

Quoth the Raven



Who Knows What Darkness Lurks in the
Hearts of Men?

The Raven Knows....

*"Beware the beast man,
for he is the Devil's pawn.
Alone among God's primates,
he kills for sport or lust or greed.
Yea, he will murder his brother
to possess his brother's land.
Let him not breed in great numbers,
for he will make a desert of his home
and yours.
Shun him, for he is the harbinger of death."*
- Cornelius, Planet of the Apes

Man, n. An animal so lost in rapturous contemplation of what he thinks he is as to overlook what he ought to be. His chief occupation is extermination of other animals and his own species, which, however, multiplies with such insistent rapidity as to infest the whole habitable earth and Canada.
- Ambrose Bierce, The Devil's Dictionary

Greetings!

Welcome to Quoth the Raven X, our tenth issue. This latest instalment is an important milestone for this magazine. Not only is this our second year of publication, but it is our first year merged with the Undead Sea Scrolls. Huzzah! From this unholy union of two netbooks sprung a being of unimaginable evil. For nearly a year, we have spread terror and mayhem across the demiplane and given new writers a forum to publish their ideas.

Yet even now the mists consume our beloved little magazine and work their warping magic upon it. For those of you who have been keeping score, the original plan for our magazine was to publish three issues of Quoth the Raven, followed by one issue of the Undead Sea Scrolls which would include revised versions of the QtR's best articles. Sadly, public response was less enthusiastic than anticipated. In contrast, support for themed issues proved higher than we ever imagined. Thus, a new plan was concocted. The Fraternity has heard the demands of the public and changed our dire plans accordingly. Starting with the publication of this issue, we will be starting production on Quoth the Raven issue 11. Please feel free to weigh in on the poll to determine the next theme.

Finally, I would like to apologise for the series of publishing blunders that have led this to be the third version of this same issue.

See you on the site,

Stephen "ScS" Sutton.

Table of Contents

Features

The Heart of Stone 4.

From the Life of Alanik Ray
By David "The Jester" Gibson

The Fraternity Unleashed 18.

Members of the Ste. Ronges Cell
By the Fraternity of Shadows

Perilous Pursuits 44.

Fraternity of Shadows
By Nathan "Dmitri" Okerlund &
Jason "Javier" True

The Show Must Go On 49.

Weeping Rose Actor Society
By Uri "Shadowking" Barak

The Lost Gazetteer 64.

The Secret work of S
By Stanton Fink

André Duvel 70.

The Man without Pity
By Thomas Rasmussen

Aspects of the Four Horsemen 74.

Fragments of the End
By Uri "Shadowking" Barak

Double Effects 87.

Original Fan Fiction
By Tami Sammons

Double Effects Companion 130.

Post story NPC writeup
Tami Sammons

Perilous Pursuits 145.

The Nightlord
By Uri "Shadowking" Barak

The Complete Misty Warrior 152.

Adaptions of the Complete Warrior
By Mark Graydon

Secrets and Sorcery 174.

The Eye
By Stephen "ScS" Sutton

Credits

Contributors 155.

Editors 156.

The Heart of Stone

From the Life of Alanik Ray

By David "The Jester" Gibson

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I remember this period mostly as a time of failure. It was not the most pleasant of times of my friendship with the renowned detective Alanik Ray, for it was during these months that my companion experienced his greatest failures. The events related during this tale occurred during his stay in Martira Bay as the chief of the costabulary. Only a few weeks earlier Ray had encountered the most peculiar individual named Doctor Rudolph Van Richten, whom I gathered was an old acquaintance. This encounter distressed Mister Ray greatly, as his old friend was quite obviously mentally addled and bore the gravest of news. Immediately after, this gentleman vanished for parts unknown and as we now know, has not been seen since.

It was only a short time after this incident that the esteemed Ray fell into conflict with a shadowy organization connected with the Darkon secret police. As a result of this confrontation, Mister Ray was forced to flee from Martira Bay. As extraneous as this introduction may seem and as obscure as these events may be, they frame the case of which I am about to speak. Before this case Ray had lost a friend; after it, he lost a home. Thus his failure in this case did not stand-alone. Even the great detective loses some battles.

The events began, coincidentally enough, with another loss for Ray, although one of a far more trivial sort. We were passing the early afternoon with a quick game of billiards at a local gentlemen's establishment. As was not unusual, I was winning quite handily. It was a common enough past-time of ours to retreat to this small club to relax in warm and comfortable surroundings and discuss all matters from alchemical to philosophical and spend a small measure of time away from the trying and foul matters that continually plagued those in our profession. I had just sunken the last ball when Ray remarked to me; "Excellently played, Doctor. To watch you is to watch a master."

I bowed and with no false modesty replied; "It is but a game and there are many greater than I. There is only one person in this club that is truly in a league of their own and it in a game more extraordinary and remarkable than this."

"What I do is not extraordinary in any manner, Arthur." He responded and pulled the smoothed balls from their pockets setting them up again on the velvet surface of the table. He spoke in his usual soft casual tones, placing the balls in a precise and deliberate manner that amazed me but came naturally to him. "One simply must pay attention and draw the necessary conclusions. It is no more remarkable than addition. Another game?"

I nodded and chalked the end of my cue in preparation. I could see my companion was not pleased with his loss but I have known few more graceful losers in my time than Alanik Ray. As it was, the outcome of that game remains a mystery even Ray could not solve because before I had made my first shot a solitary gentleman approached us.

“Pardon me.” He spoke removing his weatherworn broad brimmed hat from his head and holding it firmly in both hands against his chest, his hands working and folding creases in it nervously. “Do I have the honour of addressing the Great Detective, Alanik Ray? And his companion the doctor Arthur Sedgewick?”

Ray straightened to his full imposing height after the first sentence. I could see the stranger stare mute at my friend. He was not the first to be struck dumb by the severe appearance and powerful presence of my companion. He was dressed in his manner most common; professional and formal clothes meticulously pressed and with his shoulder length blonde hair pulled tightly back and tied revealing the full length of his pronounced widow’s peak. His powerful eyes started outward intent on all they spied giving the impression he could see all secrets and dark thoughts with the merest glance. As always the rigid pose of the stranger loosened once Ray began to speak in his soft, dulcet voice. “We are them and yes, you do.”

The man bowed his head in respect. “I represent and am a servant of the house of Dyreth. My lady requests your presence in a matter of personal security. I can assure you she would not ask if the matter was not most urgent.”

I could see my friend debating his next words. His mind, being as quick as it is, always meant he had a ready reply so his silent pause in this notable. I knew he preferred to let the rest of the constabulary deal with most matters, saving himself for the interesting or challenging cases. At last he spoke; “May I inquire as to the nature of the case?” he asked.

The stranger nodded. “But of course. My name is Sassienie and I am the coachman of the Lady Eliza Dyreth, widow of the nephew of the head of the Weaver’s Guild as well as third cousin by blood to the respectable Baroness Reldkasen. My lady fears for her life and has been warned she may be assailed, possibly by foreigners intent upon most foul and bloody murder.”

Ray scowled at this. “Your lady is of most notable lineage, both by blood and by marriage. I trust she does not suffer from any financial hardship?”

“No, she does not.”

“Then why does she not simply hire greater protection?”

“What possible protection could be hired that is of greater skill than yourself?”

Ray nodded. He was not susceptible to flattery, or at least none I had seen, but recognized a realistic assessment of his skills when he heard one. “I will assist, for now, and see if the matter is worth further investigation. But I cannot guarantee I shall remain if more pressing matters emerge.”

The coachman nodded and led us immediately to his waiting carriage. It was a small enclosed vehicle that spoke of middle class, obviously not the Lady’s personal transportation, but the comfortable vessel spoke of luxury nevertheless. Within minutes we were seated inside and admiring the padded interior. Ray never was a man to delay an investigation and we were soon rattling along towards the manors in the East District. The carriage bounced speedily along, the coachman quickly navigating through the thin

streets of the city. It did not take long to reach the walled compound of Lady Eliza Dyreth.

It was only early evening when we arrived but the many trees surrounding the main grounds shaded the area with their thick-foliaged branches, making it appear dark already. A thick-bricked wall surround the grounds built out of local rock and giving way to the grass covered hills of the estate. We entered through a thin gate sealed by a large metal grate ornately shaped and decorated with the family crest. We continued along down the rocky dirt access road towards the main compound, snaking back and forth along the various sharp curves. More than once my body lightly struck the inside wall of the lushly padded carriage. My companion seemed oblivious, simply staring out the window and studiously examining all he observed. I could see his eyes flicker from detail to detail.

At last we stopped before the large main doors to the manor. A large set of steps led up to the portal, which had opened at our arrival. A single figure dressed impeccably in a fine suit exited and walked towards us gracefully. Sassienie descended from his perch and opened the door for us.

