to mind-affecting spells

or powers, all vampires and vampire spawn within a 30-foot spread centered on the Herald of Dawn must make a Fear save (DC = 10 + Herald of Dawn levels + Charisma modifier). This is a sonic effect usable once a day. At 6th level, it is usable three times a day, and at 8th level it is usable five times a day.

**Blood of Chill Fire (Su):** At 10th level, a Herald of Dawn's blood becomes infused with a supernatural warmth that burns vampires like molten metal. Whenever a vampire or vampire spawn attempts to use its blood drain ability on the Herald of Dawn, it suffers 1d6 + the Herald of Dawn's Charisma modifier points of damage for each point of Constitution drain. The vampire or vampire spawn is permitted a Wisdom check (DC 20) to realize the danger just before it begins draining blood from the character.

**Table 5–1: The Herald of Dawn**

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Soul of burnished bronze +2, bane of the blood-drinker +2	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Banish the bestial children, strike of the rosy dawn	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Soul of burnished bronze +4, bane of the blood-drinker +4	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Strike of the rosy dawn (improved critical), cockerel's crow 1/day	+1 level of existing class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Soul of burnished bronze +6, bane of the blood-drinker +6	+1 level of existing class
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Strike of the rosy dawn (ignore damage reduction), cockerel's crow 3/day	+1 level of existing class
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Soul of burnished bronze +8, bane of the blood-drinker +8	+1 level of existing class
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Cockerel's crow 5/day	+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Soul of burnished bronze +10, bane of the blood-drinker +10	+1 level of existing class
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Blood of chill fire	+1 level of existing class





## New Magic

This section presents new cleric domains, spells, and magic items particular to the southeastern Core. Under certain circumstances, DMs may allow characters from outside the specified region special access to these magics.

### Cleric Domains

#### Bindings Domain

**Deity:** The Lawgiver (Hazlan)

**Granted Power:** You cast Enchantment (Compulsion) spells at +1 caster level.

##### Bindings Domain Spells

- 1 **Command.** One subject obeys one-word command for one round.
- 2 **Hold Person.** Holds one person helpless; 1 round/level.
- 3 **Lesser Geas.** Commands subject of 7 HD or less.
- 4 **Hold Monster.** As *hold person*, but any creature.
- 5 **Mark of Justice.** Designates action that will trigger *curse* on subject.
- 6 **Geas/Quest.** As *lesser geas*, plus it affects any creature.
- 7 **Repulsion.** Creatures can't approach you.
- 8 **Binding.** Array of techniques to imprison a creature.
- 9 **Trap the Soul.** Imprisons subject within gem.

#### Mora Domain

**Deity:** The Ancestral Choir (Kartakass)

**Granted Power:** Once per day, you may call upon the Ancestral Choir to fill your music with the beauty of its heavenly song. This supernatural ability grants a divine bonus equal to your level to a single music-based Perform check (singing, performing a musical instrument, etc.) and lasts for the length of your performance.

Perform is a class skill.

##### Mora Domain Spells

- 1 **Comprehend Languages.** Understand all spoken and written languages.

- 2 **Suggestion.** Compels subject to follow stated course of action.
- 3 **Sending.** Delivers short message anywhere, instantly.
- 4 **Sculpt Sound.** Creates new sounds or changes existing ones.
- 5 **Shout.** Deafens all within cone and deals 2d6 damage.
- 6 **Legend Lore.** Learn tales about a person, place, or thing.
- 7 **Mass Suggestion.** As *suggestion*, plus one/level subjects.
- 8 **Power Word, Stun.** Stuns creature with up to 150 hp.
- 9 **Wail of the Banshee.** Sing a dirge to kill one creature/level.

#### Salvation Domain

**Deity:** The Morninglord (Barovia)

**Granted Power:** You have the supernatural ability to take a lethal wound for an ally. If an ally within five feet of you is reduced to 0 or less hit points by an attack, you may elect to take the damage instead. This ability is a free action on your part, but you must be conscious to activate it. You may use this ability once per day.

##### Salvation Domain Spells

- 1 **Remove Fear.** +4 on Fear saves for one subject +1/4 levels.
- 2 **Remove Paralysis.** Frees one or more creatures from paralysis, *hold*, or *slow*.
- 3 **Remove Disease.** Cures all diseases affecting subject.
- 4 **Neutralize Poison.** Detoxifies venom in or on subject.
- 5 **Atonement.** Removes burden of misdeeds from subject.
- 6 **Stone to Flesh.** Restores petrified creature.
- 7 **Greater Restoration.** As *restoration*, plus restores all levels and ability scores.
- 8 **Mass Heal.** As *heal*, but with several subjects.
- 9 **True Resurrection.** As *resurrection*, plus remains aren't needed.







## Spells

The following spells have arisen in the lands of the southeastern Core, though their knowledge may extend beyond the region.

### Control Shape

Transmutation

**Level:** Drd 4, Sor/Wiz 5

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** Creature touched

**Duration:** One hour/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell allows any creature that has suffered an involuntary transformation (including afflicted lycanthropes and targets of *polymorph other*) to transform back and forth between its true form and altered form for the spell's duration, as if it is the target of a *polymorph self* spell. Transforming between forms takes one action to complete. The target retains its own mind and alignment for the duration of this spell.

**Material Components:** A blob of wax and a blob of clay.

### Create faux Henchman

Transmutation

**Level:** Apt 5, Sor/Wiz 6

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** One day

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** Your familiar

**Duration:** Permanent

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell transforms your familiar into a henchman resembling a member of any Small or Medium-size humanoid or monstrous humanoid race (your choice).

The henchman acquires all of the mimicked race's physical and natural abilities, including size, physical ability scores, natural attacks, and extraordinary abilities. It does not gain any of the mimicked race's supernatural or spell-like abilities. Your familiar retains its own Intelligence and Wisdom scores and adds +1d3 to its effective Charisma.

Your familiar becomes a commoner, expert, or warrior (your choice) with levels equal to its HD. While in henchman form, your familiar no longer

grants you a special ability based on its species (see Table 3–18 in the *PHB*), but all its other familiar qualities remain intact. Your henchman can speak any languages you can speak, but it does not gain knowledge of the language of its mimicked race. A faux henchman cannot gain levels through experience, but continues to gain HD as you rise in level.

Despite the faux henchman's appearance, it is still considered a magical beast. The henchman appears identical to its mimicked race, though it may exhibit behavior and subtle physical traces of its original form.

**Material Component:** A small clay figure into which you have kneaded one drop of your blood, your familiar's blood, and one drop of blood from the mimicked race.

### Create Gblyn

Transmutation [Evil]

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 5

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Target:** One humanoid creature

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell transforms one humanoid into a goblin (see *Denizens of Darkness*). Goblins created with this spell are absolutely loyal to their creator and have only dim memories of their previous life. Casting this spell requires a powers check.

**Material Component:** A handful of mud mixed with humanoid blood.

### Ground fog

Conjuration [Creation]

**Level:** Clr 2, Drd 2, Sor/Wiz 2

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** 10 ft./2 levels

**Effect:** Thick vapor centered on you spreads 10 ft./2 levels and is 2 ft. high

**Duration:** 1 hour/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

As *obscuring mist*, except the vapor that arises around you only rises about 2 feet (knee-high on a Medium-size humanoid). The fog swirls mysteriously along the ground, so it does not reveal the



presence of invisible creatures. The fog grants three-quarters concealment to anything it completely covers such as a Tiny creature, a prone human, or a hidden pit. The vapor offers total concealment to gaseous creatures such as a spellcaster or vampire using gaseous form.

## Mimic Mortal

Necromancy

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Personal

Target: You (vampires only)

Duration: 10 minutes/level (D)

This highly specialized spell allows a vampire spellcaster to suppress her detrimental attributes and vulnerabilities by similarly suppressing her potent abilities. *Mimic mortal* suppresses a disadvantage of vampirism and an advantage on a one-for-one basis. You can suppress any number of disadvantages up to a maximum of one per two caster levels. Disadvantages and advantages are always suppressed in the same order and in the same pairings, as shown in Table 5-2.

**Table 5-2: Suppressed Vampiric Traits**

Order	Vulnerability	Ability/Quality
1	Skin no longer pale or cold	Energy drain and blood drain
2	Can tolerate garlic	Damage reduction
3	Does not recoil from mirror	Domination
4	Can enter buildings uninvited	Fast healing
5	Does not recoil from holy symbol	Gaseous form
6	Can cross running water	Alternate form
7	Not harmed by holy water	Children of the night
8	Cannot be turned	Create spawn, resistance
9	Not harmed by sunlight	Spider climb, all salient powers

For example, if you chose to suppress three vulnerabilities, you would no longer be pale and cold to the touch, could tolerate garlic, and would not recoil from a mirror; however, you would also lose your energy drain and blood drain abilities, damage reduction, and domination ability. Your creature type remains undead, and you do not lose any of the undead creature type's qualities not listed above.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

## Misty Summons

Transmutation [Teleportation]

Level: Sor/Wiz 7

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 7 minutes

Range: 1 mile/level

Area: 30 ft. radius

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: No

Spell Resistance: Yes (object)

Before casting, you must build a stone portal (see Focus). To cast the spell, you must be within 30 feet of the portal. You must visualize a known location within 1 mile per caster level, but it can be in another domain. As you concentrate over the next seven minutes, the Mists of Ravenloft coalesce within the portal and in a 30-foot radius at the chosen location. Once the misty portal activates, you no longer need to concentrate on it. It remains active for 10 minutes per caster level. Any creature entering the Mists at the chosen location while the spell is active emerges through the portal. You cannot summon creatures through a closed domain border.

**Focus:** A doorway or archway made of stone at least 3 feet wide, but no more than 30 feet wide. The portal costs 3,000 gp to construct, and you must craft it yourself. You may make the portal as plain or as ornate as you desire.

## Strahd's Baneful Attractor

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature

Duration: 2 rounds/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes





This spell transforms the subject into a lodestone for magical energies, causing spells to veer toward her. Any spell targeted at a creature within 15 feet of the subject of *Strahd's baneful attractor* actually targets the latter creature. If the target of *Strahd's baneful attractor* is not a valid target for the redirected spell — for example, if she is out of the spell's range or is not the appropriate creature type — the spell is not redirected. If more than one creature within 15 feet is affected by a spell, only the creature closest to the subject of *Strahd's baneful attractor* is spared. If more than one creature is an equal distance from the subject, choose the spared creature randomly. *Strahd's baneful attractor* has no effect on area of effect spells.

**Material Component:** Some bits of broken glass.

## Wolfsong

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Brd 3

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Personal

**Area:** 1 mile radius/caster level emanation, centered on you (see text)

**Duration:** See text

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You perform an eerie, ululating song that magically carries on the wind into the surrounding countryside. Every wolf and dire wolf in the area of effect hearing your song and failing its Will save howls in reply and lopes to your location. The *wolfsong* attracts one group of wolves for each mile radius of the area of effect; each group includes 1d4 wolves, plus one dire wolf for every four wolves beckoned. The first group arrives 1d4 minutes after you cast the spell; each additional group arrives 1d4 minutes after the pack before it.

This spell effect can cross domain borders but is effective only when cast in terrain where wolves roam (forest, hill, plains, and mountains). The compulsion effect ends as soon as a beckoned wolf reaches your location or reaches a physical boundary it cannot cross (such as a river, canyon, or wall). Unlike a summoning spell, *wolfsong* grants you no control over the wolves once they arrive.

Harkon Lukas, who created this spell, sometimes teaches it to bards he finds bothersome. Such students are quite surprised when the beckoned wolves prove anything but obedient.

## Magic Items

**Arawn's Cauldron:** *Arawn's Cauldron*, a sacred relic of Forlorn's goblins (called in their tongue *Prais Mar Arawn*), is a massive iron cauldron weighing more than a ton and a half and perpetually filled with warm, soupy mud. Large enough for most adult humans to crouch within it and not have their heads clear the rim, the sides of the cauldron are decorated with crude images of goblins, wolves, ghosts, hags, and the Wild Hunt. If the cauldron is emptied in any way, it gradually refills with mud over the next ten minutes. The only way to destroy *Prais Mar Arawn* is to slay every goblin in Forlorn. Currently, *Arawn's Cauldron* is hidden in the goblin caves of Mt. Arawn.

This cursed artifact is the key to the growing number of Forlorn's goblins. By placing a person in *Arawn's Cauldron* and submerging him beneath the mud for one minute, the goblins can transform a victim into a goblin, as per the *create goblin* spell. All goblins created with *Arawn's Cauldron* are under the control of Tristen ApBlanc.

**Arcane Grounding Rod:** This copper rod draws magical energies away from combatants facing mages. When planted in the ground, an *arcane grounding rod* draws toward itself all magical energies within 100 feet. All spells other than touch-based spells have their target or point of origin changed to focus on the grounding rod. For each spell that strikes the *arcane grounding rod*, the rod becomes charged with arcane energy that deals 1d6 damage per spell level to the first creature to touch it. An *arcane grounding rod* can hold a maximum of 20 spell levels of energy (20d6 damage if touched). Should it exceed this amount, it instantly discharges its energy into the ground and melts into slag. After absorbing spell energies, the rod harmlessly releases one spell level of energy into the ground each following round (reducing damage by 1d6). An *arcane grounding rod* that attracts a *disintegrate* spell is destroyed instantly.

**Caster Level:** 15th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Rod, *spell turning*, 9-foot copper rod; **Market Price:** 210,000 gp; **Weight:** 45 lb.

**Ba'al Verzi Dagger:** These vile weapons have been carried by Ba'al Verzi assassins for centuries. A *Ba'al Verzi dagger* is a long, gleaming blade etched with sinister Abyssal entreaties for stealth and true aim. Its lacquered crimson, black, and gold hilt symbolizes the blood the Ba'al Verzi draw, the shadows that conceal them, and the wealth that guides their blades. A *Ba'al Verzi dagger's* sheath is





always fashioned of the cured and tooled skin of the first victim that the dagger's master slew.

*Ba'al Verzi daggers* are +1 *keen daggers*. Attacks with these daggers bypass any armor bonus derived from the mundane protection of armor and shields. The *dagger* does not bypass natural armor bonuses, armor bonuses generated by magic items (such as *bracers of armor*), or enhancement bonuses to magical armors. Thus, a character wearing +2 *leather armor* and a character wearing +2 *full plate* would have the same +2 bonus to Armor Class against a *Ba'al Verzi dagger*.

**Caster Level:** 13th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *keen edge*, *phase door*, creator must be evil; **Market Price:** 32,300 gp.

**Bright Blade:** This unique *sunblade* was originally borne by Sergei von Zarovich, a gift when he joined the clergy of the Church of Andral in 341 BC. The Dark Powers ensured that it found its way into the Realm of Dread to bedevil Strahd, and a doomed band of heroes attempted to wield it against the darklord in the sixth century. Though the blade came into the possession of Rudolph van Richten, it vanished from his herbalist's shop under the nose of the Weathermay twins not long after the doctor's disappearance in 750 BC. Barovian legend claims that the sword has thirsted for the blood of the Dilisnyas since it saw its master and his kin cut down by assassins four centuries ago. *Bright Blade* would certainly be a potent weapon in the hands of any hero brave enough to face Strahd von Zarovich.

*Bright Blade* has all the normal properties of a *sunblade*, save that it deals triple damage against vampires. Any evil creature that wields *Bright Blade* suffers two negative levels.

**Caster Level:** 12th; **Weight:** 3 lb.

**Holy Symbol of Ravenkind:** This platinum holy symbol is crafted in the shape of the sun, with a large crystal surrounded by celestial symbols of light and truth embedded in its center. Most High Priest Kir of the Church of Andral crafted this medallion in 350 BC, after he foresaw that a terrible curse would soon befall Barovia. Kir gave his life to create the *Symbol*, and the Church of Andral died out after Strahd made his pact with Death. The *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* followed the vampire lord into the Realm of Dread, retaining its power. Thought to be in Strahd's possession, the medallion has been missing since the Grand Conjunction. The Keepers of the Black Feather search

for it tirelessly, believing it holds the key to Strahd's destruction.

The *Holy Symbol* has all the properties of an *amulet of undead turning*. Additionally, any undead creature vulnerable to sunlight suffers 1d6 fire damage each round it touches the *Symbol* (no save). When forcefully presented against any vampire or vampire spawn, it flares with true sunlight for 1d10 minutes (see the *Monster Manual* for the effect of sunlight on vampires). The *Symbol* can flare only once per week.

**Caster Level:** 15th; **Weight:** —.

**Horn of the Sacred Grove:** Created by the druids Gregory and Dorinna, the *horn of the sacred grove* is a holy artifact of Daghdha and Belenus, gods honored by Forlorn's druids. Unfortunately, Tristen's goblins slew Gregory and Dorinna before they could give the horn to the other druids. Currently, the *horn of the sacred grove* is believed to rest within the Maw of Arawn, watched over by bone golem guardians in the vast ossuary of the fissure.

Once a week, the *horn* can summon the Wild Hunt. Only druids or priests of Daghdha or Belenus can use this power, which only functions at night.

Once every other day, the *horn* can cast a *sunbeam* spell as a 20th-level druid. A beam 10 feet in diameter erupts from the *horn's* mouth. On days it does not produce a *sunbeam* spell, the *horn of the sacred grove* can produce a *heroes' feast* as a 20th-level druid.

The bearer of the *horn* can resist elements as the spell, absorbing 12 points of fire damage per round.

Once per day, the *horn's* bearer may *speak with animals* or *speak with plants* for 3 rounds by using the *horn* as an earpiece. Once per week, the *horn* can control winds as a 15th-level druid.

Four times per day, when a supplicant kisses the *horn*, it can cure light wounds as a 15th-level druid. This ability only works when the *horn* rests in the hands of a druid.

The *horn's* abilities to summon the Wild Hunt and cast *sunbeam*, *heroes' feast*, and *control winds* require that the *horn's* bearer play certain sequences of notes for each power.

Each time the *horn of the sacred grove* is blown, the sounder must make a successful Will save (DC 20) or have her alignment shift one step closer to true neutral. If the bearer of the *horn* is not a druid and blows the *horn* at night, there is a cumulative 5% chance per sounding that this attracts the







attention of the Wild Hunt to prey upon the bearer. Every night from then on, the Wild Hunt manifests within two miles of the bearer and chases him, attempting to retrieve the *horn*. The Master of the Hunt allows the bearer one opportunity to turn over the *horn* before closing in for the kill.

**Icon of Ravenloft:** The *Icon of Ravenloft*, a sister holy object to the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* and potent in the hands of a cleric, is a 1-foot tall silver statuette of a raven with detailed engravings and stony, glittering diamonds for eyes.

Ancient folklore claims that when the von Zaroviches first set foot in Barovia, a raven fell from the sky and landed at the feet of Mihaela von Zarovich. She gathered up the dying bird and declared, "He flew into the sun until his strength left him and his black eyes were burned blind, so enraptured was he by its glory. If Andral is merciful, he will bless this pitiful creature, who only sought to touch his magnificent face." At that moment, the raven burst from Mihaela's hands, its feathers suddenly sleek and its eyes bright, and flew towards Mount Baratak. Clerics of Andral created the *Icon* shortly before Sergei von Zarovich's wedding in 351 BC.

The *Icon* languished for centuries in Castle Ravenloft under the guardianship of Strahd, who could not touch so holy an object. It vanished after the Grand Conjunction. Though rumors place it in the possession of Azalin Rex, the object's true whereabouts remain unknown. The Keepers of the Black Feather know of the *Icon's* existence, but believe it less important than the *Holy Symbol*. Some legends hint that the *Holy Symbol* will reveal unknown powers when brought together with the *Icon*.

If held in the hand of a paladin or a cleric of good alignment, the *Icon* grants a +4 bonus to turning checks. Additionally, once per day a paladin or a cleric of good alignment can use the *Icon* to *cure moderate wounds* via spell trigger activation simply by touching the statuette to a target creature. Any evil creature that bears the *Icon* suffers two negative levels. The negative levels remain as long as the *Icon* is in the creature's possession. These negative levels never result in actual level loss, but they cannot be overcome in any way (including *restoration* spells) while the *Icon* is in the creature's possession.

**Caster Level:** 15th; **Weight:** 8 lb.

**Orb of Augmentation:** An *orb of augmentation* is created by sealing the still-living brain of an arcane spellcaster inside a special crystal orb. Once per day, by using the *orb* as a focus, a wizard may attempt to cast a spell one spell level higher than she can normally use. The wizard's attempted spell must be a spell she both knows and has in her spellbook. The attempted spell has a base 75% chance of failure, reduced by 5% for every four spellcaster class levels possessed by the spellcaster's brain imprisoned within the *orb*, to a minimum of 10%. The effects of multiple *orbs of augmentation* stack. *Orbs of augmentation* do not function for wizards below 5th level. A spell cast with an *orb of augmentation* requires a full day to prepare.

Crafting or using an *orb of augmentation* requires a powers check.

**Caster Level:** 20th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, arcane spellcaster's brain; **Market Price:** 57,000 gp; **Weight:** 15 lb.

**Vat of the Living Clay:** This accursed artifact is a rune-encrusted jade tub, 5 feet across and 3 feet deep with a two-part hinged lid. The moist, pinkish, gray-green clay within slowly shifts and undulates. Hazlik created this artifact shortly after he became trapped in the Realm of Dread, basing this device on a similar artifact in his homeland. Once per day, a user may open the *vat of the living clay* to create an aberration, animal, beast, dragon, giant, humanoid, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, or vermin of up to the user's character level in HD. Creatures created may include those in the *Monster Manual* and *Denizens of Darkness*, as well as new creatures invented by the clay's user (subject to Dungeon Master approval). Once a creature's creation is complete, the vat's lid shuts and cannot be opened for one day.

To use the living clay, the user must sculpt, carve, or otherwise create a statue of the creature she wishes to animate. Once the statue is complete, the user must cover her statue in a layer of living clay and place slips of paper describing the creature's physical appearance and abilities over the statue's heart and brain. Finally, the user must write the Vaasi word *liv* ("life") on her creation. The statue then transforms into flesh, much like the results of a *stone to flesh* spell, but unlike that spell, the transmutation results in a living being, not a corpse.

**Caster Level:** 12th. **Weight:** as per the being created





## New Monsters

This section presents horrors known to lurk in the southeastern domains.

### Lycanthrope, Werefox (Vixen)

Werefoxes, or vixens, are rare creatures afflicted with an unusual and powerful form of lycanthropy contractible only by women. Those afflicted experience profound changes in body and soul. Appearing as silvery-haired elfmaids in humanoid form, vixens are vain, concerned only with surrounding themselves with life's comforts. The lycanthropic curse also renders vixens barren. A werefox who desires a child must adopt or kidnap a young girl (typically an elf), afflict the girl with lycanthropy, and raise the girl in her own, self-centered image.

**Denizens of Darkness**



and the **Ravenloft** sourcebook contain full rules for Ravenloft's lycanthropes; the rules below detail the werefox only as she differs from other sample lycanthropes.

### Creating a Werefox

"Werefox" is a template that can be added to any female humanoid creature (referred to hereafter as the "character"). The character's type changes to "shapechanger." The werefox takes on the characteristics of a silver fox (see below) and can also adopt a hybrid shape combining elven and vulpine features. A werefox uses either the character's or the silver fox's statistics and special abilities in addition to those set out below.

**Hit Dice:** See **Denizens of Darkness**.

**Speed:** See **Denizens of Darkness**.

**AC:** See **Denizens of Darkness**.

**Attacks:** See **Denizens of Darkness**.

**Damage:** See **Denizens of Darkness**. **Special**

**Attacks:** A werefox retains all of the special attacks of the character or silver fox, depending on which form she is using,





and gains those listed below unless noted otherwise.

**Lycanthropic Empathy (Ex):** A werefox can communicate and empathize with foxes and silver foxes, as the standard lycanthrope.

**Curse of Lycanthropy (Su):** Any female humanoid bitten by a werefox in hybrid or animal form must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15, or DC 18 in Ravenloft) or contract lycanthropy. Newly created werefoxes are not subject to a trigger as are other afflicted lycanthropes. Instead, starting three days after the woman is bitten, she must make a Will save each night to resist the change (DC = 10 + number of nights since her last transformation). Any afflicted werefox can spend 100 XP to take the Improved Control Shape feat. A werefox who takes this feat is thereafter considered a true lycanthrope and is no longer subject to this involuntary change. A true werefox, however, automatically assumes a chaotic evil alignment and can never be cured.

**Bewitching Gaze (Su):** Any male humanoid who sees a werefox's unearthly beauty (in her humanoid form) must make a successful Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 werefox's HD + werefox's Charisma modifier) or be smitten as by *charm person* cast by a 9th-level sorcerer. Females are unaffected. This gaze attack has a range of 30 feet.

**Special Qualities:** A werefox retains all the special qualities of the character or animal and also gains those listed below.

**Alternate Form (Su):** Afflicted werefoxes can shift into silver fox form as though using the *polymorph self* spell (though their gear does not change). True werefoxes can also assume a bipedal humanoid form, which combines a sleek elven body and prehensile hands with a fox like head, bushy tail, and silvery pelt. A werefox can assume hybrid form without ruining her clothing or armor and can still speak, enabling spell casting. Changing to or from animal or hybrid form is a standard action. Upon assuming either form, the werefox regains hit points as if having rested for a day. A slain werefox reverts to her humanoid form, although she remains dead. Separated animal parts retain their animal form. This shapeshifting ability can be difficult to control, unless the werefox succumbs to her bestial nature (see above).

**Damage Reduction (Ex):** Werefoxes in silver fox or hybrid form gain damage reduction 15/silver.

**Elfmaid (Ex):** Starting one year after being afflicted, a werefox's humanoid form slowly changes to that of an elf. During this process, which takes 1d12 months to complete, the character discards all racial modifiers and abilities of her original race and replaces them with those of an elf (if she is not an elf to begin with). When the process is finished, the werefox's "base race" is considered to be "elf" in all respects, including OR modifiers. Only a few traces (such as tattoos or birthmarks) remain of the werefox's old identity.

All werefoxes have silvery hair in all forms and a marked widow's peak, features also common to Sithican elves.

**Pristine (Ex):** Scars vanish from a werefox's skin. Any disfigurement that increases her Outcast Rating is reduced by 1 point each month until it fades entirely.

**Saves:** See *Denizens of Darkness*.

**Abilities:** For a werefox in humanoid form, ability scores are unchanged. In silver fox or hybrid form, a werefox's ability scores are modified as follows: Str -2, Dex +8.

**Skills:** See *Denizens of Darkness*.

**Feats:** Same as the character. When in hybrid or silver fox form, the werefox gains the Weapon Finesse (bite) feat. Any werefox can also take the Improved Control Shape feat, as detailed above.

**Climate Terrain:** Temperate and cold forest.

**Organization:** Solitary, pair (one adult with noncombatant "daughter"), or entourage (one or pair with 2-12 *charmed* 1st-3rd level humans, elves or half-elves).

**Challenge Rating:** Character level +2.

**Treasure:** Double standard.

**Alignment:** Always chaotic evil.

**Advancement:** By character class. Regardless of the character's race prior to infection, a werefox's favored class is always sorcerer. Werefoxes almost always place ability increases into Charisma as they rise in level.





## Sample Werefox

This example uses a 9th-level elf sorcerer as the base creature.

	<b>Coraline, Werefox</b> <b>Medium-Size Humanoid/Small Shapechanger</b>
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	9d4 (22 hp)
<b>Initiative:</b>	+6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); +10 (+6 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative) as fox or hybrid
<b>Speed:</b>	30 ft.; 60 ft. as fox
<b>AC:</b>	16 (+2 Dex, +2 natural, +2 earring); 23 (+1 size, +6 Dex, +4 natural, +2 earring) as fox
<b>Attacks:</b>	Masterwork dagger +5 melee or masterwork longbow +7 ranged; masterwork dagger +4 melee or masterwork longbow +11 ranged as hybrid; bite +9 melee as hybrid or +10 as fox
<b>Damage:</b>	Dagger 1d4, or 1d4-1 as hybrid; longbow 1d8; bite 1d4-1 as fox or hybrid
<b>Face/Reach:</b>	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Spells, bewitching gaze; curse of lycanthropy as fox or hybrid
<b>Special Qualities:</b>	Alternate form, damage reduction 15/silver, elf traits, pristine; scent, <i>pass without trace</i> as fox or hybrid
<b>Saves:</b>	Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +9; Ref +9 as fox or hybrid
<b>Abilities:</b>	Str 10, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 20; Str 8, Dex 22 as fox or hybrid
<b>Skills:</b>	Appraise +4, Bluff +11, Concentration +2, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Listen +7, Profession (innkeeper) +5, Search +8, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +8, Spot +7; Listen +11, Search +12, Spot +11 Wilderness Lore +4* as fox or hybrid
<b>Feats:</b>	Dodge, Improved Control Shape, Improved Initiative, Mobility; Weapon Finesse (bite) as fox or hybrid

## Combat

Coraline has been one of Harkon Lukas' lovers and spies for the last 20 years. Harkon gives Coraline the physical comforts she seeks, while Coraline passes secrets to Harkon and carries no risk of bearing him more ungrateful whelps. Coraline relies on her bewitching beauty to avoid combat. Outside the public eye, she relies on her spells and *charmed* suitors to deal with most foes.

The Will save against Coraline's bewitching gaze has a DC of 19.

**Sorcerer Spells per Day:** 7/7/7/6/3. Base DC = 15 + spell level.

**Sorcerer Spells Known:** 0—*dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *light*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*; 1st—*charm person*, *color spray*, *hypnotism*, *reduce*, *sleep*; 2nd—*hypnotic pattern*, *misdirection*, *scare*, *whispering wind*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *hold person*, *suggestion*; 4th—*charm monster*, *emotion*.

**Magic Items Carried:** Cloak of charisma +2, earring of protection +2 (as ring), potion of cure light wounds, wand of magic missile (3rd-level caster).

**Challenge Rating:** 11.

## Lake Serpent, Undead

	<b>Gargantuan Undead (Aquatic)</b>
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	20d12 (130 hp)
<b>Initiative:</b>	+3 (-1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
<b>Speed:</b>	Swim 30 ft.
<b>AC:</b>	25 (-4 size, -1 Dex, +20 natural)
<b>Attacks:</b>	Bite +32 melee
<b>Damage:</b>	Bite 2d8+22
<b>Face/Reach:</b>	0 ft. by 40 ft./10 ft. (25 ft.)
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Breath weapon, frightful presence, improved grab, lunge
<b>Special Qualities:</b>	Damage reduction 20/+2, darkvision 60 ft., undead, SR 16
<b>Saves:</b>	Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +12
<b>Abilities:</b>	Str 40, Dex 9, Con —, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 6
<b>Skills:</b>	Listen +14, Search +13, Spot +14
<b>Feats:</b>	Alertness, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack
<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any aquatic (Lake of Red Tears)
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Challenge Rating:</b>	13
<b>Treasure:</b>	None
<b>Alignment:</b>	Always chaotic evil
<b>Advancement:</b>	21–32 HD (Gargantuan), 33–40 HD (Colossal)

The undead lake serpent known as "Agatha" is a unique creature, found only in the Lake of Red Tears in Forlorn. Her mottled grayish-green hide gapes with multiple open, rotting wounds. Row after row of needle-sharp teeth fill her giant maw, and her eyes glow soft green. When she swims on the surface of the lake, all that can be seen is her head followed by a series of round humps.

Though unable to leave the lake, Aggie eagerly attacks any living creature that approaches the shore. She is cunning enough to lure creatures closer, surfacing at the center of the lake to attract attention, only to submerge and resurface within striking range.





No one saw Aggie before the Year of Woe. Some speculate that the creature had lain dormant in the lake for millennia until roused by the catastrophes that shook the land. Some rumors claim more than one sea creature inhabits the lake and have reported seeing two or more separate sets of humps breaking the lake's surface at once.

No one has managed to explore the lake's bottom to confirm the rumor that Aggie hoards mounds of treasure belonging to her many victims at the lake's bottom.

## Combat

Aggie is a clever fighter, reserving her special attacks until they will be effective. She is especially fond of fooling adversaries into thinking she has limited reach beyond the lake, only to strike with her breath weapon or a lunge attack.

**Saving** throws against an undead lake serpent's special attacks have a DC of  $10 + 1/2$  serpent's HD + serpent's Charisma modifier (DC 18 for Agatha).

**Breath Weapon (Su):** Line of toxic vapor, 140 feet, every 1d4 rounds, Reflex save negates. Creatures that fail their Reflex save and are caught within the vapor are treated as though exposed to a *cloudkill* spell as cast by a 20th-level sorcerer. The vapor lingers in the air for 4 rounds.

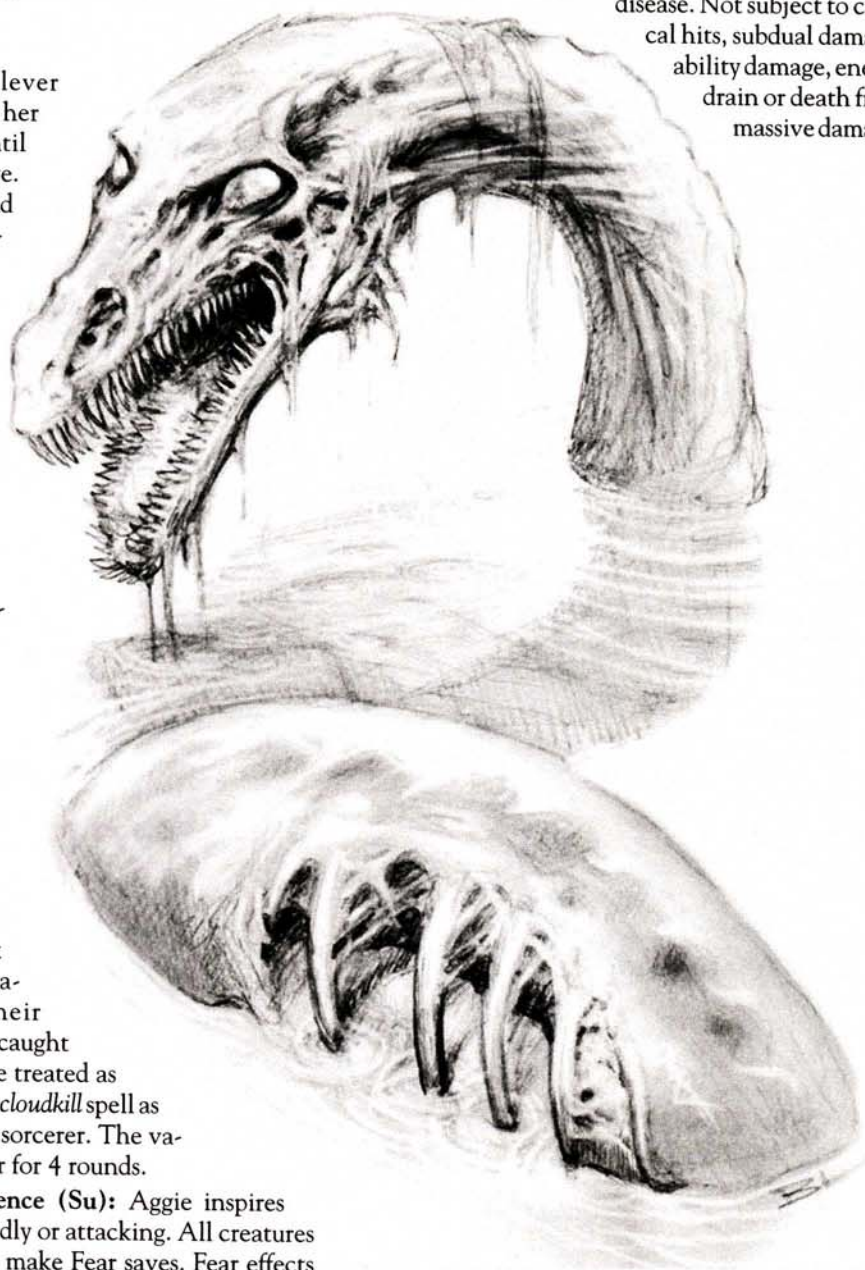
**Frightful Presence (Su):** Aggie inspires terror by roaring loudly or attacking. All creatures within 50 feet must make Fear saves. Fear effects

last until the creatures move out of the area of effect.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** Aggie can use her improved grab after a successful bite attack. She often drags held creatures below the lake's surface, pinning them there until they drown.