“Greetings,” said the well-dressed man in a crisp upper class Darkonian accent. “I am the lady’s manservant and butler, Aldous. Please come to me if you have any requests or questions.”

Ray tugged gently at the bottom of his jacket straightening the fine wrinkles from the ride. He looked back over the grounds. “I shall need a room. If I am to adequately ensure the safety of the Lady I shall need to be on hand at all times. I shall also require someone to fetch some clothes and equipment from my lodging, for both me and my associate Doctor Sedgewick.”

Aldous nodded instantly at the request bowing his head down low. “But of course, I shall see to it immediately. In the meantime I shall show you to the waiting lounge where my mistress will join you as soon as she is able.”

With that, Aldous bowed, extending one gloved hand and led us into the manor proper. We first passed through the magnificent high ceilinged entrance hall where another servant was on hand to relieve us of our burdensome outer clothes. The hall was magnificent with a large staircase dominating the room and several ornate rugs complementing the floor. From there we were led through a narrow hallway lined with lovely red wood paneling to a windowed lounge decorated with antique couches and several large tapestries. Aldous was immediately on hand to display the drinks cabinet and offer both Ray and myself some refreshment. I gladly accepted some Barovian plum brandy of exquisite quality but my companion declined. Aldous bowed again and departed to inform his employer of our arrival.

I reclined into the aged, but comfortable, sofa and inhaled the scent of my brandy. “So what does your observant eye tell you so far Ray?” In inquired.

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?”

“Nothing.” He repeated looking out of the window into the blackness. I could see naught but blackness, but knew his elf-eyes could see more than mine ever could in such light. He observed all but saw nothing.

Ray ran his fingers across the pane of glass and mused softly to himself, “And nothing is all the more telling.”

At that we both turned at the sound of the door opening. Lady Dyreth entered gracefully clad in a fashionably, but light, evening gown. “I greet you both.” She said formally sitting down across from Ray.

“And us you.” Ray said turning from the window to face the hostess.

“I am sorry to have summoned you so abruptly but I fear I am in serious danger.”

“Yes, so I have been told. What makes you think you are threatened?”

Lady Dyreth lowered her head and visible bit her lip. I took the opportunity to examine the features of the mistress of the house. She was a mature woman, to use the polite descriptor, with greying hair pulled tightly back into a firm bun. Despite advancing years, having already outlived her husband and with two full-grown children, she was still of good health and quite fit. Her stern face was lively and her gait strong. But now, under the burden on the threat of death, she seemed small and helpless like a deer caught by a hunter’s unwavering gaze.

“My story begins yesterday when I was on watching a fox hunt. During the sport a small gypsy wagon pulled close to the woods in which we were parked and two Vistani emerged. They proclaimed themselves travelers, as is most of their breed, and offered to tell us our fortunes for a few small coins. Curious, we entered into their hastily set up wagon and one after another heard what the fates had in store for us.”

After this, the madam paused, produced a thin handkerchief from her sleeve and held it over her mouth. I could see the fine silk swaying back and forth with her gentle breath.

“Please, proceed.” My friend said softly.

“I had not been in the presence of the peasants for more than a moment when the woman in the wagon glanced at my hand and let out a piercing scream. Outside I could hear her husband -or whatever those folks call their mates- holding back my servants and companions from entering and telling them it would be hazardous to enter. Regaining her composure, the gypsy told me I was in great danger and that I must flee immediately for foreign shores lest the flower of my life be unceremonially plucked.”

“And you believed her?”

“No, of course not. Superstitious dribble. Or so I thought.” The Lady paused for a moment and looked over at the watching Aldous. “Until that night when my servants witnessed three trespassers on my land. Fortunately my groundskeeper is a masterful shot and always keeps a loaded rifle on his person. He quickly scared them off by firing into the sky.”

“Who were these trespassers?”

“Foreigners. Black-skins from Sri Raji. Worshippers of some pagan god and now out for my blood. It is the result of a curse passed along my bloodline.”

Ray nodded with this. I could see his left eyebrow twitch with her description of the Sri Rajians. My friend has seen more than his share of prejudice and is still somewhat sensitive to such matters. I could see him thinking the matter over in his mind. He pushed the tips of his index fingers together and held the point up to his lips on silent contemplation. “I will assist you.” He said at last.

“Oh thank you Mister Ray.” Lady Dyreth said, a gleam of relief spreading across her face like a sunrise.

“If you would, describe these gypsies please.” Ray took the moment to ask.

Lady Dyreth thought for a moment. “They were dressed in bright colours with many silken chiefs covering their arms and hair. They were decorated in many flashy gold rings and hoops so they jingled while they danced. As I mentioned there were two, a man and a woman.

“The man was dark skinned, almost as black as the Sri Raji, and never stopped moving save when he was waiting outside the wagon with his head bowed and his long black hair dangling across his face. He was forever dancing to his flute or performing small tricks with his trained falcon pet.

“The woman was younger than most fortunetellers I have seen and spoke with a dramatic air, her hands flashing in a way that reminded me of the bad actors in a theater. If not for the serious matter of which she spoke I might have been tempted to laugh at her audacity and melodrama. She was obviously new to her craft.”

Ray nodded at this. “And the Sri Rajians?”

As Ray said this it became obvious this topic distressed the Lady. “I do not know much of them; I did not see them. But from what I have heard they were spotted only for a second and were dressed in the poorest of rags.” With that the Lady rose. “You must excuse me now, I am very fatigued. Sleep is not coming as easily as it normally does. The servants are preparing a room for you and your assistant as we speak.”

I must admit that I scowled despite myself at her use of the phrase ‘assistant’, but that is beyond the point. At this the Lady rose to depart, Aldous aiding in her ascension. I could see he was bothered; his mistress’ condition must have weighed heavily on him I surmised quickly. At last he spoke. “Are you quite sure you will be safe here?” He asked. “What do you think, Great Detective? Is her home secure or would she be better off in a more secluded and defensible location?”

My friend thought for but a second before replying. “I believe she is safe here, as safe as she will be anywhere.”

With that Lady Dyreth nodded to us and left the room, leaving the pair of us alone with the butler. Aldous filled us in on the details while he escorted us to our quarters. There was very little else to say other than the quick descriptions of what was currently being done to protect the safety of the Lady.

“So you are in charge of security then, Mister Aldous.” Ray remarked.

“Yes, as the head servant.” Aldous remarked. “I was just discussing the matter with the rest of the staff in my cottage. I live in a smaller house on the grounds, just north of the main manor. Although there is very little that can be done. I have the groundskeeper, Wellace, patrolling the area with his mastiff, but other than that I can do little. We do not employ guardsmen here.”

Ray made a faint grunt of acknowledgement. I could tell he was still deep in thought, although I was unsure if his contemplation was concerning the case or his absent friend VanRichten. We passed through the rest of the corridors in silence heading up to the second story before reaching our small suite. It was a large pair of rooms separated by a thin superficial wall. Ray immediately offered me the larger quarters, which I declined in favour of the smaller. I disliked the opulence and only need the smallest measure of space for my needs. The rooms themselves were lavishly decorated in a modern style with draperies and tapestries covering and insulating all the walls. A large window that opened onto a balcony dominated the far wall across from the large canopied bed. On the small table nearest the bed sat a single scented candle that was slowly filling the room with a familiar and comfortable odor I am still unable to place.

After reassuring himself we required nothing, Aldous retired for the night leaving Ray and I to talk. We set about the task of getting settled and discussed minor matters before moving on to the pressing issue of the night.

“So what do you think of the case?” I asked innocently.

“It is too early to tell.” Ray said. “But I will say this, she is not lying. There have been some odd recent deaths involving her bloodline.”

“How so?”

“Her brother recently passed some months ago, due to illness I believe. This was followed very shortly by the death of an uncle, one Baron Reldkasen-Hydal, whom died under very similar circumstances.”

“You suspect foul play?”

“I suspect nothing. I merely keep my options open until proven otherwise.”

I marveled for a second at his knowledge. “Impressive none the less, recalling such obscure deaths.” I ventured to comment.

“Simple common knowledge; their deaths have been widely reported and speculated over.” Ray said as he walked over to a lovely silk rope dangling by the master bed and gave the cord a quick pull. Somewhere else in the house a small bell was undoubtedly ringing summoning a servant to attend to Ray’s needs. The detective himself took those few moments to compose himself at the room’s small note-desk and jotted down a quick correspondence on the available paper. Within moments Aldous himself arrived with his usual air of refinement and crisp obedience. Ray stamped the letter shut with a quick dab of wax then rose.

“Can I be of service?” the butler asked smoothly opening the double doors to the room.

Ray held out the letter. "Please see that this is received by my landlady, Mrs. Bay, as soon as is possible."