**Lunge (Ex):** By using a full action to attack, Aggie can extend her reach to 25 feet.

**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.







## Strahd Undead

Few necromancers in the Realm of Dread equal the stature of Strahd Von Zarovich or possess the vampire lord's cold intimacy with undeath. The Count's skeleton and zombie minions are more potent than those animated by other necro-

mancers. None know whether these hardier abominations arise automatically from Strahd's castings of *animate dead*, or if the Count has researched his own, more powerful version of the spell. These undead minions are notoriously tough, shrugging off spells and turnings that would fell their lesser kin and displaying a terrifying habit of attacking their victims despite being hacked to bits.

A few clues differentiate Strahd's mindless minions from others of their kind. Strips of leathery flesh still cling to the bones of Strahd skeletons, and their movements are swift but jerky. The flesh







of Strahd zombies appears fragile. Their eyes rot into dark pits, and their lips peel away to reveal crooked teeth. Strahd zombies occasionally issue a low moan, sometimes croaking Strahd's name (requiring a Listen check at DC 14 to decipher), when they are eager to act.

## Creating a Strahd Undead

"Strahd undead" is a template that can be added to any skeleton or zombie (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). The creature's type remains unchanged. A Strahd undead uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

**Special Qualities:** A Strahd undead retains all the special qualities of the base creature and also gains the following.

**Vigilant (Su):** A Strahd undead can continuously see invisibility to a range of 60 feet.

**Relentless (Ex):** When a Strahd undead is reduced to 0 hit points or below, it is not destroyed. Instead, it begins to heal 1 hit point per round as its animating force rebuilds. When the Strahd undead is once again at full hit points, it reanimates and rises to attack once more. To destroy a Strahd undead permanently, its body must be completely annihilated (as with a particularly successful turning check or the *disintegrate* spell), or an opponent must finish the job with a coup de grace while the creature lies helpless (this bypasses the standard undead immunity to critical hits). A Strahd undead can reattach severed limbs; such limbs slowly crawl back to their owner.

**Turn Resistance (Ex):** A Strahd undead has +4 turn resistance.

**Spell Resistance (Ex):** A Strahd undead has spell resistance 15.

**Feats:** Strahd undead gain Great Fortitude.

**Climate/Terrain:** Any land and underground (Barovia).

**Organization:** Gang (2–5), squad (6–10), or mob (11–20).

**Challenge Rating:** Same as the base creature +1.

**Treasure:** None.

**Alignment:** Always neutral.

**Advancement:** Same as base creature.

## Sample Strahd Undead

This example uses a Medium-size zombie as the base creature.

### Strahd Zombie

#### Medium-Size Undead

<b>Hit Dice:</b>	2d12+3 (16 hp)
<b>Initiative:</b>	–1 (Dex)
<b>Speed:</b>	30 ft.
<b>AC:</b>	11 (–1 Dex, +2 natural)
<b>Attacks:</b>	Slam +2 melee
<b>Damage:</b>	Slam 1d6+1
<b>Face/Reach:</b>	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
<b>Special Qualities:</b>	Undead, vigilant, relentless, turn resistance +4, SR 15, partial actions only, darkvision 60 ft.
<b>Saves:</b>	Fort +2, Ref –1, Will +3
<b>Abilities:</b>	Str 13, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1
<b>Feats:</b>	Great Fortitude, Toughness

## Combat

**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.

**Partial Actions Only (Ex):** Strahd zombies move as if unbearably weary and can perform only partial actions. Thus they can move or attack, but can only do both if they charge (a partial charge).

**Challenge Rating:** 1



## Wildlife, Dread

	<b>Dire Raven</b> Small Animal		<b>Silver Fox</b> Small Magical Beast
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	1d8 (4 hp)	<b>Hit Dice:</b>	1d10 (5 hp)
<b>Initiative:</b>	+5 (Dex)	<b>Initiative:</b>	+4 (Dex)
<b>Speed:</b>	20 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)	<b>Speed:</b>	60 ft.
<b>AC:</b>	17 (+1 size, +5 Dex, +1 natural)	<b>AC:</b>	16 (+1 size, +4 Dex, +1 natural)
<b>Attacks:</b>	Claws +5 melee, bite +0 melee	<b>Attacks:</b>	Bite +5 melee
<b>Damage:</b>	Claws 1d3-1; bite 1d4-1	<b>Damage:</b>	Bite 1d4-1
<b>Face/Reach:</b>	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.	<b>Face/Reach:</b>	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Eye peck	<b>Special Qualities:</b>	Pass without trace
<b>Saves:</b>	Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +2	<b>Saves:</b>	Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0
<b>Abilities:</b>	Str 9, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 4, Wis 16, Cha 8	<b>Abilities:</b>	Str 8, Dex 19, Con 11, Int 4, Wis 14, Cha 6
<b>Skills:</b>	Listen +8, Spot +8	<b>Skills:</b>	Listen +5, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +4*
<b>Feats:</b>	Weapon Finesse (claws, bite)	<b>Feats:</b>	Weapon Finesse (bite)
<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any forest, hill, plains, and mountains	<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Temperate and cold forest
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary or unkindness (5-20)	<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary or skulk (2-5)
<b>Challenge Rating:</b>	1	<b>Challenge Rating:</b>	1/2
<b>Treasure:</b>	None	<b>Treasure:</b>	None
<b>Alignment:</b>	Always neutral	<b>Alignment:</b>	Always neutral
<b>Advancement:</b>	2-3 HD (Small), 4-6 HD (Medium-size)	<b>Advancement:</b>	2-3 HD (Small)







## Dire Raven

Larger, more dangerous cousins of their common kin, dire ravens often flock around ravenkin and wereravens, following their commands.

### Combat

Dire ravens attack only when defending the carrion they feed on. When riled, dire ravens swoop down at their opponent's face, trying to disorient or blind the creature.

**Eye Peck (Ex):** If a dire raven deals a critical hit with its bite attack, it plucks the victim's eye out of its socket. This blinds the eye and applies a -2 penalty to Dexterity checks, Reflex saving throws, and numerous skill checks. See Table 3-9 in the DMG for specifics. A creature that loses all its eyes is blinded. Only the *regeneration* and *heal* spells can cure this form of blindness.

## Silver Fox (Elven fox)

Rarely seen beyond elven forests, silver foxes possess bright, almost luminous silver pelts in adulthood. Silver fox pelts fetch high prices, but elf spellcasters often seek out these creatures as familiars. Silver foxes are known for their cunning and quicksilver speed.

### Combat

Silver foxes avoid combat with any creatures larger than themselves and are adept at throwing trackers off their scent.

**Pass Without Trace (Su):** When moving through forested terrain, a silver fox can continuously *pass without trace*, as the spell cast by a 3rd-level druid.

**Skills:** Silver foxes receive a +8 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

## Zombie Wolf

	<b>Medium-Size Undead</b>
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	2d12+3 (16 hp)
<b>Initiative:</b>	-1 (Dex)
<b>Speed:</b>	30 ft.
<b>AC:</b>	11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural armor)
<b>Attacks:</b>	Bite +2 melee
<b>Damage:</b>	Bite 1d6+1
<b>Face/Reach:</b>	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Trip
<b>Special Qualities:</b>	Undead, partial actions only
<b>Saves:</b>	Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3
<b>Abilities:</b>	Str 13, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1
<b>Feats:</b>	Toughness
<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any land and underground
<b>Organization:</b>	Pack (2-20)
<b>Challenge Rating:</b>	1/2
<b>Treasure:</b>	None
<b>Alignment:</b>	Always neutral
<b>Advancement:</b>	3 HD (Medium)

Created by the darklord of Forlorn, zombie wolves are the shambling remnants of Tristen ApBlanc's lupine minions. These rotting beasts stalk Forlorn's forests alongside their living brothers, hunting druids and other interlopers into Tristen's realm.

### Combat

Zombie wolves attack with their bites, though their undead nature robs them of the speed they possessed in life.

**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.

**Partial Actions Only (Ex):** Zombie wolves have poor reflexes and can perform only partial actions. Thus they can move or attack, but can only do both if they charge (a partial charge).





## Who's Doomed

This section presents the darklords of the four domains in this gazetteer as well as other notables. Information in this chapter on the darklords already detailed in *Secrets of Dread Realm* takes precedence over previous descriptions. The NPC descriptions adhere to the following format:

**Statistics:** The character's complete game statistics. Some characters use special rules found in the *Ravenloft* setting book or *Denizens of Darkness*. The character's native language is always listed first and marked with an asterisk. If the character has a spellbook, spells usually prepared are marked in the same manner.

**Background:** The character's history.

**Current Sketch:** The character's personality and current activities.

**Combat:** Tactics and strategies the character usually uses in combat. If the character has any unique special attacks or qualities not found in the *PHB*, *Ravenloft* sourcebook, or *Denizens of Darkness*, these will also be detailed here.

**Lair:** The character's home or where she can often be encountered.

**Closing the Borders:** If the character is a darklord, this section details how a border closure manifests in his domain.

### Cristen ApBlanc, Darklord of Forlorn

(Day Form) Male vampyre Brd6/Ftr4: CR 15; Size M monstrous humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 8d8+4d10+6d6+18; hp 99; Init +7 (+3 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 24 (touch 16, flat-footed 21); Atk +21 melee (1d4+5, bite) and +16/+16 melee (1d4+2, claws) or +23/+18/+13 melee (2d6+7, +2 *greatsword*) or +24/+19/+14 ranged (1d8+5, +1 *mighty composite longbow* [Str 18]); SA Alternate form, blood drain, domination, command the clans, feral allies, spells; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 15/+1, turning vulnerability, turn resistance +1, anchored, allergen, undying soul, turning of the seasons, bardic music (inspire courage, countersong, fascinate, inspire competence), bardic knowledge; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +15, Will +12; Str 21, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 19.

(Night Form) Male human rank four Ghost Brd6/Ftr4: CR 15; Size M undead (incorporeal); HD 10d12; hp 65; Init +3; Spd Fly 30 ft. (perfect);

AC 16 (touch 16, flat-footed 13) or AC 19 (touch 16, flat-footed 16) on Ethereal; Atk +10/+4 (+13/+7 on Ethereal) melee (2d6+2, [2d6+5 on Ethereal] +2 *greatsword*) or +11/+5 (+14/+8 on Ethereal) ranged (1d8+4, +1 *mighty composite longbow* [Str 18]); SA Aura of despair, command the clans, corrupting gaze, frightful moan, malevolence, manifestation, spells; SQ allergen, anchored, darkvision 60 ft., incorporeal, rejuvenation, turn resistance +5, undead, undying soul, turning of the seasons, bardic music (inspire courage, countersong, fascinate, inspire competence), bardic knowledge, SR 19; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 16, Con —, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 27.

**Skills and Feats (as vampyre):** Bluff +11, Climb +11, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +10, Hide +9, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (nature) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +11, Move Silently +9, Perform (bagpipes, epic, harp, lute, melody) +10, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +9, Spot +10; Alertness, Cleave, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Critical (*greatsword*), Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (*greatsword*).

**Skills and Feats (as ghost):** Bluff +15, Climb +9, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +14, Disguise +14, Hide +9, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (nature) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +9, Move Silently +9, Perform (bagpipes, epic, harp, lute, melody) +14, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +9, Spot +8; Cleave, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Critical (*greatsword*), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (*greatsword*).

**Languages:** Forfarian\*, Draconic, Druidic, Sylvan.

**Bard Spells Per Day:** 6/5/4 by day, 6/6/5 by night. Base DC = 14 + spell level by day, 18 + spell level by night.

**Bard Spells Known:** 0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *read magic*; 1st—*charm person*, *mage armor*, *protection from good*, *sleep*; 2nd—*animal trance*, *detect thoughts*, *suggestion*.

**Signature Possessions:** +2 *greatsword*, +1 *mighty composite longbow* (Str 18), 50 +1 arrows, bracers of armor +3, bagpipes of haunting (as pipes), bagpipes of sounding (as pipes), ring of protection +3.

During the day, Tristen is a vampyre, a living creature (see *Denizens of Darkness*). Though he ages only one year for every decade, his apparent age varies due to the peculiar circumstances sur-





rounding his imprisonment in Ravenloft. Just as Castle Tristenoira exists in several points in time and changes appearance as it travels between them, Tristen changes to match his surroundings.

When the castle becomes The Lord's Tower, Tristen appears as a young man of 24, though he is actually 245 years old. His rich brown hair falls to the middle of his back, its rakish unkemptness lending him an air of recklessness and danger. He dresses as a minstrel in brightly colored shirts, tams, and kilts. Though he claims the heritage of the ApBlancs, he never wears the family tartan. Those who spend a great deal of time in his company learn that his romantic and jovial mien hides feelings of anger and impatience. He does not answer to the name Tristen; most know him simply as "the young minstrel" or "the Lord ApBlanc."

When the castle becomes Castle ApBlanc, Tristen is 340 years old but appears to be 34. His hair has receded at the temples and has darkened by several shades. He dresses in a manner befitting the ApBlanc, wearing the traditional clan tartan: a white kilt with green stripes, a sporran marked with the ApBlanc crest, a green shirt with lace trim, white knee-high socks and black shoes with silver buckles. His imperious presence brooks no disobedience or questioning. He goes by the name Marc ApBlanc, though addressing him so informally draws his ire.

When the castle assumes its contemporary appearance, Tristen is 548 years old but looks to be in his early fifties. His thinning hair shows traces of gray. With the land of Forfar shattered and transformed into Forlorn by his evil, Tristen has abandoned the trappings of rulership and adopted modes of dress that better suit his dark tastes. His kilt and matching cloak are black with silver stripes; blood-red slashes decorate the sleeves of his white silk shirt.

Regardless of the time period, Tristen moves and speaks with consummate grace. Articulate, charismatic, and proud, he captivates others with his forceful personality.

At night, Tristen's appearance is always identical, regardless of the time period. His ghostly nocturnal appearance reflects the way he looked when he died as well as the traumas his ghostly form has suffered since that night over 500 years ago. He appears as a fair-haired teenager, dressed in an undecorated kilt and a simple shirt, both torn and stained by mud and blood. Black veins mar the surface of his bloated, incorporeal flesh. His hair is

matted and caked with filth. His flesh and clothing appear scorched and burnt in some spots. No one glimpsing him in this form would connect him with the dashing man seen during the day.

## Background

Tristen's long, tragic history is complicated by the dual nature of his existence and the tripartite nature of his lair, yet his evil remains constant. Though the druids know part of his tale, other parts remain outside their kenning. What follows is the hidden tale of Tristen ApBlanc.

When Tristen was 15, the latent vampiric taint in his bloodstream emerged. The youth grew stronger and faster, his senses sharpened. Soon after his change, he surrendered to the thirst, running down a young doe and sinking his teeth into its neck. As he fed, he heard a slight gasp behind him and noticed Rual as she fled into the night. Though tempted to give chase and slay her, he stayed his impulses, hoping Rual would not betray him.

The next morning, Tristen saw Rual speaking to the other druids in hushed whispers. Believing Rual had betrayed him, Tristen sprang upon the druid when she meditated alone below the sacred oak. She turned, impaling Tristen upon the point of a blessed antler. Driven by pain and rage, he attacked, gorging himself on her blood even as his own spilled out.

Because Rual had imbibed holy water to purify herself for meditation, Tristen's throat and belly burned as the blessed liquid touched his half-dead flesh. Believing he was dying, Tristen threw Rual to the ground, beating and slashing her flesh in mad vengeance. In truth, the holy water was not killing him, but was instead purging his body of the vampiric taint, though that knowledge would not have lessened his twisted rage.