Aldous nodded and exited with a small flourish. Ray returned to the window resting his hand gently upon the glass.

"So what do you surmise so far?" I ventured to inquire stepping forward to stand beside my friend. He did not turn to look at me and spoke with a soft tone, quieter than usual.

"Very little." With that he withdrew and began to rest in his evening chair. I retired to my smaller room and prepared for sleep. Outside I could see heavy storms brewing on the horizon. I could feel the thunder in the air, charging the very atmosphere and causing the hairs on the back of my neck to rise. The energy was unmistakable, and was very similar to the crackling tension I could feel from Ray. I began to wonder at that moment if the loss of his friend had not troubled him more than he was admitting. Looking at him through the doorway, I could see him sitting stiffly in his chair with his head resting in his hands. I remembered once again the heavy burden of his long life and how he would most likely outlive all he has met. With that depressing thought I retired for the night.

Like all who drift into the veil of dreams I cannot begin to tell when I fell asleep, but I can easily surmise when I was awoken. Suddenly conscious of the world around me, I jerked into a sitting position. The sudden loud sound of agitated barking was followed by a loud crack. Hurrying out of my bed I threw on my housecoat and slippers and dashed into the main room. "Ray, what was that?" I exclaimed.

Alanik Ray was fully dressed, not that I was surprised in the least to find him so, and busily double-checking the load on his pistol. He handed me mine and beckoned me to follow him out the door. "It was a single rifle shot discharged on the grounds and fired away from the house."

We ran outside and immediately identified the disturbance by the already gathering figures. Groundskeeper Wallace was already present and standing over a fallen body. Wallace's massive hound was beside him, sniffing at the figure. I feared for the worst and was almost hesitant to see the body. I did not wish for the Lady Dyreth to have fallen so early in our involvement. So I was almost relieved to see the figure was not only a man but also a stranger.

"What has happened here?" I asked, still groggy from my abrupt awakening. The departing adrenaline in my blood after the shock only further served to relax me.

"Burglar." Wallace said pointing at an accompanying sack the fallen figure had dropped. Ray immediately knelt and lifted up a flap of the bag examining the contents. Over his shoulder I could see a silver candelabra, several small golden figures and much pilfered silverware. Behind us we could see the lights of the house flicker on one by one and a sleepy Sassienie, followed closely by the housecoated butler, running up from the manor.

"Aldous." Ray said firmly turning to look at the butler. "Go see to your mistress immediately!" he commanded. The servant gave a crisp nod of the head then left speedily. Ray looked over and the coachman and quickly ordered him to follow Aldous in the event help was needed.

The detective looked to his side and continued with his orders. "Wellace, if you please, remove your animal before it further disturbs my crime scene." The groundskeeper gave a foul look then departed with his beast in tow. Ray, now having removed most of the witnesses threatening to trample over his investigation, now turned his attention to the body.

"Who is he, Ray?" I asked bending over beside the body.

"A burglar, apparently." The detective said closely examining the features of the figure. "He has the appropriate tools, tucked away in this hidden pocket, and a number of other small valuables in the folds of his clothes." With that he produced more assorted silverware, another candlestick, a small silver whistle and a handful of woman's jewelry. A faint scowl appeared on my companion's face. So faint anyone who had spent less time with him would dismiss it as nothing, but I recognized it immediately. He had spotted something out of the ordinary.

"What does your doctor's training tell you of this figure?" Ray asked me. I knelt over and examined the figure.

"Single shot to the head, fired from as distance. Judging from the surrounding blood, the body was rolled over but not moved."

Ray nodded in agreement. "Just what I was thinking. And from these last few footsteps it is obvious he was running, and quite quickly."

"He must have been spotted and was hoping to make it to the wall."

"Quite." My companion said, examining his fingertips and rubbing them together. He turned back to the corpse and continued to examine the subject's clothes. "When Wellace returns have him help you carry the body inside. Place it somewhere cool then join me." With that he rose and started to the house.

I rose, debating following after him and instead ventured to ask. "Ray, whatever did you find on the body that has moved you so?"

Ray held up two fingers, both greyed ever so slightly with some form of powder. "Charcoal or soot. From a fire or a burn."

"But he was shot from a distance." I protested.

"That is what troubles me."

Silently I sat, examining the body on my own before the groundskeeper returned and allowed me to fulfil my grim task. We hefted up the fallen man and carried him to the cool wine cellar where he was unceremoniously dumped on the nearest handy table. I did my best to seal the wound to prevent blood from spilling all over the floor then left the small earthen quarters for the rest of the manner.

I made my way through the corridors to the Lady's room, where I surmised Ray would be located. I noticed with sadness that my housecoat had become stained with the blood of the slain robber. Sighing, I used the hem of my ruined garment to make myself as presentable as possible before I reached the quarters of the mistress of the house.

Ray was indeed there as was the Lady and Aldous. The butler was doing his best to console his mistress as I entered. The coachman, Sassienie, was standing to the side of the room observing the scene and seeming quite out of place and uncomfortable in the luxurious master bedroom. Cabinets full of ornamental decorations covered the walls and the ceiling was decorated in a large mural depicting the history of the family. The Mistress and her trusted servant were sitting on a small padded seat to the side of the heavy canvassed bed that dominated the room.

“I told you we should have immediately departed, perhaps taken a sabbatical in Dementlieu.”

I knocked on the heavy oaken door to announce my entrance and took a place by Ray’s side. “It is taken care of.” I announced.

“It is good you are here. I arrived here to find Lady Dyreth in hysterics and have not yet been able to discover the cause. Perhaps your medical skills will find some other symptom not yet perceptible to my eye.”

“He shall find none.” The Lady said, still clenching her kerchief tightly against her mouth and breathing in desperate rasps. I paused my forward motion to let her speak.

“There is much you have not told me,” Ray said calmly. “If I am to do my job then I must be told all.”

The Lady scowled at this. “You have already failed at your task, my home has been violated and my life put at risk and *it* has been taken...” With this she fell into gasping breaths again and Aldous did his best to comfort her without actually resorting to physical contact.

“My task, as I was told, was to keep you alive. And you are quite alive.” Ray said firmly. “Now something of value has obviously been taken. I must ask what it is.”

“The Stoneheart.” Lady Dyreth said plainly. I could see the recognition on my companion’s face.

“I must confess I have never heard of it.” I spoke hoping for some explanation.

“It is a gemstone; a diamond about the size of an infant’s heart.” Ray said turning to look at me. “It is not clear, like most diamonds, but bears a reddish tinge, presumably due to some impurity in the stone. It is reputed to be a holy object in Sri Raji.”

Lady Dyreth nodded. “It was mounted on the head of one of their hideous statues to pagan gods. The heathens. One of my more distant relatives, Lord Clavellus, liberated it from them.”

“Then died a few months after his return to Darkon.” Ray reminded. “Drowned, I believe.”

“Yes.” The Lady spoke bowing her head. “Thus began the curse of the Stoneheart, or as we call it, the Clavellus Diamond. It has passed along my family and misfortune has followed.”

“The standard anyone-who-posses curse.” Ray said kneeling down before the Lady. “Bad luck and death follow. And I take it you were the most recent recipient of the Stoneheart.”

“Yes.” Lady Dyreth spoke, her hands quivery violently sending waves flowing down the quaking kerchief. “This is why after the fortunes were told I summoned you. But it is no matter now, for the diamond has been stolen.”

A raised eyebrow punctuated my elven friend’s thoughts. “There was no such stone on the body of the thief?”

The Lady shook even harder. “Then one of *them* got to him first.”

“Them?” I asked.

“Rumour has it that the Stoneheart is perused by a group of three Brahman priests of Kali. Three because the number is sacred to their people and view the recovery of the stone as the end of a cycle.” Ray commented. “They will most likely stop at nothing to recover the diamond. Which explains our mysterious trio witnessed earlier.”

“So the thief broke into the house, stole all the valuables he could, then ran. Before he could make it to the wall, he was shot, and one of these Rajians crept up and took the diamond from him.” I summarized. “Something doesn’t seem right with that picture.”

“I think I would feel better hearing that from the *detective* and not the *assistant*.” Lady Dyreth snapped so viciously I was taken aback.

“Then you will hear it from me.” Ray said, standing upright and tugging on the bottom of his waistcoat. “Firstly, there are a number of valuables in the house that were not taken; those removed all came from the area closest to the point of entry. The burglar came and grabbed whatever he could in the shortest period of time, then fled. The diamond was nowhere near it, as I assume, it was kept close to your person, Lady Dyreth.”

“Why would milady keep such a dangerous object close to her?” Aldous protested.

“Because it was a valuable object, of course, and one of great beauty,” Ray reminded. “But I cannot continue this discussion here. Let us adjourn to the parlor to continue this. Doctor, I will need your assistance in something. Yours too, Mister Aldous.”

“I would prefer not to leave my Lady unattended.” Was his reply.

“Then I shall attend her.” Ray spoke offering his hand. He lifted up the distraught woman and began to lead her to the parlor. On the way he whispered my task to me along with some quick instructions

Dutifully I nodded and gestured for Aldous to follow me.

“What does that fey think he is doing?” Aldous asked with a hint of disdain in his voice. I admit I felt the urge to clap him suddenly on the back of the head.

“His job.” I firmly replied and lead the gentleman to the cellar.

As we walked down the old wooden steps, the sepulcher scent filled the air. I grimaced slightly at the familiar sickly-sweet odour. It did not take long to discharge out

duty as we both hurried along our task. When Aldous' determination failed, I was there to urge him along.

"My Lady was truly distraught. Perhaps I should go check on her?" He would say.

"Mister Ray is there and more than capable of handling anything." Was always my firm reply to any of his excuses.

At last we reached the parlor doors and thrust ourselves in, carrying the body of the slain burglar. There was a gasp about the room where the Lady Dyreth and Wellace had both gathered along with Ray. I could see Aldous was fighting the urge to run to his Lady's side and ensure she did not faint on the sight of the deceased figure.

"Why on Earth would you have me bring *this* before a woman, and one in such a state of shock?!" The butler demanded his eyes a wild mix of emotions aimed directly at me. Around the raging orbs his face maintained its domestic calm and obedient, snobbish smirk. His eyes, however, gave away the mixed feelings behind.

"Because I asked him to." Ray said, helping us move the stiffening figure into a wooden chair close to the fire. "Because I need confirmation of one thing before we continue."

I could see Lady Dyreth's gasping breath increase through the waving of her kerchief. He pulse must have been equally rapid and I began to fear for her health. I urged Ray to speed things along to a satisfactory conclusion.

"I am sorry for the distress I am causing you, madam, but I promise it will be over soon." Ray said walking about the room sealing all the doors. He walked over to the body. "The gentleman attempted to steal from you and did so quite efficiently. He broke in without a sound, because a window was conveniently left open and there were few guards about. Which is odd, considering the threat on your life, my Lady."

"What are you saying, Mister Ray?" Lady Dyreth demanded.

"Let me finish." Ray said, holding up one hand. He knelt down beside the body and dipped his hands into the fireplace removing a few small handfuls of soot. "You of course feared for your life because you observed three Sri Rajians in the distance and were warned of them by a fortune teller. A dark skinned Vistana." Ray patted his soot-covered hands together and quickly spread the ash across the face of the dead man. He finished up his task by producing a bright coloured bandana and wrapping it tightly across the head of the burglar. Then he rose, dusted off his hands and stepped away. Lady Dyreth's gasp was audible across the room.

"But that is the gypsy man, the companion of the fortune teller." She explained in surprise. "His hair is far shorter and he lacks the many golden hoops, but the face is unmistakable."

"Exactly." Ray said moving about the room far more energetically. I could feel the enthusiasm from him as he neared the end of the hunt. Vital energy seemed to surge and leap from him. "He and his partner disguised themselves as Vistani to tell you a fortune of woe and death and urged you to flee, thus leaving your home empty and unguarded. To further this ploy, they disguised themselves as the Sri Rajians and allowed themselves

to be seen, but only for a moment. However, instead of running, you hired my services and so were home when they came calling.”

Lady Dyreth quivered slightly her hands still shaking. “But how ever did you know this?”

“By knowing the Vistani. I have been thinking of a departed friend of late who has written much on these elusive nomads. The gypsies you describe do not fit as either the Equaar or the Naiat. It was not much, but was all that was needed to arouse my suspicions. The body confirmed the rest with the faint touch of soot behind the body’s ear; a place he obviously forgot to completely wash his make-up away. This was also a vital clue.” Ray said as he held up the small silver whistle found on the body.

“What is that?” the Lady asked.

Ray put the instrument to his lips and gave a quick shot blow producing only the faintest sound. Outside we could hear the groundkeeper’s leashed hound begin to bark. “This is an animal whistle that produces a shrill noise that only some animals can hear. Animals such as your beast, Mister Wellace, or some types of trained bird.”

I nodded with realization. “Most impressive deduction, my friend. So our thieving friend here, while escaping, summoned his falcon when he saw he was spotted, and used it to carry away the Clavellus Diamond!”

“Precisely, my dear Sedgewick!” Ray exclaimed. “But, of course there remain two unresolved questions.”

“Such as?” Aldous asked quite impressed and yet still irritated by the proceedings.

“Such as the identity of the third ‘Sri Rajian’, as there were only *two* gypsies.” I commented.

“Correct,” Ray said. “But also, and more importantly, who left the window unlocked and provided the gem to be stolen. And who told these accomplices about the gem and its cursed history in the first place.”

Lady Dyreth sat up firm at this. “Are you suggesting I have been betrayed?”

“That is exactly what I am suggesting.” Ray said firmly, as if his conviction enough was proof. “And I believe this was the worst form of betrayal, as whomever planned this was most likely planning your untimely murder; to be blamed of course on the trio of foreigners.”

“Preposterous.”

“And yet there is no other possibility.” Ray maintained walking up beside his employer. “So we are looking for someone working with the gypsies, perhaps offering the same advice or agreeing with them. Someone telling you to leave.”

All eyes in the room turned to the butler Aldous. He stood there aghast and sputtering angrily. “This is preposterous. I... I...”

“This is utter nonsense,” Lady Dyreth spoke firmly. “I have known him for years and trust him with my life. How could he betray me so seriously?”

"I known not the workings of the criminal mind my lady." Ray spoke looking at the accused and walking slowly towards him. "But I would like to hear him explain why, after the shot was fired, he was running from the manor and not from his own small cottage."

"I was just... I had to check on my mistress."

"Of course." Ray said stepping forward and standing over Aldous. "During your time retrieving the corpse did he try to leave you Sedgewick?"

"Several times. Supposedly to check on his Mistress."

"More likely to flee. That is why I told you to watch him. And now, the final proof." Ray said darting forward to grab the back of Aldous' head then holding up two blackened fingers. "How would you explain this soot on the back of your neck?"

Aldous frantically looked about the room, his calm demeanor vanishing. "I must of... I..." Quickly jumping to his feet, he made a mad dash towards the door, only to find it locked in advance.

Lady Dyreth looked up in shock and dismay. "Oh Aldous, I trusted you. How could you?"

Aldous, the now presumably ex-butler, slumped down against the wooden door. His head rested down against the cool wood and his body quivered slowly. "I was tired. Just so very tired of always having to be there... always having to fix every problem. Every day without fail, with my chin held high; every day since I was a child in the employ of your father. All for the pittance you pay me. I thought if I could just get the Clavellus Diamond, the Stoneheart, I could sell it and never work again. And for the first time in over forty years be free..."

Ray wiped his fingers off on his handkerchief. "Oh, for the record; I was lying about the soot on your neck. I palmed some from the fireplace." He walked over to Lady Dyreth. "I sent a message to my landlady asking for the constables to send a squad here to arrest the perpetrator, they should be here shortly. And I also asked them to follow up on some leads at the local inns. Hopefully they will find the second 'gypsy' and recover your gem."

With that we considered the matter closed, but things did not resolved themselves as well as could be hoped. True, Lady Dyreth survived, but from then on she became a recluse, seldom venturing into polite society. On the occasions I have ridden past her estates I have noticed the grounds are unkempt and the house in poor repair.

The constables sent by Ray arrived at the Siren's Lament tavern early the next day. There they discovered the murdered body of a known local thief; her throat cut as she slept and all her valuables removed. The subsequent investigation showed she had boisterously bought the entire inn several drinks over the course of the night and it became obvious that someone had decided to further relive her of her wealth. There she died alone in the squalid flophouse, like so many others, another victim of the Stoneheart.

Yet what was most interesting was during Alanik Ray's subsequent investigation into the thief. The innkeeper told us that just after the constables removed the body three

travelers from a far away land arrived. They asked about someone matching the description of the slain but quickly departed after they heard the news.

We spent months following the trail of betrayal and murder that inevitably followed the Clavellus Diamond, but in the end, the path lead nowhere. People killed to posses it; others lied, cheated and stole to gain it. Perpetually one step behind, we continually failed in its recovery. We know that it is still out there somewhere, passing from hand to hand, spreading its misfortune, with the trio of Sri Rajian Brahmen following relentlessly after.

So I close this tale with a warning: If you are sold or find a large roughly cut diamond with a bright reddish hue, please be careful.