As she lay dying, Rual cursed Tristen in a manner that shaped the land in ways she could predict. "I was going to heal you, bring you back to the light. Yet instead, I curse you! With my dying breath, I beseech the gods to make you an eternal prisoner of this place, which you have stained with evil! Let murder burn in your veins with every setting of the sun, and may peace never come to you!"

As Rual expired, Tristen's body boiled and died. Rising as a ghost, he found himself trapped in the sacred grove and spent the night in horrified panic.



While Tristen hid his ghostly form, he watched as the druids, attracted by his wailing, discovered the two corpses and concluded that the pair had been slain by some third party. Obviously, Rual had not betrayed her ward. As the druids collected the bodies for burial, Tristen felt terror overwhelm him again. Fearing what would happen once his body was removed, he attacked, shrieking in rage. The druids fled in panic, never to return to their sullied grove. They carried the tale of the ghost on the hill to their fellow druids.

When the sun rose, Rual's curse drew Tristen forcibly back into his body. His wounds vanished and he arose as a vampyre, trapped in the grove, his path blocked by the trees. At sunset, his body burned and his blood boiled, and he arose once more as a ghost. Every day since that time, Tristen rises as a vampyre, living and breathing, only to die each evening and wander as a restless spirit.

In 1618 (231 BC) Tristen tried to free himself from the grove by setting it alight. When the flames touched the sacred oak, he felt the pain of the fire while the tree remained unharmed. After hours of agony, the fire died down, having destroyed all the trees except the oak. Still Tristen could not leave the hill.

From the grove, Tristen lashed out at the people of Birnam, summoning and controlling wolves from the countryside and setting them upon the townspeople, hoarding whatever valuables the victims possessed.

For two centuries, Tristen's depredations enabled him to amass tremendous wealth, but he grew bored with solitary banditry. Murdering and tormenting the people of Birnam appealed to him less than walking among them as lord and tyrant. To realize his fantasies of rulership, he crafted the guise of the Lord ApBlanc, a young, wealthy minstrel.

Dominating townspeople and forging documents, the "Lord ApBlanc" established his rightful claim to the ApBlanc name and purchased the hilltop where the sacred grove once stood. Hired workers cleared the land of all trees save the sacred oak and constructed a grand keep. Tristen's eloquent speech, impeccable manners, and mastery of music and art won over the townspeople, who considered his eccentricities — such as his insistence that everyone leave before nightfall — charming.

The young women of Birnam were particularly enchanted by Tristen. Only Isolt ApVay, a devoted cleric of Diancecht, had no interest in

romance. Tristen found her recalcitrance captivating, but Isolt saw him as only a friend and gracious host. When Tristen proposed to her in 1813 (426 BC), she gently refused, citing her duties to her god. Unable to soften her with his wealth or charm, Tristen manipulated her sympathy and naiveté, confessing his tragic dual existence. Isolt resolved to attempt to save Tristen, who extracted from her a promise to marry him regardless of the outcome of her efforts. Isolt's spells failed, and she found herself obligated to marry a monster.

Isolt forever lamented her abandonment of the clergy, while Tristen lost interest in his conquest of the woman, proving himself a cold, distant husband at best, and an angry and controlling one at worst. He withdrew from the outside entirely, forcing Isolt to share his seclusion with him.

Their first son, Gilan, was born in 1814, followed by Morholt in 1815 and a daughter, Brangain, in 1816. When Gilan was twelve, the child's terrier, Petitcrieu, snapped at Tristen. Angered, Tristen set wolves upon the animal. Trying to save his pet, Gilan fell before their savagery. Tristen slew many wolves in his fury, but failed to save his eldest son.

In 1833, Tristen's second son, Morholt, prepared to join the church of Morrigan, goddess of war. His priestly mentor, Duncan ApDuguid, stayed overnight at the castle with Morholt before the young man's journey to the Morrigan's temple. Morholt allowed Duncan the use of his more luxurious bedroom, while Morholt took the guestroom. Late that night, Duncan encountered the ghostly Tristen and repelled him with holy water. Tristen waited until sunrise, crept into the guestroom, and murdered the figure sleeping there with his sword, only to discover he had slain his son. Tristen stole Duncan's sword and smeared it with Morholt's blood, then returned it to the cleric's room and summoned the guards. Though Duncan escaped, everyone in the castle believed in Duncan's guilt. Isolt, however, remained convinced that Tristen was the true murderer.

Their daughter Brangain took after her mother, becoming a devoted servant of Diancecht. Disturbed by the haunted keep, she naively attempted to heal the undead inhabitants. The first ghost she encountered, without recognizing him, was Tristen, who mockingly allowed Brangain to attempt a healing spell on his ghostly form, only to find that it caused him excruciating pain. Fearing the harm she might cause him, Tristen secretly imprisoned



Brangain in the keep's dungeons. A year later, in 1839 (452 BC), she vanished from her cell.

That same year, Isolt, driven mad by the loss of her children, confronted Tristen with her suspicions of his guilt. Tristen attacked her, drained her blood, and flung her from the tallest tower in the keep, claiming her death a suicide. The people of Birnam believed him.

Tristen dismissed his servants and withdrew deep into the keep's dungeons, emerging fifty years later as Marc ApBlanc, the "grandson" of the long-missing Brangain ApBlanc. Continuing his schemes for power, he expanded and fortified his castle and hired an army of thugs and mercenaries in bold defiance of the ruling ApFittles. By the 1920s, he consolidated his power and declared himself the rightful baron of Forfar. The resulting civil war ended in 1934 (547 BC), with Tristen victorious. The last ApFittle was executed, and Tristen declared himself lord of Forfar. At that moment, the Mists of Ravenloft rose, and Forfar was torn from its natural world and twisted into the domain of Forlorn. The land was reshaped, thousands of Forfarians were transformed into hideous goblins, and Tristen became Ravenloft's second darklord.



## Current Sketch

Tristen lives a solitary existence in Forlorn, the goblins his only company. He despises the wretched creatures but suffers their existence because they make useful minions.

Tristen is desperate to escape the curse that transforms him into a ghost each night, both to be rid of the pain it causes and to allow him to wander freely once more. His daily existence as a vampire does not distress him.

Tristen pursues two schemes that might free him of the curse. The first is the destruction of Rual's ghost. Undeath has twisted Rual's mind, giving her delight in the tragic turns of Tristen's life. Tristen believes that his curse will end if her spirit is put to rest. If he encounters any adventurers with skill at hunting ghosts, he will attempt to manipulate them into seeking out Rual. Rual, in turn, seeks to manipulate adventurers into disrupting Tristen's schemes, but she will not allow his destruction since his torment gives her so much pleasure.

Tristen's second scheme is more ambitious and consists of eliminating the druidic gods' influence in Forlorn. Thus, he has his goblins cut down every tree they find as fast as they can, and slay any

druids they encounter. The land conspires against his efforts, increasing Tristen's frustration. Forest creatures, carnivorous plants, fluke storms, and the druids themselves have all interfered with Forlorn's deforestation.

## Combat

Tristen's tactics depend largely on his current form. He can only be permanently killed with great difficulty, and he knows this, so he fights with little fear. He is boldest as a ghost, because he is difficult to harm; as a vampire, he will often call on goblins or wolves to assist him.

**Special Attacks (as vampire):** *Alternate Form* (Su): Tristen can assume the shape of a worg at will as a standard action. This ability is similar to a *polymorph self* spell cast by an 18th-level sorcerer. Tristen can remain in this form until he wishes to return to his normal form or until the next sunset.

*Domination* (Su): The Will save to resist Tristen's influence has a DC of 23.

**Special Attacks (as ghost):** *Ghost Abilities*: Saves against Tristen's ghost abilities have a DC of 23.

**Special Qualities (as vampire):** *Turning Vulnerability* (Ex): Tristen can be turned in vampire



form as if he were an undead creature, but only by a cleric of Belenus. He has +1 turn resistance.

**Special Attacks (both forms):** *Command the Clans (Su)*: Tristen has an empathic link with every goblin in Forlorn. Communicating with a goblin requires no concentration or action on Tristen's part. He can communicate with an unlimited number of goblins simultaneously and give each one orders without any outwardly visible cue.

*Feral Allies (Su)*: Once per day, Tristen can call forth 3d6 wolves or 2d6 worgs from Forlorn's wilds as a standard action. The creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve Tristen for up to 1 day. All wolf-like animals, beasts, and magical beasts in Forlorn are under Tristen's influence.

*Undead Feral Allies (Su)*: Once per day, as a standard action, Tristen can animate 2d6 wolves or worgs within the borders of Forlorn as zombies. These lupine minions are considered Medium-size zombies (see the *Monster Manual*), save that they have a speed of 50 ft., Str 16, and a single bite attack (+4 melee, 1d6+3 damage) rather than a slam attack. Tristen has an empathic link with every zombie wolf in Forlorn.

**Special Qualities (both forms):** *Anchored (Ex)*: Tristen cannot move more than 300 feet from the ancient oak that grows in Castle Tristennoira's courtyard.

*Allergen (Ex)*: Tristen suffers from a strong aversion to deer antlers, much like the aversion to garlic common to vampires. He cannot enter an area containing a deer antler, nor can he approach an individual with an antler on her person.

*Undying Soul (Su)*: If slain in vampyre form, Tristen immediately rises from the grave in his ghost form. If he then successfully uses his malevolence ability on a male humanoid, he destroys the victim's soul and replaces it with his own. The character's mental ability scores change to those of Tristen, who retains all of his skills, feats, and abilities. Over the course of the next week, Tristen's new body transforms to match his original physical ability scores and appearance. If slain in ghost form, Tristen returns to life in his body at dawn as normal.

*Turning of the Seasons (Ex)*: At sunrise on the two solstices and two equinoxes each year, Tristen transforms into a normal human Brd6/Ftr4 for 24 hours and falls into a deep, comatose slumber. If killed while in this coma, he is truly destroyed. Of course, Tristen takes great care to guard this secret

weakness and hides himself deep beneath Castle Tristennoira during such times.

## Lair

**Castle Tristennoira.** Ancient and crumbling, Tristennoira drifts in time. Though unchanging from the outside, within its walls the past, present, and future twist in upon themselves, creating an eternal temporal loop. Explorers run the risk of being randomly shunted back and forth in time as they pass from one room to another and usually encounter the castle in three eras. Once within the castle walls, heroes can only leave while in their own time period.

**The Lord's Keep (1839 FC/452 BC):** The castle in this era exists as a tall, rectangular, well-maintained keep abutted by a pair of thick, round towers. It houses the Minstrel ApBlanc, his wife Isolt, and their household servants. The highest windows overlook the gently rolling, wooded highlands of Forfar and the cooking fires of Birnam to the north. This era ends with Isolt's suspicious death.

**Castle ApBlanc (1934 FC/547 BC):** During the Year of Woe, in the final weeks before Forfar is dragged into Ravenloft, the ruthless Marc ApBlanc rules the castle, expanded by the northern hall, guest tower, and curtain wall. Other than ApBlanc and the ghosts of his family, the castle houses Marc's mercenaries and the necromancer Lucy ApMorten, assigned the task of returning Isolt to life. Lucy's infatuation with Marc (despite his true nature) sabotages her experiments in the hope that Marc will eventually return her feelings. The view from the towers reveals perpetually stormy skies and tortured highlands wracked by frequent earth tremors. This era ends with the execution of the paladin Andrew ApFittle, the last of his family, directly leading to the creation of Forlorn.

**Castle Tristennoira (2143 FC/756 BC):** In the present, the castle has fallen into ruin. The tremors that wracked the land as Forfar became Forlorn tore open vast caverns beneath the castle and toppled the northern round tower. The haunted castle houses only Tristen and his wolf and goblin minions. The goblins have bricked over several doors and have added a barbican and several wooden rooms of crude construction.

Tristen ApBlanc is master and prisoner of Tristennoira in all eras, spiritually tethered to the great oak in the muddy courtyard. Tristen's crimes





have caused the whole of Tristennoira to become a rank 5 sinkhole of evil.

## Closing the Borders

When Tristen wishes to seal his domain, creatures that attempt to cross Forlorn's borders find themselves paralyzed (no saving throw). This paralysis is permanent until Tristen drops the borders or *remove paralysis* is cast on the creature. The creature can move as normal once freed from the paralysis, but must move directly away from the border or be trapped again. Forlorn's closed borders can even affect creatures normally immune to paralysis.

## Tristen's Ghosts

The ghosts of Tristen's mother, guardian, wife, and sons haunt Castle Tristennoira and its surroundings. With the exception of Rual, none of the ghosts is interested in the actions or fate of Tristen; each has its own agenda.

**Flora ApBlanc:** Flora (female human rank one ghost Ari1; entrancing appearance, manifestation; AL NG) haunts the path from the ruins of Birnam to Castle Tristennoira. Appearing at 11 PM each night, she flees from a mob that exists only in her mind. Desperately clutching a small bundle of cloth, she pays no attention to other beings, running through them if they stand in her way. She does not stop until she reaches the sacred grove, where she searches for a person to take her "child" from her. Whether the bundle is accepted or not, a ghostly noose materializes around Flora's neck at midnight and yanks her into the air. Her ghostly form swings in the wind for a moment before fading into nothingness. The bundle she carries vanishes when she does.

Flora is a fair-haired woman dressed in fine clothing, wearing a sash bearing the ApBlanc tartan. All who look at her risk falling victim to her entrancing appearance, standing fixed until she leaves their sight. This is the only risk Flora poses; she makes no conscious attacks.

**Entrancing Appearance (Su):** This ability operates continuously.

**Gilan ApBlanc:** Gilan (male human child rank two ghost Ari1; group charm, manifestation, telekinesis; wolf phobia; AL CG) haunts Castle Tristennoira, blissfully unaware of his own death, blocked from his mind due to the trauma of the wolf attack. He romps through the halls of Tristennoira, cradling the ghostly corpse of his beloved dog in his

arms. He seeks to play with anyone he encounters, resorting to practical jokes at their expense if rebuked. He attacks anyone who threatens his dog, even though the animal is clearly dead.

Gilan ApBlanc is a 12-year old boy with fair hair and a cherubic face. He wears a kilt with the ApBlanc tartan and an unbuttoned white sporran. His body shows no signs of the wounds that killed him. The dog in his arms has been horribly mutilated and is barely recognizable. Ghostly blood drips from its body, evaporating into mist before touching the ground.

**Group Charm (Su):** Once per day, as a standard action, Gilan can affect up to 8 HD worth of humanoids as though *charm person* had been cast on them by a 4th-level sorcerer. All of the targets must be within 30 feet of each other. The Will save for this power has a DC of 11.

**Wolf Phobia (Ex):** If Gilan sees a wolf or hears its howl, he immediately flees as though he had been turned.

**Morholt ApBlanc:** Morholt (male human rank two ghost Ftr3; semicorporeal, manifestation; AL LE) is confused by his present situation. Murdered in his sleep, he believes that he is unworthy of following the goddess Morrigan. Determined to prove himself a worthy follower of the war goddess, he challenges any warrior he meets to combat. He always fights to the death, cutting down those who flee like the cowards they are.

Morholt is 18 years old, with a thick mane of dark brown hair and a broad, well-muscled chest tattooed with two crossed swords, Morrigan's symbol. He carries a bastard sword. His stomach is slashed open, entrails hanging from the wound. His legs disappear into formless mist, and his face is permanently frozen in a look of pained shock.

**Semicorporeal (Su):** Morholt can attack material creatures with his bastard sword as though it were a *ghost touch* weapon (see Chapter Six of *Van Richten's Arsenal*).

**Isolt ApBlanc:** This ghost (female human rank three ghost Clr3; aura of despair, horrific appearance, malevolence, manifestation; AL NE) wanders anywhere in Forlorn searching for her daughter Brangain. Though she has traveled throughout Forlorn, she has found no trace of her. She continues to quest, spending most of her time in the walls of Tristennoira. She questions anyone she encounters for information about Brangain. Those who tell her they know nothing will be left alone. She hounds those who hint that they know



of Brangain's location or are evasive or noncommittal until they are more forthcoming. If lied to, Isolt becomes enraged and attacks.

Isolt is a middle-aged woman with long brown hair tied into a bun. She wears a kilt with the gold, red, and blue plaid tartan of the ApVay family and a white, lace-trimmed, long-sleeved blouse. Her limbs are broken and twisted.

**Rual:** Rual (female human rank four ghost Drd7; charm animals, enticing lure, hallucinatory terrain, manifestation; AL NE) is completely inhuman in appearance, taking the form of a swirling cloud of mist. Gurgling noises, like the sound of a slit throat, can be heard wherever she appears, but she cannot speak. Fine droplets of blood mark her passage.

**Charm Animals (Su):** Once per day, Rual can affect up to 30 HD worth of animals as though they had been the target of a *charm person or animal* spell cast by a 9th-level druid. All of the animals targeted must be within 60 feet of each other and of Rual. The Will save has a DC of 20. The wolves of Forlorn are immune to this power.

**Enticing Lure (Su):** At will, Rual can create an illusory scent that attracts a single target of her choice within 400 feet. The target is entitled to a Will save (DC 20) to resist. If the target fails, she is irresistibly drawn toward Rual, the source of the aroma. An enticed target attacks anyone who attempts to restrain her. The exact odor varies according to the target's tastes. Rual can lure only one target at a time. This is a compulsion effect.

**Hallucinatory Terrain (Sp):** At will, Rual can create *hallucinatory terrain* as if cast by a 9th-level sorcerer. Rual can only create one illusion with this power: that of the sacred grove as it appeared the day she was murdered. When Rual herself enters this illusion, she also changes appearance, becoming a rotting corpse with a gaping wound on her neck, dressed in tattered and bloodstained druid robes. She can speak normally in this form.