The Fraternity Unleashed

Members of the Ste. Ronges Cell

By the Fraternity of Shadows

isawtheraven@hotmail.com

The carriage rolled to a halt before the Manoir de Penombre; the coachman jumped from his seat and flung open the carriage door, helping the middle-aged gentleman seated within to step down. Nodding curtly at his servant, the gentleman gestured vaguely toward the north. Without a word, the coachman reclaimed his seat and drove the carriage toward the stables.

Erik van Rijn, the middle-aged gentleman, stepped forward. Grimacing, he knocked at the door. The knock brought no response; coughing wetly, van Rijn touched the door and muttered “Apre via.” The silver ring on the middle finger of his left hand glittered slightly as the door swung inward, revealing a silent and empty entryway.

Coughing again, van Rijn raised his cane and said, “Fiat lux.” The silver head of the cane immediately began to emit an unearthly silver glow. So lighted, van Rijn continued forward, passing directly through the house and into the garden beyond. The night was silent and windless; the wooded landscape was bathed in moonlight of a peculiarly ruddy hue. Looking up, van Rijn hissed between his teeth. Shrugging, he lowered his gaze and began to make his way toward the observatory.

“Ah, good evening, Professor van Rijn,” a tall and rather gaunt figure remarked to the older man. Falling in step beside the professor, Erik van Rijn noticed the owner of the Manoir de

Penombre as he came forth from the shadows. Anthony Reuland was dressed in his usual charcoal vest, black overcoat, and a tall top hat. A long bronzewood cane was carried in the younger man’s left hand, but Erik knew that it was more for show than support. The dusty grey emaciated skin and faint aroma of decay, however, made the professor question just how healthy the younger man was. Van Rijn acknowledged the younger man’s greeting with a curt nod. “Good evening, Dr. Reuland,” he replied, his bass voice oddly flat in the night air.

“My apologies for you not being properly greeted at the door,” Anthony continued talking as they slowly walked toward the observatory, “but I dismissed the staff this evening so that our gathering could proceed undisturbed. I would have taken the time to welcome you personally; however, Ambrose decided to explore the wine cellar earlier than normal.”

Brushing back several stray locks of dark black hair, Anthony gave his companion an amber-eyed wink before motioning him through the door to the observatory. “The rest of the brothers are waiting for us to arrive before starting.”

“So Ambrose has been at the wine cellar, has he?” Van Rijn responded, pausing before the door.

The pair shared a glance, and then van Rijn looked back across the grounds toward the greenhouse. Despite the perfect stillness of the night air there

was a flurry of movement in the topiary garden, the fantastic shapes stirring slightly, and then falling still.

"Time for a trim?" he asked idly before stepping through the door and beginning to laboriously climb the steep, narrow stairs of the observatory.

Anthony smirked slightly as he quietly followed the elderly professor up the narrow staircase to the observatory. "Our studies on the flora from some of the more distant lands have been progressing better than we had initially anticipated. The plants have grown and even thrived in the greenhouse, but you are quite correct. It is almost time to trim them back to a more controlled level."

Erik and Anthony stepped into the room, which was quite large and had an open, airy feel to it. The large windows on each of the six walls gave a full view of the world and heavens surrounding the manoir. Several stellar charts hung between the windows, and a pair of brass telescopes was available to observe the celestial bodies in the darkening sky. At a large table, littered with various books and charts, three men sat, waiting for the others.

Erik instantly recognized each one of them even in the dim light of the observatory; it would have been difficult to mistake the three in any way. The bear-like man with a dark heavy beard and long hair was Grabek Krakul; the young man with blonde hair and cold eyes set in a sharp, high-cheek boned face was Kristoff Lutemmi; and the thin, active gentleman in early middle age with wild hair and a gold pince-nez was no other than Professor Viktor Hazan.

"If you would care to sit, Professor," Anthony motioned to one of three empty chairs, "then we will begin shortly."

The sound of footsteps from the stairway indicated that the bardic gnome, Ambrose Skully, was on his way to the meeting. Cursing about the empty wine cellar under his breath, the black garbed gnome stalked into the room and slumped into an empty chair. Rubbing his cleanly shaven head with one hand, he kept his other hand tucked deeply into his pocket.

Van Rijn seated himself stiffly and nodded to each of the assembled brothers in turn. "Viktor, Grabek, Kristoff, Ambrose...Who has Klorr's Almanac?" he asked brusquely.

"I've been reading through it," Gabrek answered gruffly. Though he had been living in Richemulot for many years now, his Voros accent had not faded from the day the Mists had brought him here. With a grunt, the large and gruff man handed Erik van Rijn a large leather-bound book, which was marked only by the alchemical symbol for the sun embossed in gold leaf on the cover.

Opening it, van Rijn leafs through a few pages and then says, "'Lunar eclipse, 7 August 757, to begin eight hours, forty minutes after diurnal meridian and culminate at nocturnal meridian.' Very good." Taking a pocket chronometer from his vest, he said, "Nine. My apologies, gentlemen. But I understand the event of importance has not yet occurred. Now, Anthony, what was this about a comet?"

When he heard of the comet, Gabrek raised an eyebrow with interest. "Wasn't there some speculation on comets in the tome I lent you the other month van Rijn? What was it again...? Ah! Yes! Anglaebeike's Theory of Celestial Bodies and Prophecy."

Hazan nearly let his tea cup fall back in the saucer. "A comet? Tonight?"

That is totally unexpected! Impossible!" Pausing a second, he adds "Do we know something is happening on at Jacqueline's manor? Sacrebleu, it's one of the signs! There has to be something happening for a comet to appear!"

"I believe that is a very astute assessment, Professor Hazan." Anthony turned and nodded solemnly as he takes the final seat. "I will not be so presumptuous as to say that I truly understand the full meaning of this comet's appearance tonight, which is why I asked Professor van Rijn to look through Anglaebeike's Theory of Celestial Bodies and Prophecy. My own expertise lies in knowing the physiology of the flora and fauna of this land, but news of this comet first reached me while I was studying such things abroad in Barovia. To be specific, I was in Vallaki the night that this comet first appeared."

Anthony paused long enough to let the news sink into his brethren's minds before continuing. "In fact, the comet appeared the same night that the mysterious fire razed the Vallaki bookshop that we were about to investigate. I do not believe that it was a mere coincidence, and my initial hypotheses do not end with it simply being a sign of that fire. I think that there is much more to it, which is why I've asked all of you to meet here tonight..."

"Oh yes?" van Rijn said. "Curious, indeed, although I have never been particularly inclined to ascribe astrological portents much significance, I would be most interested indeed to hear your hypotheses, Anthony."

Putting the book aside, he rose stiffly and moved to a telescope to peer through it toward the moon. "Quite nice," he remarked. "The eclipse is just beginning, and there's the comet...now, if

I understood you correctly, there's actually to be a conjunction tonight, is there not? The comet will pass directly behind the moon?"

"Yes," Ambrose spoke up for the first time. "The comet will pass behind the moon, and there should be a significant lunar effect from the interaction of these two celestial bodies. Certain magical energies will peak at this time, and particular power sources will be restructured."

"Indeed," Anthony interjected, "which is why we need to act fast if we want to take advantage of this rare phenomenon."

From deep with the cellar of the Manoir de Penombre, a shrill scream emanated loudly for several moments. As the screams slowly subsided, high-pitched feminine laughing could be faintly heard.

Each member shook his head as the footsteps could be heard coming up the stairs. As active as the Ste. Ronges cell was, their secretary created more work for them than she saved. Anthony scowled deeply as he turned to Gabrek. "I believe that it is your turn to deal with Drusilla's newest doll golem creation..."

Ambrose Skully

By Stephen "ScS" Sutton

Medium gnome Brd 6/Dir 3/FoS 1: CR 10; Sz S (3'8"); HD 6d6+3d6+1d4; hp 48; Init +1; Speed 20; AC 12 (touch 12, flatfooted 11); Atk: +7 ranged (pistol, 1D10, *3, 50ft); SA Bardic abilities, Spells; SQ Bardic music, Bardic Knowledge (+2 from knowledge history), Gnome qualities, Lore of the Fraternity, Low light vision, Spells, Whispers of the Dead; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +10; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +11, concentration +7, decipher script +11, diplomacy +9, gather information +15, intimidate +14, knowledge (arcana) +13, knowledge (history) +8, knowledge (religion) +9, knowledge (Ravenloft) +13, perform +16, sense motive +14, speak language 2, use magic device +10; Jaded a, Open Mind a, Endurance, Dirge of Woe*, Skill Focus (decipher script).

Languages: Darkonese, Gnome, Balok, Falkovnian, Lamordian, Mordentish, Vassi.

Bard Spells per Day: (3/4/4/3). Base DC = 13 + spell level. Spells Known; 0–*Daze, detect magic, light, lullaby, resistance, summon instrument*; 1st–*charm person, identify, obscure object, silent image*; 2nd–*detect thoughts, eagle's splendor, fox's cunning, misdirection*; 3rd–*crushing despair, dispel magic, remove curse*.

Bardic Music: Countersong, Crescendo of Blood^Φ, Fascinate, Graveyard Sonata^Φ, Inspire Competence, Inspire Courage +1, Lament for the Fallen^Φ, Suggestion, Tales of Death and Madness^a.

Gnome Qualities: Weapon Familiarity (hooked hammer), +2 save vs. Illusions, +1 DC to all illusions, +1 racial attack bonus against goblinoids and kobolds, +4 dodge bonus to ac against giants, +2 listen checks, +2 craft (alchemy) checks.

Gnome Spells: Caster Level 1st; DC 10 + 3+ level; 1/day Speak with animals (burrowing mammals), 1/day – dancing lights, ghost sound and prestidigitation.

Signature possessions: ink and quill, necklace of finger bones, notebook, pistol, and Fraternity of Shadows sigil ring.

* From Champions of Darkness

Φ From Van Richten's Arsenal

a From Ravenloft Campaign Setting

Ambrose Skully is a gnome just past his first century; he is of small build, barely bigger than a human child, though that is where the resemblance ends. Skully wears a thick beard that runs down his chin from his ears, though the rest of his face is meticulously shaven. In his middle age he has begun to lose his hair and so has taken to the practice of shaving his head. Ambrose is always dressed in black, often wearing Dementlieuse fashions, complemented by his macabre necklace of human finger-bones. Despite his distinct mode of dress, he is most notable for his perpetually angry scowl and his cold, unblinking gaze.

Background

For years, Ambrose Skully has excited and horrified the core with his bizarre tales of the macabre, yet his own tale began amongst the mundane humdrum of Viaki. Raised in a small community of gnomes, Ambrose Skully worked as a humble barrister. The young gnome's life took an unexpected turn when he was rejected by a woman he had wooed for years and subsequently turned to drink and vice. He lost his position due to his alcoholism and was forced to become a research assistant for a traveling scholar.

While traveling through the core, Skully's expensive habits forced him to find additional means of income. Channeling his repressed frustrations and his talent for the written word, he became an author and poet. As his addictions began to consume his spirit, Ambrose became renowned for his talents. In the wake of the Requiem, Skully's tales of death and tragedy found an audience possessed of morbid curiosity. Exploiting humanity's

preoccupation with mortality and loss, Ambrose rose to celebrity status for his melancholy prose. Indeed, his work forced him to explore the dark depths of mortality in search of inspiration.

For many years, Skully wrote in Ludendorf until his hard drinking and womanizing caused sufficient scandal to drive him from the city. From there Skully traveled to Port au Lucine, where he tried his hand at drama, eventually creating Withering Heights, his magnum opus. Yet fame and accolades would fade and the pattern of self-destruction would repeat itself. Ambrose squandered his fortune on drink, prostitutes and exotic narcotics. He would eventually leave Dementlieu in disgrace amidst allegations of grave robbing.

Fame and ignominy followed Skully as he drifted back and forth across the Core, often forced to perform in seedy taverns to support his drinking. In those dark days Ambrose began research for a book, an epic tale that would win him back the fame, fortune and the vices that went with them. For decades he researched, producing minor fictional works to support his work. Eventually his investigations led him to an encounter with a mysterious organization; the Fraternity of Shadows.

Current Sketch

After years of drinking and debauchery, Ambrose has become a hopeless addict of base desires. Skully can scarcely function without dose of brew, though he is notoriously unselective in his boozing; many of the Fraternity members have banned him from their laboratories for his habit of draining specimen jars. As a functional alcoholic, Ambrose appears to be a charming, engaging man when supplied

with alcohol. When somber, however, the abrasive qualities of his personality rise to surface, including profanity, vulgarity, misogyny and a virulent hatred of elves.

As a member of the Fraternity, Ambrose Skully has been exposed to a wealth of information, from the darkest secrets of ancient nobility to the mysteries of the Mists themselves. Though not a wizard, Skully's own extensive knowledge has made him a rising star amongst the scholars of the Fraternity. Ambrose has no interest in the ultimate goals of the Fraternity, but he is dedicated to the study of the demiplane and its lands. His own expertise in the fields of evil and the macabre has proved a valuable resource to the brotherhood, as has his considerable bardic abilities.

Broke once again, Skully has taken a break from his research and begun work on a new publication. Rather irritated with the cycle of self-destruction, the Fraternity has arranged for Ambrose to be "dried out". The brotherhood has banished the gnome to Ste. Ronges to work as the manager of Le Café de Nuit, a new business opened as a front for Fraternity operations. Deprived of precious liquor, Ambrose is trapped in a perpetually foul mood, a situation severely aggravated by a growing addiction to caffeine.

Combat

Ambrose is loath to enter physical combat, mostly a result of his small size and poor abilities. When presented with a challenge, Ambrose first attempts to use his considerable charms to end the confrontation. Failing that, he will flee and regroup with a small gang of bodyguards. In battle, Ambrose uses his dark powers to spread

fear and despair in enemy ranks while bolstering his allies. If pressed, he will resort to his trusty dueling pistol.

Doctor Anthony Reuland

By Jason “Javier” True

Male tiefling Ench8/FoS4: CR 12; Medium-size outsider (6 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 12d4; hp 36; Init +4; Speed 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 14, flat-footed 13); Atk +8/+3 melee (1d6+2, cane of flames); SA spells; SQ cold resistance 5, darkvision 60 ft, *darkness* (1/day), *deeper darkness* (3/day), electricity resistance 5, familiar (raven), fire resistance 5, lore of the fraternity; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +13; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +13, Bluff +3, Concentration +8, Craft (woodworking) +13, Hide +6, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (geography) +15, Knowledge (nature) +15, Knowledge (planes) +21, Knowledge (Raveloft) +21, Knowledge (religion) +11, Profession +11, Spellcraft +15 (+17 to learn enchantment spells); Ancestral Legacy (Reuland family spellbook)[†], Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Scent of the Grave[†], Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Enchantments), Spell Mastery (*charm person*, *dominate person*, *hold person*, *sleep*).

Languages: Mordentish, Darkonese, Draconic, Infernal, Tepestani.

Wizard Spells per Day: 5/7/6/6/5/5/3. Base DC = 15 + spell level, 17 + spell level for Enchantment spells. Prohibited schools: Divination and Necromancy.

Spellbook: 0-all; 1st-*Burning Hands*, *Change Self*, *Charm Person*, *Color Spray*, *Hypnotism*, *Mage Armor*,

Magic Missile, *Magic Weapon*, *Shield*, *Sleep*, *Shocking Grasp*, *Spider Climb*, *Unseen Servant*; 2nd-*Alter Self*, *Flaming Sphere*, *Hypnotic Pattern*, *Invisibility*, *Levitate*, *Melf's Acid Arrow*, *Minor Image*, *Misdirection*, *Protection from Arrows*, *Pyrotechnics*, *Summon Swarm*, *Tasha's Hideous Laughter*, *Web*; 3rd-*Dispel Magic*, *Fireball*, *Flame Arrow*, *Gaseous Form*, *Hold Person*, *Illusionary Script*, *Lightning Bolt*, *Magic Circle Against Evil*, *Magic Circle Against Good*, *Major Image*, *Nondetection*, *Protection from Elements*, *Suggestion*; 4th-*Charm Monster*, *Confusion*, *Emotion*, *Fire Shield*, *Ice Storm*, *Improved Invisibility*, *Lesser Geas*, *Minor Globe of Invulnerability*, *Phantasmal Killer*, *Shadow Conjuration*, *Stoneskin*, *Wall of Fire*; 5th-*Cloudkill*, *Cone of Cold*, *Dominate Person*, *Feeblemind*, *Greater Shadow Conjuration*, *Hold Monster*, *Mind Fog*, *Nightmare*, *Persistent Image*, *Teleport*, *Wall of Force*; 6th-*Acid Fog*, *Antimagic Field*, *Chain Lightning*, *Disintegrate*, *Geas/Quest*, *Mass Suggestion*, *Otiluke's Freezing Sphere*, *Permanent Image*, *Project Image*, *Shades*.

Signature possessions: amulet of natural armor +3, cane of flames, dark-tinted glasses, Fraternity of Shadows sigil ring, pocket watch, spellbook, wand of charm person, and wand of flame arrow.