**Manifestation (Su):** Rual cannot suppress her manifestation.

## Eleni of Toyalis, Heir to the Red Wizard

**Female human Evo8:** CR 8; Size M humanoid (human) (5 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 8d4+8; hp 34; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 13, flat-footed 13); Atk +5 melee (1d4+1, +1 dagger) or +7 ranged (1d4, masterwork daggers); SA Spells; SQ Arcane

tattoos, hawk dread familiar ("Zaglaive"); SR 17; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 14, Cha 16.

**Skills and Feats:** Alchemy +10, Bluff +4, Concentration +10, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (local) +14, Scry +10, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +10 (+12 to learn Evocation spells); Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation).

**Languages:** Vaasi\*, Balok, Mordentish, Draconic.

**Wizard Spells per Day:** 5/7/5/5/4. Base DC = 15 + spell level, 17 + spell level for Evocation spells. *Specialized School:* Evocation. *Prohibited Schools:* Enchantment and Illusion.

**Spellbook:** 0—all; 1st—alarm, animate rope, burning hands, cause fear, comprehend languages\*, detect secret doors, detect undead\*, endure elements, enlarge, expeditious retreat, feather fall, hold portal, identify, mage armor, magic missile\*, magic weapon, message, obscuring mist, protection from good, reduce, shield\*, shocking grasp, spider climb, summon monster I, Tenser's floating disk, unseen servant; 2nd—alter self, arcane lock, blindness/deafness, cat's grace, darkness, darkvision, daylight, detect thoughts, flaming sphere\*, fog cloud, fox's cunning\*\*, gaze screen, glitterdust, knock, levitate, locate object, Melf's acid arrow\*, owl's wisdom#, protection from arrows\*, pyrotechnics, resist elements, rope trick, scare, see invisibility, shatter, summon monster II, summon swarm, web; 3rd—clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball\*, flame arrow\*, fly, gust of wind, halt undead, haste, Leomund's tiny hut, lightning bolt\*, protection from elements, shrink item, sleet storm, slow, stinking cloud, summon monster III\*, wind wall; 4th—arcane eye\*, bestow curse, detect scrying, dimension door, Evard's black tentacles, fear, fire shield, fire trap, ice storm, polymorph other\*, polymorph self, scrying, shout\*, stoneskin, summon monster IV, wall of fire.

**Signature Possessions:** +1 dagger, masterwork daggers, bracers of armor +2, robe of resistance +1 (as cloak), ring of protection +1.

Eleni is an exotic beauty with hawkish facial features. She has the dusky skin and dark eyes common to the Rashemani people. Her shaved head, however, is covered with elaborate tattoos that flow from her scalp and onto her shoulders and chest. Typically, such fashion is reserved only for the Mulan. Rashemani and Mulan alike are often scandalized when they first meet her. Many of her





tattoos resemble magical sigils, but no one has been able to discern their significance.

## Background

Born to laborers in Toyalis, Eleni dreamed of a life where she and other Rashemani would not bow and scrape for the effete, tattooed Mulan. Shortly before her 16th birthday, after watching her father's humiliation by a Mulan woman, she decided she would bow no longer. She strode into the streets, resolved she would make any Mulan she met step aside from her path. If an oppressor attacked her, she would die fighting him.

As fate would have it, the first Mulan she encountered was the Red Wizard, Hazlik. The rebellious teen impressed Hazlik, who struck up a conversation with her, rather than ordering her slain. Within a few minutes, he invited her to accompany him to the village of Ramulai, where he tested her as a potential apprentice.

Eleni possessed a strong talent for magic and quickly mastered the arcane arts. Hazlik permitted her to help instruct other apprentices. The pair became fast friends, discovering a mutual hatred for the Mulan. When Hazlik confided to Eleni that some Mulan humiliated him to a degree that still tortured him, she suggested that she should adopt Mulan dress and fashion to spite them. Hazlik loved the idea, since it mocked the Mulan beliefs and provided him with the first step to his revenge over the Mulan.

Eleni was tattooed with both traditional Mulan and magical sigils of Hazlik's own creation. Hazlik was so delighted with the scandal her new appearance caused that he started giving Eleni political power, even allowing her to sit at his side when he met with his council of advisors. No one dared criticize Eleni openly, and her word became equal in weight to that of Hazlik himself. Rumors hold she is the aging wizard's lover, chosen heir, or both. Those who question the propriety of their relationship vanish.

## Current Sketch

Eleni is, indeed, Hazlik's appointed heir and most trusted confidant. They share a love like father and daughter, but there is nothing more physical or romantic about it. Together, they are executing a complicated plan of epic scope that will send shockwaves through Hazlan and perhaps beyond should it succeed.



Their goal is the complete extermination of all Mulan everywhere. Eleni is unaware of Hazlik's complete plan but suspects that some of the magical sigils upon her skin relate to it. Hazlik has promised that her part in the plan is a vital one and that when it is executed, she will become lord of a transformed Hazlan.

Eleni is charming and personable when she wants to be, but takes an almost pathological delight in shocking others. Well-educated and quick-witted, she is a good conversationalist and a convincing orator, particularly when she keeps her sarcasm in check. If she is trying to win someone over to her point of view, she is a hard person to dislike. Yet Eleni has little interest in winning over those who find her deplorable; in fact, these are the very people she takes the greatest delight in shocking. Eleni enjoys spending time with foreigners, learning about the lands beyond Hazlan. Her position as Hazlik's right hand gives her the opportunity to meet a number of highly placed foreign emissaries. She corresponds with those she finds particularly interesting, including Lord-Speaker Mason of Har-Thelen and dwarven scholar, explorer, and vampire Mulger d'Ajust of Darkon.

A new source of scandalous rumor in Hazlan is Eleni's lover, a sharp-featured man by the name of



Zaglaive. In truth, Zaglaive is her familiar, given humanoid form as a gift from Hazlik.

Recently, Eleni has noticed that when she is alone, some of her tattoos move of their own volition, twisting together to form pictures of skulls that glare at her. Eleni, therefore, tries to remain near at least one other person, usually Hazlik or Zaglaive, at all times.

## Combat

Eleni avoids physical combat. If confronted by foes, she relies on the protection of her bodyguards (1d6+1 1st-level fighters armed with short swords and whips whenever she is in public; frequently accompanied by Zaglaive) and retreats from melee. She uses her spells to assist her guardians against the enemy. Most of these guards are Rashemani whom Eleni has known since childhood.

**Special Qualities:** *Arcane Tattoos* (Su): A number of arcane tattoos inked by Hazlik decorate Eleni's body. One of the tattoos grants SR 17. Others grant her permanent *comprehend languages*, *darkvision*, *detect magic*, *protection from arrows*, *read magic*, *see invisibility*, and *tongues*. Additional tattoos covering Eleni's body are vital to Hazlik's genocidal ritual in order to transfer his soul into Eleni's body. If Eleni takes more than 4 points of damage from a single attack by an edged weapon, there is a 20% chance a random tattoo is damaged and ceases to function.

Additionally, as the result of a failed powers check, when Eleni concentrates, she can determine the general location and power level of the nearest undead creature by studying her tattoos.

**Minions:** Eleni's hawk dread familiar, Zaglaive, has been imbued with two castings of the *create faux henchman* spell as well as a permanent *control shape* spell. These spells allow Zaglaive to transform freely between hawk, human warrior, and hawk-man (arakocra; see *Monsters of Faerun*) forms. As a human, Zaglaive is tall, lean, and muscled, with hawk-like features.

Within Hazlik's strongholds, Eleni can call upon any of Hazlik's minions to defend her. These minions arrive in 2d6 rounds.

## Cair

Eleni frequently lives in Hazlik's estates, including the Red Academy, Veneficus, and the Tables. Her family has also been granted a large walled estate in the heart of Toyalis, and she is sometimes found there.

**The Red Academy.** The center of Hazlik's more recent schemes, the Red Academy serves as the training grounds for his apprentices, a small cadre of wizards who share his ambition and disregard for human life. The air crackles with magic, and a palpable lust for power radiates from the students within its walls. The Red Academy is normally a rank 2 sinkhole of evil, but occasionally some of the more fiendish magical experiments raise it to rank 3.

Magical constructs and traps guard the Academy, most of which lie dormant until activated at the command of Hazlik or one of his apprentices. A small contingent of elite Rashemani guards is permanently barracked at the Academy.

## Madame Eva

**Female Zarovan Vistani Clr10:** CR 11; SZ M humanoid (human) (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 10d8; hp 53; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (touch 11, flat-footed 10); Atk +8/+3 melee (1d4+1); SA Curses, evil eye; SQ Fluid time, foresight, the Sight, Mist navigation; ALC N; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +16; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 25, Cha 19.

**Skills and Feats:** Bluff +12, Concentration +2, Craft (illumination) +7, Diplomacy +13, Innuendo +9, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (nature) +8, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +17, Listen +7, Scry +17, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +6, Spot +7; Craft Wondrous Item, Iron Will, Silent Spell, Still Spell, Voice of Wrath.

**Languages:** Patterna\*. Eva seems to be able to communicate with any humanoid that has a language.

**Cleric Spells per Day:** 6/11+1/11+1/10+1/10+1/9+1. Base DC = 17 + spell level. *Domains:* Knowledge (casts divinations at +1 caster level) and Protection (1/day generate a protective ward granting +10 resistance bonus to a saving throw). Eva worships no deities, and no one — not even other Vistani — truly understands the source of her powers. Eva's spells are not altered by the Dark Powers unless she wants them to be, and she is not subject to powers checks. She can choose to turn or rebuke undead on a case-by-case basis.

Madame Eva is a Zarovan Vistani. She appears as a wizened crone, with a deeply lined face and squinting eyes heavy with knowledge, but she has *always* appeared as a wizened crone in all the centuries she has existed in the Land of Mists. Her true age is unknown. Vistani lore holds that Eva's





age reflects her inner thoughts: she is as old as she feels.

## Background

History tangles when discussing the Zarovan, who do not flow through time as others do. History records that Madame Eva entered the Realm of Dread at the stroke of midnight separating the years 469 and 470 BC, leading the tribes of the Vistani into their new home. Once in Ravenloft, Eva forged a fateful pact with Count Strahd von Zarovich whereby the Vistani receive free passage through Barovia and the antidote to Strahd's choking fog. In return, they heed him when he beckons, slipping him information on travelers in his realm or events in distant domains. The Vistani find this agreement acceptable.

History also notes that in the year 495 BC, a young Barovian thief named Jacqueline Montarri murdered Madame Eva. Though Montarri was hideously cursed for her crime (see below), Madame Eva continues to appear alive and well to this day. In the strange twisting of Vistani time, it may be that Eva will, one day in her distant future, die more than two and a half centuries ago.



Madame Eva

## Current Sketch

Eva exists as a detached observer of all that occurs in the Land of Mists. As the ultimate bystander, neither friend nor foe to anyone, she rarely takes action herself, instead appearing at an opportune time and place to guide others into fulfilling what she needs done. She does take an active role when opposing Dukkars when they arise, however, and was involved in the creation of the powerful magic that binds Malocchio Aderre to Invidia. No one knows her long-term goals. Not even Strahd understands her or knows the true limits of her powers.

Madame Eva can be maddeningly obtuse when speaking to *giorgio*, couching her language in esoteric metaphors and confusing the past and future tense.

## Combat

Madame Eva never initiates combat and avoids situations where conflict is likely. If pressed, she relies on her spells, evil eye, and powerful curses. If a battle turns against Eva, the Mists boil up on her next action. When they dissipate, she disappears.

**Special Attacks:** *Evil Eye (Ex)*: Saves against Eva's evil eye attacks have a DC of 21.

**Special Qualities:** *Fluid Time (Ex)*: Like her Zarovan kin, Madame Eva does not flow through the same linear time as *giorgio*. Eva's apparent age is always whatever she wishes it to be. She is immune to magical aging.

*Foresight (Su)*: Eva can never be surprised or caught flat-footed.

## Cair

As a Vistana, Madame Eva has no true home. Heroes may encounter Eva anywhere and at any time in their travels throughout the Realm of Dread. Those who need to seek her out, however, can often find her in the semi-permanent Vistani camp at the base of the Tser Falls in Barovia.

## Hazlik, the Red Wizard, Darklord of Hazlan

**Male human Evo14**: CR 15; Size M humanoid (human) (5 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 14d4+14; hp 63; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (touch 17, flat-footed 16); Atk +7/+2 melee (1d4, +1 dagger) or +12/+7 ranged (1d4-1, masterwork daggers); SA Spells; SQ Permanent spells, spell sense, toad dread familiar ("Lurzed"), undying soul; AL CE; SV Fort





+7, Ref +10, Will +11; Str 8, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 22, Wis 11, Cha 10.

**Skills and Feats:** Alchemy +16, Bluff +5, Craft (sculpture) +8, Concentration +11, Craft (tattooing) +8, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (local) +16, Knowledge (the planes) +17, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +11, Knowledge (religion) +15, Scry +16, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +17 (+19 to learn Evocation spells); Combat Casting, Craft Rod, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Empower Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation), Spell Penetration.

**Languages:** Vaasi\*, Abyssal, Balok, Darkonese, Draconic.

**Wizard Spells per Day:** 5/7/7/6/6/5/5/3. Base DC = 16 + spell level, 18 + spell level for Evocation spells. *Specialized School:* Evocation. *Prohibited Schools:* Enchantment and Illusion.

**Spellbook:** 0—all; 1st—alarm, animate rope, burning hands\*, comprehend languages, detect secret doors, detect undead, endure elements\*, enlarge, erase, expeditious retreat, feather fall, grease, hold portal, identify, mage armor, magic missile\*, magic weapon, message, obscuring mist, protection from good, reduce, shield, shocking grasp, spider climb, summon monster I, Tenser's floating disk, true strike, unseen servant\*; 2nd—alter self, arcane lock, blindness/deafness, bull's strength, cat's grace, darkness\*, darkvision, daylight, detect thoughts, endurance, flaming sphere\*, fog cloud, glitterdust, knock, levitate, locate object, Melf's acid arrow\*, obscure object, protection from arrows, pyrotechnics\*, resist elements\*, rope trick, see invisibility, shatter, summon monster II\*, summon swarm, web, whispering wind; 3rd—blink, clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic\*, explosive runes, fireball\*, flame arrow\*, fly, gaseous form, greater magic weapon, gust of wind, halt undead, haste, Leomund's tiny hut, lightning bolt\*, magic circle against good, nondetection, phantom steed\*, protection from elements, secret page, sepia snake sigil, shrink item, sleet storm, slow, stinking cloud, summon monster III\*, tongues, wind wall; 4th—arcane eye, bestow curse\*, detect scrying, dimension door\*, Evard's black tentacles, fire shield\*, fire trap, ice storm, locate creature, minor creation, minor globe of invulnerability, Otiluke's resilient sphere, polymorph other\*, polymorph self\*, remove curse, scrying, shout, solid fog, stoneskin, summon monster IV, wall of fire\*, wall of ice; 5th—animal growth, Bigby's interposing hand\*, cloudkill\*, cone of cold, contact other plane, dismissal, energy buffer#, fabricate, lesser planar binding, magic jar, major creation, Mordenkainen's

faithful hound, passwall, permanency, prying eyes\*, Rary's telepathic bond, sending, stone shape, summon monster V\*, telekinesis, teleport, transmute mud to rock, transmute rock to mud, wall of force, wall of iron, wall of stone; 6th—acid fog\*, analyze dweomer, Bigby's forceful hand, chain lightning\*, contingency, control weather, disintegrate\*, eyebite\*, flesh to stone, globe of invulnerability, greater dispelling, guards and wards, legend lore, mass haste, move earth, Otiluke's freezing sphere, planar binding, repulsion, stone to flesh, summon monster VI, true seeing; 7th—banishment, Bigby's grasping hand, delayed blast fireball\*, Drawmij's instant summons, ethereal jaunt, forcecage, greater scrying, Mordenkainen's sword, plane shift, prismatic spray, sequester, summon monster VII, teleport without error\*, vanish, vision.

**Signature Possessions:** +1 dagger, masterwork daggers, bracers of armor +3, gloves of dexterity +2, headband of intellect +2, ring of protection +3, robe of resistance +2 (as cloak), wand of fireball (14th-level caster, 10 charges), wand of magic missile (14th-level caster, 12 charges), spellbook.

An elderly, wizened man with coarse features, Hazlik is completely bald, with ornate tattoos taking the place of hair on his scalp. He wears a brown goatee, but not a mustache. His left eye is brown and his right eye is blue. He dresses in long red robes that expose his hairless, tattooed chest. Around his neck, he wears a silver pendant adorned with a yellow gemstone, which serves as the amulet that controls his shield guardian. Hazlik leans on a tall staff of silver-shod black ironwood, tipped with a large red crystal gripped by a silver mount. Hazlik's hissing, phlegmy voice is tight with unconcealed impatience.

## Background

Called the Red Wizard, Hazlik was born 83 years ago in an outlander kingdom ruled by mages. His interests lay in the arts of evocation, where he created a number of unique spells, unusual magic items, and interesting creatures. The wizard satraps of that land enjoyed Hazlik's beautiful and diabolical creations. His status rose accordingly, and Hazlik soon moved in the uppermost circles of his homeland's courts. Yet Hazlik's ambitious rise to power was too fast for the tastes of some wizards, who sought a weakness they could exploit. His control was exceptional, however, and he never took his enemies' bait.

Hazlik's sole weakness seemed to be his hatred of a rival wizard, the necromancer Thantosya, who





had matched his rise step for step. The two competed with barely concealed venom, and when Thantosya out-stepped him, Hazlik smoldered. Hazlik also desired Thantosya's lover, Ordiab, though the wizard concealed his passion well.

In time, Hazlik's enemies hatched a malicious plan with Thantosya. During a night of courtly intrigue, Ordiab approached Hazlik, suggesting a tryst. The pair retreated to a locale and Hazlik succumbed to passion. Thantosya and Hazlik's other enemies stepped forth, accusing Hazlik of assaulting Ordiab. The court turned on Hazlik, captured him, tattooed his head and chest with arcane symbols of femininity and cast him out.

The court burned Hazlik's estate and he retreated to a prepared bolthole. Humiliated and ostracized, he devoted himself to revenge and magical studies. While searching the forests for arcane components, Hazlik stumbled upon a secluded glade, where he encountered Thantosya and her lover. Hazlik ambushed the pair, slew Ordiab, cutting out his heart with a silver knife, and forced Thantosya to drink Ordiab's blood before slashing her throat.

As Hazlik gloated, mists rose to envelop him. Hazlik wandered until he found a strange realm, mutable and dreamlike, within the Mists. A white tower loomed in the distance, filling him with dread. There he found himself facing the wizards who had tattooed him. Hazlik ran blindly back into the Misty Border, where he emerged into a new land, becoming the lord of Hazlan.

## Current Sketch

Hazlik is tightly wound, obsessed with control over himself and his surroundings. His captivity infuriates him, as it prevents him from exacting revenge on the wizards who humiliated him. He has conducted innumerable magical experiments on unwilling subjects, in the hopes of finding a means to escape Ravenloft. None have been successful, and most have been fatal. As he ages, Hazlik's hopes for success fade. Because he loathes the necromantic magic practiced by Thantosya, Hazlik eschews the use of undead servants and does not aspire to lichdom.

For a quarter century, Hazlik brutally suppressed the practice of magic in his domain. Since the Grand Conjunction, his attitude has shifted, and he has taken apprentices to expand his own power base. The Grand Conjunction thrust Hazlik back into his homeworld, where he saw his en-



emies' prosperity. With a renewed desire for revenge, Hazlik founded his own school of wizardry upon his return. Hazlik acknowledges that he will never escape Ravenloft and hopes that one of his apprentices will carry on for him after his death. His apprentices, however, are too concerned with their own welfare to spend their lives pursuing an old man's vengeful dreams. They feign loyalty and obedience, but none will carry on his legacy. Realizing this, Hazlik has placed all his hopes in Eleni. Many Mulan despise her for the special favor Hazlik shows her.

In Hazlik's nightmares, he is powerless and cowers before the magical might of the wizards who humiliated him. Because these dreams remind him of his failures, Hazlik uses arcane concoctions to delay sleep, reducing his need for slumber to once every few days. The longer Hazlik stays awake, however, the more his dreams seep into his reality, lacing the world with paranoid hallucinations. Apprentices take on the appearance of his enemies, the halls of Veneficus stretch to become the halls of palaces and estates he once knew, and the nagging suspicion that Thantosya and Ordiab still plot against him festers in his mind. By the fifth day of wakefulness, Hazlik surrenders to the inevitable, falling into dream-cursed sleep. He constantly seeks



more effective methods of maintaining wakefulness.

Currently, Hazlik is meticulously researching a complex arcane ritual that will enable him to slay every Mulan in existence, both within the Realm of Dread and in all other planes. In addition, the ritual will allow Hazlik to escape his dying body, transferring his soul into the body of the ritual's caster, his beloved apprentice Eleni. While Hazlik does care for Eleni, he loves himself far more. Hazlik hopes his genocidal ritual will be ready before the turn of the decade.

Because of his constant research and other activities, Hazlik has handed the day-to-day governance of Hazlan over to his generals, a group of handpicked Mulan satraps who govern in the Red Wizard's stead. These governors regularly report to Hazlik, who remains at work while holding audience. Even when he relaxes, Hazlik uses what little time he devotes to pleasure in fashioning new spells and other creations at the Tables.

## Combat

Hazlik is no warrior, but his mastery of evocation makes him quite effective in battle. He seeks to end combats quickly, raining fire, lightning, and frost down upon his foes. One or more of his apprentices and a number of arcane minions remain at his side to lend assistance.

**Special Qualities:** *Spell Sense (Ex):* Hazlik automatically senses every arcane spell cast within Hazlan, save those cast by undead. When a spell is cast, Hazlik instantly knows the spell's school and the caster's location with a precision of 10 miles – the spell's level. Hazlik can identify the spell with a successful Spellcraft check (DC 15 + spell level) as if he were present to see or hear its verbal or somatic components.

*Undying Soul (Su):* Hazlik's amulet, a gift from the Dark Powers, radiates a strong Necromancy aura when studied with *detect magic*, though the amulet is not truly magical and functions only for him. If Hazlik is slain, his soul enters the amulet's gem. If a humanoid or monstrous humanoid touches the gem while it contains Hazlik's soul, the creature must succeed at a Will save (DC 21) or be compelled to wear the amulet and defend it to the death. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect. Unlike the *magic jar* spell, however, *protection from evil* or a similar ward will not block the amulet's

power. The amulet is not a cursed item and can be forcibly removed from a creature that wears it. Each time a compelled creature sleeps while wearing the amulet, he must succeed at a Will save (DC 17) or his own soul will be destroyed and replaced by Hazlik's. Once reborn, Hazlik has his original mental ability scores, skills, feats, and abilities. Over the course of the next month, Hazlik's new body transforms to match his original physical ability scores and appearance.

**Minions:** Hazlik has a number of arcane creations that serve his wicked desires. His toad familiar, Lurzed, has been imbued with two castings of the *create faux henchman* spell as well as a permanent *control shape*. These spells allow Lurzed to transform between toad, human expert, and toad-man (bullywug) forms. As a human, Lurzed has a thick torso with a potbelly, long gangly limbs, large hands and feet, bulging eyes, and a profusion of warts. Hazlik also possesses a homunculus called Incubolos, whose hideous form the Red Wizard sculpted. Incubolos has an oversized, cow-like head with a long vertical mouth filled with needle-like teeth. A single, solid black eye stares from above the mouth, and a pair of long, straight, gazelle-like horns crown its head. Incubolos' body is long and snake-like, sporting a pair of slender arms ending in broad bony hands each with eight many-jointed, clawed fingers. A single slimy membranous wing juts from the homunculus' back, and a squirming knot of short tentacles sits in the crook between the homunculus' head and body.

Hazlik's third personal minion is a nameless shield guardian Hazlik created in the shape of a fiend. The hulking construct lacks wings but possesses a heavy tail made of wooden joints set around a flexible metal core, long ape-like arms, a fearsome mask of snarling metal, and two large bull-like stone horns.

Within his strongholds, Hazlik can call upon 2d6 chosen ones and 4d6 crawling claws at any time. At night, Hazlik may also call upon 1d4 darkenbeasts. All arrive to aid Hazlik in 1d6 rounds.

See *Monsters of Faerun* for details on bullywugs, chosen ones, crawling claws, and darkenbeasts.

**Permanency:** Hazlik has the following permanent spells cast on his person: *comprehend languages*, *darkvision*, *detect magic*, *protection from arrows*, *read magic*, *see invisibility*, *tongues*.







## Cair

Hazlik resides in Veneficus, a sprawling estate north of Toyalis. Additionally, Hazlik has complexes known as the Tables in the center of Toyalis and Sly-Var, where he meets with his governors and furthers his dark wizardry. Both complexes are rank 2 sinkholes of evil.

**The Tables.** These squat, domed stone fortresses resemble prisons more than the wizard-tyrant's laboratories. They serve as Hazlik's bases of operations away from Veneficus. One is located in the center of Toyalis and the other in the center of Sly-Var. Hazlik uses the Tables to meet with his Mulan advisers, but they have other, darker purposes. Their dungeons extend far beneath Hazlan's surface. Both dungeons and the fortresses' minarets hold fodder for Hazlan's cruellest experiments. The Tables offer Hazlik many advantages, primarily the wealth of subjects within easy reach of their walls. Each of the Tables is a rank 2 sinkhole of evil under normal circumstances; they rise to rank 3 when Hazlik practices his obscene magics within them.

**Veneficus.** Veneficus, Hazlik's personal retreat, lies north of Toyalis and west of Ramulai. At the center of the sprawling estate rises a tall, blocky tower, known as the Red Tower. Within its walls, Hazlik conducts his experiments and magical research. The Tower is a symbol of fear and oppression to Hazlan's people. Few who enter leave the tower alive.

A vast variety of horrible and monstrous plants grow in Veneficus' formal gardens, tended by expert gardeners from throughout the Realm of Dread. Among the paths and pools are greenhouses, carp ponds, fountains, and specialized gardens such as a Rokuma rock garden, a poisonous herb garden, rose gardens, and an entire garden devoted solely to fungi. Shambling mounds, tendriculos, and lashweeds wander the grounds; the deadly plants do not harm Hazlik, Eleni, or the gardeners, but focus on intruders.

The whole of Veneficus is a rank 3 sinkhole of evil.

## Closing the Borders

When Hazlik wishes to seal his domain, a wall of fire leaps up at Hazlan's borders. Creatures that touch the wall suffer 4d6 points of fire damage (no saving throw). Neither fire resistance nor fire immunity can protect a creature from these flames. Creatures that enter the wall of fire suffer fire

damage each round until incinerated to fine ash. Only creatures of elemental fire can withstand the border's heat. To create the wall of fire at the borders, Hazlik performs an arcane ritual in which he meditates over a brazier of burning incense. The wall of fire burns only while Hazlik concentrates and the incense burns. For this reason, Hazlan's borders are usually not closed for long.

## Inajira, The Pariah Fiend, He-Who-Deceives

**Arcanaloth:** CR 15; Size M outsider (Evil) (6 ft. 4 in. tall); 12d8+24; hp 78; Init +6 (+2 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft., fly 90 ft. (good); AC 25 (touch 14, flat-footed 21); Atk +16/+16 melee (claws, 1d4+4 and poison) and +12 melee (bite, 1d6+2); SA Contractual obligation, spells, spell-like abilities, poison; SQ Damage reduction 30/+3, flight, immunities, resistances, telepathy, darkvision 60 ft., SR 25; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +9; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 17.

**Skills and Feats:** Alchemy +16, Bluff +15, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +15, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +16, Listen +23, Scry +16, Search +16, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +16, Spot +23; Combat Casting, Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell.

**Languages:** Infernal\*, Abyssal, Balok, Draconic, Luktar, Vaasi.

**Wizard Spells per Day:** 4/5/5/5/4/3/2. Base DC = 20 + spell level.

**Spellbook:** 0—all; 1st—alarm, comprehend languages, expeditious retreat, hypnotism, identify, obscuring mist, protection from good, ray of enfeeblement, shield, sleep; 2nd—arcane lock, blindness/deafness, fog cloud, hypnotic pattern, knock, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image, see invisibility, web; 3rd—clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, gaseous form, haste, hold person, magic circle against good, nondetection, stinking cloud, suggestion, wind wall; 4th—arcane eye, bestow curse, charm monster, emotion, enervation, improved invisibility, locate creature, scrying, solid fog, wall of fire; 5th—dominate person, feeblemind, hold monster, magic jar, nightmare, permanency, wall of stone; 6th—control weather, globe of invulnerability, greater dispelling, guards and wards, legend lore, mass suggestion, true seeing.

**Signature Possessions:** Bracers of armor +4, medallion of thoughts, ring of protection +2, wand of dispel magic.





Inajira is an arcanaloth, one of the many varieties of yugoloth (see *Manual of the Planes*), fiends of the purest and blackest evil imaginable. In his natural form, he resembles a humanoid jackal swathed in the fine, voluminous robes of a wealthy sage. His sandy yellow fur has red highlights and is always sleek and flawlessly groomed. His canine ears are expressive; his black eyes swim with a malign, hypnotic cunning. His slim hands end in hooked claws. Inajira would possess a feral beauty if not for the sneer of contempt that wrinkles his muzzle. His voice is sharp and vaguely unpleasant. In his true form, he smells of volcanic sulfur and filthy kennels.

Inajira normally uses his *shapechange* ability to disguise himself as a human, though he rarely masquerades as a mortal of lowly station.

## Background

Inajira was born in the furnaces of a lower plane of eternal flame and scheming evil. Arcanaloths are the scribes, librarians, and advocates of the yugoloths, binding mortal and fiend alike into infernal contracts. For eons, Inajira fulfilled these duties, though petty rivalries and poor luck prevented his advance in rank. His destiny changed when he ventured into the Material Plane to tempt Strahd von Zarovich.

On the eve of a pivotal battle against the Tergs in 347 BC, Inajira visited the still-mortal Strahd and made a pact with the general, whose soul was already stained by the horrors of war. In return for vague concessions of eternal servitude, Strahd bargained for victory on the field of battle. Strahd also convinced Inajira to allow him to take possession of the fiend's *Book of Keeping* until the contract was fulfilled by his own death. This unholy tome, a symbol of Inajira's status in yugoloth society, contained all Inajira's contracts. When the Mists snatched Strahd up four years later, Inajira was left behind in Material Barovia, shamed and seething with rage.

For centuries Inajira attempted to divine the fate of Strahd and the *Book of Keeping*. He could not return to his fiery home without the *Book*. When Strahd returned to Material Barovia briefly during the Grand Conjunction, Inajira seized the opportunity to reclaim his book and wreak his revenge. Strahd attempted to use the *Book of Keeping* to bargain for Material Barovia's Queen Kristiana, whom Strahd desired as his bride. Unfortunately, the Grand Conjunction's collapse returned Strahd

and Azalin to their prisons in the Realm of Dread. Inajira was likewise ensnared by the Mists, his precious *Book of Keeping* destroyed by the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*.

## Current Sketch

Inajira despises his entrapment in the Realm of Dread. Since the Grand Conjunction, however, he has learned a great deal regarding his prison. He theorizes that the more powerful he becomes, the greater the possibility of escape. This fits nicely with his goal of filling his new *Book of Keeping* with signatures of the damned, though this requires time and the cooperation of many mortals. He hopes to become powerful enough to break free of the Realm of Dread and regain his rightful place in Gehenna's furnaces.

Inajira is first and foremost a liar. He is also a cunning manipulator, who paints himself in a meek and unfavorable manner, subtly suggesting that any mortal who deals with him has the upper hand. Actually, Inajira is capable of juggling hundreds of complex plots and is rarely caught off guard by mortals. He takes satisfaction in watching mortals predictably falter and fail.

Inajira has resisted the temptation of binding himself to the land with power rituals. He still loathes his archenemy Strahd von Zarovich, but considers vengeance against the vampire lord a luxury until he is ready to slip the shackles of the Mists.

## Combat

Despite his formidable powers, the fiend rarely confronts others directly, preferring to cover his escape with illusion and observe his adversaries from afar. He is not cowardly, but prefers destroying foes through webs of deception. The exception is Strahd von Zarovich, whom Inajira would assault with magical and physical attacks should they come face to face.

Inajira's reality wrinkle has a 10,000-foot radius, somewhat small for a fiend of his stature. Yet Inajira has 0 corruption points and no land-based powers. He plans to escape the Realm of Dread and does not intend to permit the Dark Powers to hold him back with promises of power.

Inajira's phylactery (see *Van Richten's Arsenal*) takes the form of a new *Book of Keeping*, bound in disquietingly warm leather. The book contains the names of all the mortals whose souls Inajira has claimed in the 16 years since he entered Ravenloft,



a fraction of the number contained in his former book.

**Special Attacks:** *Contractual Obligation (Ex):* Inajira has the power to grant mighty boons in return for the fee of one's mortal soul. Inajira can draft a contract for any living creature, describing a gift granted the mortal. This gift is equivalent to a powers check reward of up to Stage Four in power, though every gift carries the same price. Upon the mortal's death, Inajira gains possession of her soul; consigned to an eternity of torment, the mortal cannot be restored to life by any means. No special materials or costs are required to create the contract, which is not in itself magical. The mortal must simply sign on the dotted line, whereupon the boon is immediately granted and the contract promptly vanishes in a puff of brimstone. No mortal power short of the spells *miracle* or *wish* can break the contract once it is signed, though Inajira can break the contract if he chooses. If a contract is broken, the mortal regains her soul, but loses the granted boon.

Inajira cannot use any of his spells, spell-like abilities, or supernatural abilities to coerce a mortal into signing a contract. The document must always clearly describe the terms of the arrangement. Furthermore, Inajira cannot directly harm any mortal with whom he has a contract, though the fiend remains free to manipulate and deceive his victim. Signing a contract with Inajira requires a powers check with a 10% chance of failure.

**Spells:** Inajira knows and casts spells as a 12th-level wizard.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** At will—alter self, animate dead, contagion, charm person, deeper darkness, heat metal, invisibility, magic missile, minor image, produce flame, shapechange (humanoids only), teleport without error; 1/day—fear, permanent image. These abilities are as the spells cast by an 18th-level sorcerer. The save DC, where applicable, is 19 + spell level.

**Poison (Ex):** Claws, Fortitude save (DC 18); initial damage 1 point of permanent Strength drain, secondary damage none.