[†] from *Van Richten's Arsenal*

Anthony Reuland is a 34 year old man descended from a particular and strange family bloodline. Standing over six feet tall and weighing a little less than 160 pounds, Anthony tends to possess a gaunt and sometimes emaciated appearance. While physically fit, he always looks as if he suffers from some unknown illness. The fact that his natural skin tone is a shade of dusty grey

only adds to the rumors that his health is failing him. Even though he has immaculate hygiene, his body continuously exudes a faint odor of decay and rot (which makes it difficult for him to dispel the rumors about his health).

His unruly mop of hair is deep black in color and almost always hangs past the tips of his ears. Unless he is alone, a pair of darkly tinted glasses is worn to obscure the amber hue of his eyes. The few individuals who catch a glimpse of Anthony's pointed ears or amber colored eyes tend to whisper about him already being among the walking dead. The truth of the matter is that Anthony is planetouched, rather than undead.

Excluding his wild hair and faint odor, Anthony maintains a very clean and dignified look about himself. He typically wears a pair of black trousers and a white, silken shirt for his day-to-day activities. For more formal occasions, he dons a charcoal vest, black overcoat, and a tall top hat. It is not uncommon for him to carry around a long bronzedwood cane, which he uses to lean on when he wants to mislead others on the matter of his health. Since his induction into the Fraternity of Shadows, Anthony always wears his signet ring on one of his fingers.

Background

The history of Anthony Reuland starts long before he was ever born. In fact, it starts nearly five generations before in a dark and dank section of the woods in Tepest. A young and ambitious witch, named Madeline Reuland, desired to learn more about the dark secrets of magic than her simple life could provide. She studied and planned for several weeks until she

discovered an old and almost forgotten legend scrawled in a hag's personal journal. There were several vile acts detailed in the book, but Madeline was most interested in the information about making deals with a particular devil. That same night, she summoned the reptilian fiend to her doorstep. The fiend offered Madeline a book of powerful spells and secrets, and she agreed to give birth to his half-fiend child as payment.

This half-fiend was Anthony's great, great grandfather. When the Tepestani inquisition came searching for the vile witch and her hell spawned offspring, the half-fiend and its mother fled to Richemulot. The half-fiend found a new home in Mortigny and eventually sired a child of its own. The fiendish blood has become more and more diluted with each generation, but the Reuland bloodline still possess a certain amount of fiendish power within its veins. Anthony's parents noticed this fact at their child's birth.

Taking his newborn son into his arms, Anthony's father sat down at his wife's side. The baby looked sick and weak, but intelligence burned brightly in his amber eyes. Both parents recognized the potential and what it could mean for the family. As Anthony grew older, his parents provided the best teachers and tutors that they could afford. Anthony absorbed knowledge like a sponge, and his parents wanted him to gain all the benefits he could. Anthony spent many of his early years cloistered away in classrooms and libraries. While he had some childhood friends, he spent more time with books and instructors than children of his own age. While all these isolated studies kept him distant, he was better prepared for the gift his father gave him on his thirteenth birthday; lessons in wizardry.

It was not only the devil's blood that was passed down each generation, but the book of spells exchanged hands as well. It was a tradition that the Reuland family would study magic, and Anthony was one of the most qualified to do this since their family matriarch, Madeline, started the practice. Anthony, who was much smarter than his father ever had been, surpassed the elder Reuland in ability and skill by the time he had turned eighteen. Realizing that he could gain little more from his father, Anthony went to the University of Richemulot to study under more qualified instructors.

It was at the University that the Fraternity of Shadows noticed Anthony. Through his detailed projects and arcane abilities, Anthony caught the eye of a couple professors that belonged to the Fraternity. By slyly pushing his projects and assignments toward the particular directions that the organization favored, Anthony's professors were able to watch the young man grow in both knowledge and ability applicable to the Fraternity. As time went on, the tasks became more detailed and the tests became more difficult. After a couple years of restrained but methodical inspection, two members of the Fraternity of Shadows approached Anthony and explained the basic concepts of their organization to him. Without hesitation, Anthony joined the group and has been very active within the organization ever since.

Current Sketch

Anthony Reuland is the latest member to join the Ste. Ronges section of the Fraternity of Shadows. While he is one of the newer members of the organization, his knowledge and skills have helped him quickly climb through

the ranks. Although Anthony has little interest in the ultimate goals of the Fraternity, its collection of scholars and wizards provide resources and information that he would otherwise be unable to access. At the same time, the Fraternity has also been generous in supporting his research and studies in biological genetics and planar philosophy. Due to the benefits of such a relationship, he plans to continue to rise through the ranks of the organization and learn as much about the demiplane and its inhabitants that he can. In fact, he recently accepted a minor teaching position at the University of Richemulot where he can continue with his research of extraplanar creatures and their connection to the physical world.

Unfortunately, Anthony has also recently learned his superiors in the Fraternity of Shadows are not the only ones who have a vested interest in him. He received a letter from his mother, which spoke of the tragic disappearance of his father during a terrible storm. His mother went on to explain that the inherent magic of the Reuland bloodline was not the only thing that the family members inherited. Any child born with the taint of fiendish blood would eventually be collected by their extraplanar progenitor to serve some vile purpose. While Anthony hasn't been panicked by this news, he is deeply concerned about how much truth may be in the family legend. In preparation for such a time, he has been doubling all his efforts in expanding his arcane knowledge and tightening his group of companions. If he is going to be taken in the middle of the night, then there will at least be an epic struggle...

Combat

Anthony prefers to avoid physical combat whenever possible. Using his wide selection of enchantments and illusions, he employs charmed companions or imaginary monsters to fight at the front of his battles while he strikes with spells from a distance. If he feels that a battle is not proceeding in his favor, Anthony will make use of his innate *darkness* or his signet ring's *deeper darkness* to cover his escape.

If pressed into actually fighting hand-to-hand combat, Anthony will use his magical cane that strikes as if it were a +2 *club*. In addition to the improved attack, the cane also acts as if it were a modified *staff of fire*, and can cast the following spells from it: *burning hands* (1 charge, DC 13), *fireball* (1 charge, 8d6, DC 15), and *wall of fire* (2 charges, DC 17).

Professor Erik van Rijn

By Nathan "Dmitri" Okerlund

Medium human Trans8/FoS6:
CR 14, HD 14d4 -14 hp 28 Initiative +3
Spd 20 ft; AC 12 (-1 Dex, +3 with necklace of protection +3); Atk (+5/+0) 1d4-2; Face/Reach 5'x5'; SA spells AL NE SV Fort +2 Ref +3 Will +14 Str 7 Con 9 Dex 8 Int 24 Wis 16 Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +24, Concentration +20, Forgery +14, Knowledge (Arcana) +24 Knowledge (Ravenloft) +24, Knowledge (undead) +14, Knowledge (outsiders) +14, Knowledge (shapeshifters) +14, Spellcraft +24, Scribe Scroll, Brew Potion, Forge Ring, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (Transmutation), Extend Spell, Spell Mastery (*detect magic*, *invisibility*, *teleport*) Quicken Spell, Silent Spell, Still Spell.

Languages: Mordentish, Balok, Darkonese, Draconic, Falkovnian, Vaasi, Kartakan, Old Kartakan, Lamordian, Valachani, Sithican, Tepestani, Rajian, Nosan, Paridonish, Dutch, Latin.

Spells: 5/7/7/6/6/5/5/3. Base DC = 17 + spell level, 19 + spell level for Transmutation spells. Prohibited School: Conjuration.

Spellbook: 0th level: All non-conjuration. 1st-*Shield, Comprehend Languages, Detect Undead, Identify, Charm Person, Sleep, Magic Missile, Change Self, Silent Image, Ventriloquism, Chill Touch, Ray of Enfeeblement, all Transmutation spells.* 2nd-*Arcane Lock, Obscure Object, Resist Elements, Detect Thoughts, Locate Object, See Invisibility, Darkness, Daylight, Shatter, Invisibility, Minor Image, Ghoul Touch, Scare, Spectral Hand, Alter Self, Knock, Levitate, Pyrotechnics, Rope Trick.* 3rd-*Dispel Magic, Clairaudience/Clairvoyance, Tongues, Hold Person, Suggestion, Fireball, Lightning Bolt, Major Image, Halt Undead, Vampiric Touch, Blink, Fly, Gaseous Form, Haste, Shrink Item, Slow, Water Breathing.* 4th-*Fire Trap, Minor Globe of Invulnerability, Remove Curse, Stoneskin, Arcane Eye, Detect Scrying, Locate Creature, Scrying, Charm Monster, Confusion, Fire Shield, Ice Storm, Shout, Improved Invisibility, Phantasmal Killer, Enervation, Fear, Bestow Curse, Dimension Door, Polymorph Other, Polymorph Self, Rary's Mnemonic Enhancer.* 5th-*Prying Eyes, Dominate Person, Feeblemind, Hold Monster, Mind Fog, Cone of Cold, Wall of Force, Persistent Image, Animate Dead, Magic Jar, Fabricate, Passwall, Stone Shape, Telekinesis, Teleport, Permanency.* 6th-*Antimagic Field, Globe of Invulnerability, Guards and Wards, Repulsion, Analyze*

Dweomer, Legend Lore, True Seeing, Contingency, Permanent Image, Programmed Image, Project Image, Circle of Death, Control Weather, Disintegrate, Eyebite, Flesh/Stone to Stone/Flesh, Mordenkainen's Lucubration. 7th-Spell Turning, Greater Scrying, Vision, Insanity, Prismatic Spray, Shadow Walk, Control Undead, Finger of Death, Ethereal Jaunt, Reverse Gravity, Statue, Teleport Without Error, Vanish, Limited Wish.