**Special Qualities:** *Flight (Su):* Inajira can fly continuously.

**Immunities (Ex):** Inajira is immune to poison, acid, and mind-influencing effects.

**Resistances (Ex):** Inajira has cold, fire, and electricity resistance 20.

**Telepathy (Su):** Inajira can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.



## Cair

Inajira has no permanent abode and cannot maintain any mortal façade for longer than a year or two. He remains within Barovia or a neighboring domain to stay abreast of Strahd von Zarovich's affairs. As of early 756 BC, Inajira is masquerading as a local magistrate and amateur alchemist in Teufeldorf, dwelling in a grim manor filled with moldy books and arcane paraphernalia.

## Cara Kolyana

**Female Human Clr5 of Ezra:** CR 5; SZ M humanoid (human) (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 5d8+5; hp 30; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 10); Atk +1 melee (1d6–2, quarterstaff) or +5 ranged (spells); SA Spells, turn undead; SQ Innocent; AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +10; Str 7, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 16.

**Skills and Feats:** Concentration +5, Craft (trapmaking) +7, Diplomacy +11, Heal +12, Knowledge (history) +7, Knowledge (religion) +9; Extra Turning, Iron Will, Reincarnated.

**Languages:** Vaasi\*, Balok, Mordentish.

**Cleric Spells per Day:** 5/3+1/2+1/1+1. Base DC = 14 + spell level. *Domains:* Healing (cast healing spells at +1 caster level) and Mists (call



upon shield of Ezra for 5 rounds 1/day, providing 25/+5 DR vs. metal weapons only).

**Signature Possessions:** *Amulet of undead turning*, prayer book.

A natural beauty in her late 30s, Tara Kolyana has a creamy complexion, full lips, a gentle face, expressive emerald green eyes, and auburn hair, highly unusual traits for an ethnic Barovian. Tara eschews wearing armor, relying on her faith to preserve her. She wears the green and white robes of Ezra's anchorites. Ezra's holy symbol hangs from a chain around her throat.

## Background

Tara was born in the village of Vallaki in 718 BC, but her parents fled with her to Hazlan while she was still an infant.

Though a temperamental girl with a quick temper and passionate beliefs, Tara's strength lay in her compassion for the weak and powerless. Considered a tomboy and thrill seeker, Tara suffered from wanderlust. As she neared adulthood, her parents shared her mounting unease.

When Tara was 17, a vicious wolf plagued the farmers and herdsman of her hamlet each night. The villagers set out traps to kill the beast. Tara, hoping to save the wolf's life, constructed a sturdy cage and used it to trap the beast. The next morning, Tara discovered not a wolf in her cage, but a naked man — an afflicted lycanthrope. With the aid of a passing Vistani troupe, the local cleric cured him.

Aware of the supernatural threats stalking her world, Tara chose to wander the Land of Mists, finding ways to restore those under the sway of darkness. Her parents drew a solemn oath from her that she would never return to their homeland of Barovia.

In Borca, Tara encountered the Church of Ezra and joined the clergy as a traveling anchorite. Her many acts of compassion and charity soon earned her the appellation *fille des anges*, or "daughter of the angels." The unease that gnawed at her abated; her tumultuous emotions gave way to a deep inner calm.

Three years ago, Tara received word that her father was on his deathbed. She returned to Hazlan, and she and her mother were with her father as he died. With his last breath, he told Tara how much joy she had brought him and why he and her mother had fled Barovia so long ago. When Tara was born, a Vistani seer delivered a dire prophecy



about Tara. The Vistana said that the infant had an ancient soul and would not live to see her twentieth year. Death had claimed her many times before and would claim her many times more; it was her eternal destiny. Horrified, Tara's parents defied fate and left Barovia.

Tara let her father slip away in peace, content he had saved his beloved child. She could not tell him that the nagging wanderlust of her youth had reemerged.

## Current Sketch

Tara travels a regular circuit through Hazlan's settlements, healing the sick and aiding the down-trodden. She bears the taunts and barbs of the Lawgiver's clerics with grace, retaining her composure in the face of danger.

Tara refuses to take the life of any intelligent creature and defends the rights of anyone, even an irredeemable villain. Tara cannot even bring herself to hate the undead, viewing them as pitiable wretches trapped in a mockery of life. Fortunately, she believes that destroying them lays their spirits to rest.

Increasingly frequent nightmares disturb Tara's sleep — strange, fractured dreams, like snatches of lost memories involving weddings, pale faces, blood,







and a terrible darkness at Barovia's heart. These dreams grow more intense with each passing year, making her feel that her presence anywhere other than her homeland is simply... unnatural. The day may come when Tara cannot help but follow the visions' call.

## Combat

Tara considers violence pointless and attempts to withdraw from combat whenever possible. When she must fight, she works to subdue or imprison opponents. She never casts spells that cause physical harm to living foes. After combat, Tara assists friend and foe alike.

The holy symbol Tara wears acts as an *amulet of undead turning*, a gift of thanks from the leaders of the Home Faith. The amulet functions only for clerics and paladins of Ezra.

## Cair

Tara can be encountered anywhere in her travels through Hazlan. When she needs to rest, she stays with her mother at her home in a tiny hamlet several miles upriver from Sly-Var.

## Harkon Lukas, Darklord of Kartakass

**Male werewolf Brd8:** CR 13; Size M shapechanger (6 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 5d8+8d6+52; hp 118; Init +7 (+3 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 25 (touch 16, flat-footed 22); Atk +13 melee (1d4+4, bite in hybrid form) or +13/+8 melee (1d8+5, +1 *berserking longsword*) or +13/+8 (1d8, masterwork light crossbow); SA Call to arms, song of weariness; SQ Alternate form, bardic knowledge, bardic music (inspire courage, countersong, fascinate, inspire competence), damage reduction 15/cold iron, darkvision 60 ft., feral allies, master of the forest, undying soul, SR 13; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +14, Will +11; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 22.

**Dire Wolf Form:** Size L; Init +9 (+5 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 50 ft.; AC 17 (touch 14, flat-footed 12); Atk +20 melee (1d4+11, bite); SA Trip; SQ Alternate form, bardic knowledge, bardic music (inspire courage, countersong, fascinate, inspire competence), call to arms, damage reduction 15/cold iron, darkvision 60 ft., feral allies, master of the forest, scent, undying soul, SR 13; SV Fort +15, Ref +16, Will +11; Str 32, Dex 20, Con 24, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 20.

**Skills and Feats:** Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +12, Gather Information +12, Hide +9, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (nature) +9, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Perform +16 (ballad, dance, epic, flute, harp, lute, melody, storytelling), Sense Motive +6, Spot +6, Use Magic Device +12; Combat Reflexes, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Multiattack (despite only one natural weapon), Skill Focus (Perform), Spell Focus (Enchantment), Weapon Focus (longsword).

**Languages:** Vaasi (Kartakan dialect)\*, Balok, Elven, Sylvan.

**Bard Spells Per Day:** 3/5/5/2. Base DC = 16 + spell level, 18 + spell level for Enchantment spells.

**Bard Spells Known:** 0—*dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*; 1st—*charm person*, *hypnotism*, *silent image*, *sleep*; 2nd—*darkness*, *hold person*, *suggestion*, *Tasha's hideous laughter*; 3rd—*charm monster*, *emotion*, *gust of wind*, *wolfsong*.

**Signature Possessions:** +1 *berserking longsword*, masterwork light crossbow, *bracers of armor* +3, *cloak of Charisma* +2, *ring of protection* +3, *wand of sleep* (10 charges).

Harkon Lukas is a werewolf, a shapechanger that takes humanoid form to lure in its prey. His natural form is that of a large and fearsome dire wolf. Unlike most werewolves, however, Harkon prefers his humanoid form. Harkon can imitate any humanoid race and either gender, but his appearance from form to form is always similar, in contrast to other werewolves, who can tailor their appearance. His aging has slowed to a crawl since he was granted a domain.

His favorite form is that of a tall, muscular human male with wavy black hair that falls below his shoulders, a well-trimmed beard, and a moustache that comes to two very fine points. He favors high quality clothing consisting of a white shirt, blue trousers, a golden coat and a wide feathered hat. He wears a monocle, an affectation as he has excellent vision, and has a finely crafted harp and basket-hilted sword with him.

In human female form, Harkon has the same wavy black hair and tends toward similar clothing. As a female he is thin, athletic, and remarkably beautiful. In this form, he eschews the monocle but retains the harp and sword.

In hybrid form, Harkon becomes much taller and more muscular. He selects loose clothing that can survive the change. His head becomes that of



a snarling wolf, complete with terrible fangs, and his body sprouts a thick covering of fur.

## Background

Harkon hails from a distant land, where he was unusual among wolfweres in that he was a highly social creature. Rebuffed by his attempts to engage in discourse with his kind, Harkon found himself increasingly isolated and actively shunned.

Harkon took his anger out on the innocent farmers of the surrounding lands, slaughtering dozens of humans. Once his rage cooled, he abandoned the wild and lived as a man. Posing as a wandering minstrel, Harkon satisfied his social and murderous cravings by visiting towns for pleasant discourse and slaking his hunger on travelers and loners. Happier than among his own kind, he still felt dissatisfied.

One night, as Harkon walked alone on a village road, dreaming of conquest and power, he barely noticed as a thick fog rolled in and he entered a new land, Barovia.

Frenzied by this sudden turn of events, Harkon went berserk, hunting down and slaying the wolves that run thick in the Barovian forests. Count Strahd noticed the depredations and confronted the interloper. Harkon was nearly slain, but managed to escape into the Mists and was rewarded with the domain Kartakass.

## Current Sketch

Bitterly disappointed with his domain, Harkon desires to rule a land of greatness. He finds himself as purposeless as ever — only this time he has nothing more to aspire to. Following the twin betrayals of his rebellious children, Harkon flexes what control he can as the meistersinger of Skald, but defends his title more out of territoriality than ambition.

Fiendishly clever, Harkon plans for the future, favoring complicated schemes and trickery over violence. His bestial nature is never far from the surface, however, and should his efforts be thwarted, he erupts in a violent rage that sometimes last for days.

When not enraged, Harkon is an amiable sort, given to laughter, song, and conversation. A hint of mischief remains in his attitude, as though he enjoyed a private joke. Harkon maintains this amiable demeanor even as he eviscerates a hapless traveler.



## Combat

Harkon is a fearsome combatant regardless of the form he takes, though he prefers his powerful hybrid form in combat. He is bold and fearless in melee, knowing that he cannot be permanently killed.

**Special Attacks:** *Call to Arms (Su):* Lukas carries a +1 *longsword* with the rage curse of a *berserking sword*. This sword was a “gift” from the Dark Powers, appearing in his hand when he became darklord of Kartakass. He can summon this sword into his waiting hand as a free action. This ability functions regardless of the sword’s current location or owner. Otherwise, this ability is similar to the spell *Drawmij’s instant summons*, as though cast by a 14th-level sorcerer.

Whenever Harkon enters combat in humanoid or hybrid form, the sword automatically appears in his hand and compels him to fight to the death. Once engaged, Harkon cannot change to wolf form until his enemies are dead. Harkon has adapted to this curse and uses the sword’s power to surprise his foes. His favorite trick is to give his sword to those he meets as a sign of “peaceful intentions”; should a combat start, it will instantly appear in Harkon’s hand no matter what they have done







with it. Lukas' sword cannot be removed from the domain of Kartakass.

**Song of Weariness (Su):** When Lukas sings in humanoid or hybrid form, all creatures within a 90-foot radius must succeed at a Will save (DC 22) or be slowed for 1d4+4 rounds as the spell cast by a 6th-level sorcerer. If the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by Lukas' song for one day. This is a sonic, mind-affecting ability.

**Special Qualities: Alternate Form (Su):** Lukas' true form is that of a dire wolf. He can transform into hybrid form or a Small or Medium-size humanoid as though using the *polymorph self* spell (though his equipment does not change). Changing forms is a standard action, and he can remain in any form indefinitely. Unlike a creature using the *polymorph self* spell, Lukas can use his supernatural abilities (including his song) when he assumes the form of a humanoid. Likewise, Lukas can use his bardic song abilities while in wolf form, but his howls affect only other wolf-like creatures.

**Feral Allies (Su):** Once per day, Lukas can call forth 3d4 dire wolves from Kartakass' wilds as a standard action by playing on his harp. The wolves arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve Lukas for up to 1 day. This is a sonic ability.

**Master of the Forest (Su):** Lukas can command any animal in Kartakass as the spell *dominate animal* cast by a 13th-level sorcerer. Using this ability requires no action on Lukas' part, the animal receives no saving throw, and the control lasts as long as the darklord wills it. The animal must be within 100 feet of Lukas for him to establish control. All animals in Kartakass are under Lukas' influence.

**Undying Soul (Su):** If Lukas is slain, his soul is instantly transferred into the body of the nearest dire wolf in Kartakass, regardless of distance, replacing the creature's spirit. The dire wolf becomes a wolfwere and its ability scores change to match those of Lukas, who retains all of his skills, feats, and abilities.

## Cair

**The Old Kartakan Inn.** Harkon Lukas spends his time at the Old Kartakan Inn and Tavern, also known as The Inn of Kartakass, the Great Inn, Bard's Home, the Old Inn, and the Lord's House, though few understand the significance of that name. The inn sits on a small rock island in the middle of the Cauldron; the mists that rise from the churning waters combine with the constant roar of

the falls to conceal all that goes on here from the rest of the world.

The inn is a popular place for the people of Skald to dine and drink during the day, but draws a dangerous clientele at night. Few locals know that Harkon owns the inn and he always comes and goes in disguise. Nor do they know that the violent "woodsmen" who gather here at night are actually wolfweres. Human guests who stay too long become the house specialty. The not-infrequent murders committed in the back rooms keep the inn a rank 2 sinkhole of evil.

## Closing the Borders

When Lukas wishes to seal his domain, a gentle lullaby fills the air at Kartakass' borders. Creatures crossing the border fall into a deep sleep (no saving throw), only to awaken in 1d6 x 10 minutes a few feet inside Kartakass' border. Neither plugging one's ears nor magical *silence* protects a creature from the song. Even deaf creatures, creatures that do not require sleep, and creatures normally immune to mind-affecting effects, compulsions, enchantments, and sonic effects are affected by the song. The song cannot affect creatures without an Intelligence score, however.

## Jacqueline Montarri

**Female Human Rog8 (or varies with head):**

CR 10 or varies with head; Size M humanoid (human) (5 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 8d6+8 or varies with head; hp 36 or varies with head; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (touch 14, flat-footed 16); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+4, longsword) or +13/+8 ranged (1d6+4, composite shortbow) or varies with head; SA Sneak attack +4d6 or varies with head; SQ Headmistress, immunities, regeneration 1, evasion, uncanny dodge, or varies with head, SR 21; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +11, Will +6, or varies with head; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 18.

**Skills and Feats:** Appraise +8, Balance +10, Bluff +10, Climb +8, Decipher Script +7, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +8, Escape Artist +10, Forgery +7, Gather Information +10, Hide +10, Jump +8, Knowledge (local) +5, Listen +9, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +10, Pick Pocket +9, Sense Motive +8, Spot +9, Tumble +10, Use Magic Device +9, or varies with head; Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword), Weapon Focus (longsword), or varies with head.





**Languages:** Balok\*, Draconic, Mordentish, or varies with head.

**Signature Possessions:** +1 studded leather, +1 buckler, +2 vorpal longsword ("Ironfang"), +2 mighty composite shortbow (Str 14), 20 masterwork arrows, cloak of resistance +1, potion of darkvision, potion of haste.

At the time of her death, Jacqueline Montarri was a slim, athletic Barovian woman in her late twenties, renowned for her loveliness and her skill at burglary. From the neck down, she retains her beauty and cat-like movements. Her original head, however, has been missing for two and half centuries. Even Jacqueline herself has forgotten her original visage. Depending on the head she currently wears, Jacqueline resembles that of any human female, though she favors Barovians. She always chooses heads of beautiful young maidens, preferring comely victims with exceptional skills. As the mistress of the Red Vardo Traders, Jacqueline dresses in the functional clothing of an adventurer, tailored to highlight her trim figure. When going about in public, she hides her tresses and face behind a scarlet scarf.

## Background

Jacqueline Montarri was born in 469 BC in Krezk, the daughter of accomplished thieves. She soon learned the particulars of underworld life in the town's thriving merchant community. By the age of sixteen, criminals throughout the realm knew her as one of the most consummate and beautiful rogues in Barovia. Unable to bear the thought of aging, Jacqueline sought out the Vistani at Tser Falls in the hopes that they might know the secret of eternal youth. At first, Madame Eva refused to provide such knowledge to Jacqueline. When threatened, the old Vistana relented, revealing that Castle Ravenloft's library held the secrets she sought. Blinded by desire and paranoia, Jacqueline murdered the ancient *raunie* with a flick of her dagger.

Jacqueline found even legendary Castle Ravenloft straightforward to infiltrate. Once she reached the library, however, Strahd revealed himself, pulling the horrified young thief into his numbing embrace. When Jacqueline awoke, she was caged in the village square as a criminal. Mad with terror, Jacqueline was dragged from her prison and beheaded before a grim crowd of villagers. The Zarovan Vistani appeared and requested possession of the corpse, explaining that Jacqueline had

murdered their *raunie*. Thus, Jacqueline's body was spirited away by the gypsies, and an abominable curse woven over it.

Jacqueline awoke within an abandoned vardo near Krezk, possessing only hazy memories of what fate had befallen her. Glad to be alive, she hastened home to the village. It was only there, when she caught her reflection in a looking glass, that Jacqueline comprehended her fate: the visage that gaped back at her was that of the wizened Madame Eva. The horror of her punishment mounted beyond reason, however, when she tore away the velvet ribbon encircling her neck and her gypsy head tumbled to the floor. Jacqueline remained relatively calm. She discovered that she could still function normally without a head, and that the ribbon served to secure the surrogate head in place. Jacqueline sought out the Zarovan again in rage, but the Vistani laughed bitterly at her fate, revealing that should Jacqueline find her original head, she would not only be freed of her curse, but would receive the gift of true eternal youth.

## Current Sketch

Jacqueline has indeed received her prize of everlasting beauty, but at a horrible price. Her body no longer ages, but without a head, her life slips rapidly away. Any surrogate head she dons, however, ages a year for every day she wears it. Her curse also touches her vorpal longsword *Ironfang*, causing any head it severs to remain preserved in suspended animation.

In recent decades, Jacqueline established the Red Vardo Traders to serve as cover for a concerted, worldwide search for her original head. Facts about its whereabouts continue to elude her, though she has discovered that it has passed through the hands of more than one darklord. Meanwhile, the Traders reap significant wealth and power for their mistress. Though escaping her curse is always foremost on Jacqueline's mind, she revels in the comfort and influence of her position. Wealthy and powerful figures throughout the southern Core — including a handful of darklords — rely upon the nefarious talents of the Red Vardo Traders and their mistress.

## Combat

Jacqueline is a canny opponent, skilled at employing her curse to her advantage. If caught unawares by obviously superior foes, she retreats to retrieve the head of a powerful combatant or





spellcaster. Her collection is vast, containing heads of nearly every class of up to 10th level in power.

**Special Qualities:** *Headmistress (Su):* Jacqueline's class and level — as well as all related abilities and attributes — are variable, depending on the head she wears. When headless, Jacqueline's attributes (given above) are similar to those she possessed at the time of her death. Jacqueline's senses operate normally even when headless, a supernatural effect of her curse. For every day she spends without a head, Jacqueline acquires one negative level. These negative levels cannot be removed by time or magic. Only when she dons the fresh head of another female human do these negative levels vanish. Removing a head is a move-equivalent action, while donning a head is a standard action. Jacqueline must have her red velvet ribbon to don a head. The ribbon does not detect as magical, but cannot be damaged. Jacqueline's class and level change to match those of the head, as do all other statistics that are derived from them, such as her HD, hit points, base attack bonus, base saves, skill ranks, feats, and special abilities. Her ability scores never change, but she loses her own skills, feats, and class abilities when wearing a head. Her CR when wearing a head is the CR of the head's original owner +2. Donning a fresh head heals Jacqueline of a number of hit points equal to the head's character level.

For each day that Jacqueline wears a head, the head's appearance ages one year, and for every week that she wears the head, she acquires one negative level. These negative levels cannot be removed, and are permanently associated with that particular head. Once a head acquires negative levels equal to its character levels, it is forever useless to Jacqueline and tumbles off her neck. Jacqueline then begins gaining negative levels until she acquires a new head. When she dons the head of a spellcaster, Jacqueline must prepare or ready the head's spells in the normal fashion. She cannot cast a spell if she does not have a sufficiently high ability score; she cannot, for example, cast wizard spells higher than 5th level. Jacqueline can use the known spells of a bard or sorcerer's head without difficulty, but must possess the personal spellbook belonging to a wizard's head to use its spells (save for any spells associated with Spell Mastery). Daily spell slots and abilities with limited uses (such as a barbarian's rage) are restricted as normal. Jacqueline cannot, for example, don a



wizard's head, ready her spells for the day, cast them all, remove the head, re-don the head, and then re-prepare her spells.

Regardless of its skills or powers, Jacqueline will not don a head she does not consider physically attractive.

**Immunities (Ex):** Regardless of her current head, Jacqueline is immune to disease, paralysis, poison, and sleep.

**Regeneration (Ex):** Nothing deals normal damage to Jacqueline. She regrows lost body parts in 2d6 hours, but cannot reattach severed members. Only the destruction of Jacqueline's original head by fire will truly destroy her.

## Lair

Jacqueline often stays at the storefront for the Red Vardo Traders in Krezk, where she oversees the acquisition of objects from across the Realm of Dread. She keeps a manor house in Krezk as well, an opulent estate that houses a secret vault of horrors. Within the manor's cellars stand endless glass cases, filled with hundreds of Jacqueline's discarded heads, still moaning and wailing in agony, unable to die.



## Count Strahd von Zarovich, Darklord of Barovia

**Male human ancient vampire Ftr4/Nec16:** CR 24; Size M undead (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 20d12; hp 154; Init +9 (+5 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 50 ft.; AC 32 (touch 19, flat-footed 27); Atk +20 melee (1d6+8 and energy drain, slam) or +24/+19/+14 melee (1d10+13, +4 bastard sword) or +27/+22/+17 ranged (1d8+6, +2 mighty composite longbow); SA Blood drain, children of the night, command undead, create spawn, domination, energy drain, spells; SQ Undead, alternate form, cold and electricity resistance 20, darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 25/+2, dread familiar (carrion bat, see **Denizens of Darkness**), fast healing 6, gaseous form, light sleep, master of the realm, spider climb, turn resistance +9, vampire weaknesses, SR 15; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +16, Will +18; Str 26, Dex 20, Con —, Int 20, Wis 17, Cha 18.

**Skills and Feats:** Alchemy +10, Bluff +16, Climb +12, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +8, Handle Animal +9, Hide +15, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nature) +10, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +10, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +10, Knowledge (undead lore) +12, Listen +16, Move Silently +15, Perform (dance, organ, storytelling) +7, Ride +10, Scry +12, Search +15, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +10 (+12 to learn Necromancy spells), Spot +16; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Expertise, Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Maximize Spell, Mobility, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Necromancy), Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword).

**Languages:** Balok\*, Darkonese, Draconic, Luktar, Mordentish, Vaasi.

**Wizard Spells Per Day:** 5/7/6/6/6/4/4/3. Base DC = 15 + spell level, 17 + spell level for Necromancy spells. *Prohibited School:* Enchantment.

**Spellbook:** 0—all; 1st—burning hands, cause fear, chill touch, comprehend languages, hold portal, magic missile, protection from good, ray of enfeeblement, shocking grasp, unseen servant; 2nd—alter self, darkness, detect thoughts, fog cloud, ghoul touch, ground fog, invisibility, knock, locate object, scare, shatter,

spectral hand, Strahd's baneful attractor, wall of gloom\*; 3rd—augment undead\*, dispel magic, explosive runes, fireball, gentle repose, gust of wind, halt undead, lightning bolt, nondetection, sleet storm, stinking cloud, tongues, vampiric touch; 4th—arcane eye, contagion, detect scrying, dimension door, enervation, fear, ice storm, induce lycanthropy\*, mimic mortal, polymorph other, polymorph self, shadow conjuration, solid fog, suppress lycanthropy\*, wall of ice; 5th—animate dead, greater shadow conjuration, magic jar, nightmare, passwall, sending, telekinesis, teleport, wall of stone; 6th—antimagic field, circle of death, contingency, control weather, guards and wards, planar binding, shades, stone to flesh; 7th—control undead, delayed blast fireball, finger of death, forcecage, limited wish, misty summons, shadow walk, spell turning; 8th—clone, horrid wilting, maze, symbol.

**Signature Possessions:** +4 bastard sword, +2 mighty composite longbow (Str 18), amulet of proof against detection and location, bracelets of armor +6 (as bracers), cloak of resistance +3, crystal ball, gloves of Dexterity +2, ring of minor elemental resistance (fire), ring of protection +4, rod of absorption.

\* Spell found in Chapter Two of **Van Richten's Arsenal**.

Lean and strong, with a noble bearing, Strahd is a powerful presence, with strong and chiseled features, a commanding gaze, and a deep, full voice. He moves with liquid grace and speaks with authority. Feeding returns color and health to his otherwise pallid skin.

Strahd sometimes disguises his pointed ears by combing his dark hair over the tips. Otherwise, he falsely claims elven blood in his ancestry. His long, sharp nails are also unusual, and he often wears gloves to conceal them. Strahd's fangs retract when he has no need for them.

Strahd dresses as a Barovian nobleman, preferring black accented with red and white. He wears long cloaks, and a gold pendant with a large red stone hangs around his neck.

## Background

*The Tome of Strahd* is a self-serving account of Strahd's background (see Chapter One of the **Ravenloft** setting book). Strahd glosses over the horror and evil of his own actions, which set in motion events that cursed not only himself and Barovia but a great many other lands. Whether Ravenloft would exist without Strahd's wickedness is uncertain, but his evil is a significant factor in its existence.





Since the account given in *The Tome of Strahd*, Strahd himself has grown in evil and might, becoming a necromancer of great power and learning much about the prison that binds him. He has dealt with most of the Core's powerful figures and formed alliances and enmities that shape the face of Ravenloft. Of particular note are his alliance with Madame Eva, in which he granted the Vistani free passage in return for their passing information to him, and his hatred of the lich Azalin, who had been his reluctant servant and is now his greatest foe. Their rivalry came to a head during the Grand Conjunction, when Azalin nearly destroyed Strahd. Strahd survived that experience, remaining the one constant in an ever changing Ravenloft.

## Current Sketch

Strahd emerges from his castle only rarely to ensure his laws are being followed. He cares little for his people's welfare but defends his property zealously. Barovia and its people belong to him; anyone seeking to usurp his authority faces his wrath.

Strahd has been a vampire for over four centuries. A master of strategy, his plots are never as simple as they seem, and he hides his true motivations. Inhumanly patient, he is willing to outlive his enemies if necessary. He is ruthless at heart, however, and takes immediate advantage of any opportunity to crush a potential threat.

His greatest weakness is his undying love for Tatyana. Over the centuries, many women have been born in Barovia who resemble her in everything but name. Strahd believes these women are reincarnations of his lost love and sees in each an opportunity to win Tatyana's heart. Unfortunately, each effort ends in failure. Strangely, he has been unable to find her among this latest generation's crop of Barovian daughters, deepening his frustration.

## Combat

Strahd may be the most dangerous of Ravenloft's darklords, combining power and cunning to a degree few can hope to match. Well versed in his vampiric powers, he strikes his enemies quickly and brutally. He uses his many immunities to surprise would-be vampire slayers. As an accomplished necromancer, he uses his spells to deadly effect.

Despite his personal power, Strahd is not rash and will not needlessly risk himself. He has many



Strahd von Zarovich

minions he can call at a moment's notice, from animal servants to mindless undead to vampire slaves to magically summoned beasts.

**Special Attacks:** *Children of the Night (Su):* Strahd may use this ability to call forth worgs instead of the wolves that most vampires command. He may also use this ability to call forth 1d10 Strahd zombies or 2d10 Strahd skeletons.

**Vampire Abilities:** The save DC against Strahd's vampire abilities is 24.

**Special Qualities:** *Master of the Realm (Su):* Strahd may open or close the two main gates on the Old Svalich Road as a free action from anywhere in his domain. He has similar power over the gates and doors of Castle Ravenloft, where he also senses the entry of any creature with an Intelligence of at least 3. From anywhere in his domain and without concentrating, Strahd may control his horse-drawn carriage as if he were driving it. He can sense the presence of any creature with an Intelligence of at least 3 that comes within 30 feet of the carriage and can also sense when such a creature enters the carriage.

**Strahd's Contingency:** Strahd always has *contingency* cast on himself that *teleports* him to a hidden mountain sanctuary whenever he is ex-



posed to light that could destroy him or render him helpless.

*Vampire Weaknesses:* Garlic, mirrors, and holy symbols do not affect Strahd. He may freely enter any building in Barovia without being invited. Strahd can tolerate ten rounds of sunlight before he is destroyed. Like most vampires, however, he may only take partial actions while exposed to sunlight.

## Lair

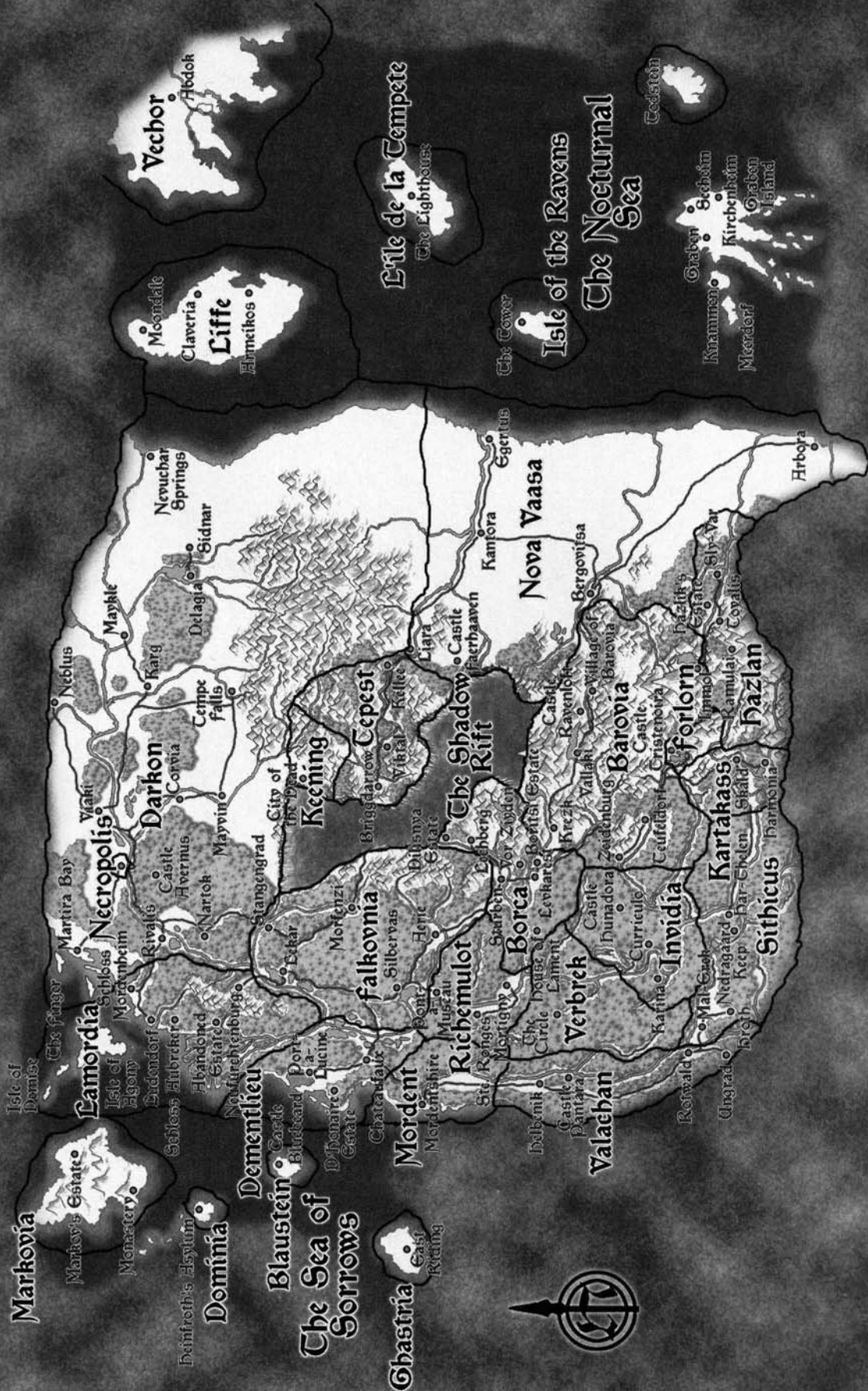
**Castle Ravenloft.** Castle Ravenloft is a gigantic structure seated at the top of a thousand-foot rock spire. Strahd almost never allows visitors. Interlopers find it replete with vampiric slaves, animated corpses, and magical and mundane traps. Castle Ravenloft is normally a rank 4 sinkhole of evil, but Strahd's necromantic experiments or midnight yearnings for Tatyana can occasionally raise it to rank 5.

Strahd cares nothing for mortal comforts; thus, Castle Ravenloft has fallen into decay over the past four centuries. The drawbridge is half-rotted, the curtain walls are crumbling, and the lowest level of the castle's dungeons is flooded with three feet of stagnant water. Strahd's "renovations" since becoming a vampire have all been aimed at vexing mortal intruders. As an example, several doorways that once offered easy access to sections of the castle have now been bricked over, leaving tiny cracks just wide enough for mist to slip through.

## Closing the Borders

When Strahd wishes to close his domain, a thick fog rises from the ground to surround Barovia. This fog has the same properties as the choking vapors that shroud the Village of Barovia.





Markovia

Markovia Estate

Monastery

Iminfrost's Hsylum

Dominia

Dementieu

Blaustein

The Sea of Sorrows

Ghastria

East Riding

Ile of Demise

Lamordia

Necropolis

City of the Dead

Darkon

Castle Avernus

Corvia

Mayvin

Keening

Cepest

Briggarrow

City of the Dead

Keening

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Briggarrow

City of the Dead

Ile of Demise

Lamordia

Necropolis

City of the Dead

Darkon

Castle Avernus

Corvia

Mayvin

Keening

Cepest

Briggarrow

City of the Dead

Keening

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# GAZETTEER<sup>TM</sup>

## VOLUME I

**Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook,  
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