Possessions: Cane of lights, Fraternity of Shadows signet ring, ring of regeneration, necklace of protection +3.

Erik van Rijn is now in his late fifties. His face is dominated by piercing gray eyes, long, lank gray-brown hair, and a similarly unkempt beard. He has a heavy paunch but is otherwise quite thin. His hands--by far his best feature--are long-fingered, well-kept and elegant. He wears the sigil ring of the Fraternity (a silver asp with an onyx in its mouth) on the middle finger of his left hand and a plain gold band (a ring of regeneration) on the ring finger of his right hand. He usually dresses in black and red, wearing the jacket and trousers of a gentleman of Richemulot high society. He wears a ruby pendant necklace of protection +3 under his shirt.

Background

Erik van Rijn was born in the city of Amsterdam in Gothic Earth, the son of a well-to-do merchant who intended that his son follow him into the family business. His father's plans changed, however, when he discovered his six-year-old son reading the family Bible in Latin. He arranged for private tutors to instruct his son, and Erik's academic potential soon became fully

apparent. When he left home at the age of seventeen to attend university in Gottingen he was already fluent in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and a handful of modern languages, and he quickly became a star pupil. However, his eagerness to learn soon took a dark turn. While at the university, he also began to read the works of such famous magicians as Paracelsus and Nicolas Flamel, and soon he became an eager devotee of alchemy and the occult. Led, perhaps, by the Red Death, he eventually encountered magical formulas of real potency--discoveries which whetted his appetite for power at any cost.

Like other alchemists, Erik's ultimate goal was to create the philosopher's stone--the fabled artifact which would grant both the ability to transform base metals into gold and the secret of eternal youth. His desperate search for funds and ingredients led him to first to embezzlement, then to grave-robbing, and his search for occult knowledge brought him into contact with forces which encouraged him in his downward spiral. At last, he believed he had found the secret of the philosopher's stone--but to create it he would need the life-blood of a human being.

For a time Erik struggled with himself over this final step, but the enticement of infinite wealth and eternal youth was too strong; he added kidnapping and murder to the list of his crimes, luring a beggar with the promise of coin, sedating him with an alchemical concoction, and draining him of his life's blood. As Erik worked over his alchemical apparatus that night, the end of his long struggle for the philosopher's stone in sight, he found himself growing dizzy and light-headed; the room seemed filled with fumes from the alembics and beakers, filling his vision and clouding

the room. He struggled to continue, but he felt consciousness slip away from him...

When he came to himself, Erik found himself in an abandoned house on the outskirts of a large city. To his astonishment and terror, he had no idea where he was, and the language of the natives was completely unfamiliar. He was able to support himself by scavenging from the many abandoned homes and businesses of the city while he put his linguistic talents to use; soon he found himself fluent enough to understand that he found himself in Ste. Ronges in Richemulot--a city and country he had never heard of, nor seen on a map. He soon learned that he found himself in what was literally a new world, and he became obsessed by the desire to explain what had happened to him and the world around him. At first he plunged into study at the University of Richemulot, but even the academic resources of that center of learning failed to address his questions. Frustrated, he began to wander the Core in search of answers to his questions about the physics and metaphysics of the Demiplane. It was in the course of these wanderings that he met and became an associate of the famous (or infamous) bard of Kartakass, Harkon Lukas. After suffering a serious mauling at the hands of Master Ulathar, a psionic lich, he was forced to leave the active life of an adventurer and retired to an academic position at the University of Richemulot, where his knack for learning languages and his extensive travels won him a position as a professor of anthropology and modern languages.

Here he made the acquaintance of Viktor Hazan, then a recent initiate into the Fraternity of Shadows. The two became friends--at least, insofar as both

are capable of friendship--and Hazan soon determined that Erik would be an ideal member of the Fraternity. Initially, Erik progressed in the Fraternity by leaps and bounds, but soon he found his progress in the Fraternity blocked by questions of Fraternity politics and philosophy. He discovered that his favored branches of study--anthropology, languages, transmutation and alchemy--were considered lowbrow and overly concerned with the material by the more senior members of the Fraternity, who favored the study of illusion, philosophy, and mathematics--the most mental and ideal of the magical and scholarly branches of study.

At first, Erik hoped to overcome this prejudice by excellence and diligence in serving the Fraternity, but as time has gone on he has begun to grow embittered by his perceived lack of status in the Fraternity. In addition, he feels that his time may be growing short as his health fails. He failed to achieve the philosopher's stone, and he has failed to reach the highest level of the Fraternity and gain immortality in that way--but he is resolved to cheat Death in any way he can, and if the Fraternity will not offer him scope for his talents, backing for his studies, and the promise of eternal life, he may be forced to turn to other sources. Already he has turned to the study of necromancy, and none can say to what lengths he will go to achieve his goals...

Current Sketch

Van Rijn is extremely intelligent and exceedingly arrogant. He is usually quiet and distant but is bitterly sarcastic when provoked. He holds an endowed chair which frees him from most academic duties. He gives a lecture on "cultures and peoples of the Core" once

a week and tutors the few students willing to deal with his terrible tongue-lashings. Nearly all the students and faculty of the University fear and dislike van Rijn and not a few hate him, but he is generally considered a genius, albeit an extremely unpleasant one.

Van Rijn makes his home a few miles outside Ste. Ronges in a crumbling chateau known as the Chateau d'Is, where he lives with two servants. He also has a set of rooms at the University, where he often stays during the academic year. Those members of the Fraternity of Shadows who live in Richemulot sometimes use his home as a convenient meeting place, although they more often meet at the Manoir de Penombre, the family manor of Anthony Reuland.

Combat

Van Rijn has neither strength for nor any interest in combat. If he cannot avoid it by using enchantment spells, he will attempt to evade it, if his opponent appears strong, or to end it quickly by using crushing force if his opponent appears weak enough to land a killing blow immediately.

In addition to his protective magical devices--the ring and necklace previously mentioned-- Erik always carries a cane with a worn silver head and iron ferrule. This is actually a powerful magic item, capable of casting the following spells: At will: *light*; 3/day: *color spray* or *daylight*; 1/day: *searing light* or *fireball*; 1/month: *prismatic spray* or *sunburst*. All spells are cast as a 12th level sorcerer, save DC 14 + spell level when applicable.

Gabrek Krakul

By Eddy "Wiccy" Brennan

Human male, Rgr 4/Wiz 9/FoS

5: ECL 15; CR 13; SZ M humanoid (human); HD 1d10 + 9d4 + 5d4 + 36; hp 82; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 Ring of Protection) (touch 11; flat-footed 12); Atk +12/+7 melee (rapier of delusion, 1d6+1; Crit 19-20/x2) or +12/+7 ranged (longbow, 1d8; Crit 20/x3); SA Rapier of Delusion, spells; SQ Favoured Enemy (Wolves), Slippery Mind; AL NE; SV Fort +9 Ref +8 Will +14; Str 13; Dex 12; Con 14; Int 15; Wis 16; Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +11, Animal Empathy +7, Concentration +10, Craft (forester) +8, Handle Animal +6, Intuit Direction (Vorostokov only) +8, Knowledge (Arcane) +15, Knowledge (Nature) +6, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +15, Knowledge (Werebeasts) +10, Listen +12, Profession (Researcher) +11, Spellcraft +11, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore (Vorostokov only) +6; Alertness, Combat Casting, Craft Magical Arms & Armour, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Illusion), Spell Mastery (Phantasmal Killer, Shadow Conjuration), Spell Penetration, Track, Weapon Focus (Rapier).

Languages: Voros*, Balok, Mordentish, Falkovnian.

Spells: (4/4/4/3/2/1)

Ranger spells: Alarm, Delay Poison, Entangle, read Magic, Resist Elements, Summon Nature's Ally I.

Wizard spellbook: Arcane Mark, Dancing Lights, Detect Magic, Ghost Sound, Prestidigitation, Read Magic, Cause Fear, Change Self, Colour Spray, Magic Missile, Silent Image, Summon Monster I, Ventriloquism, Blur, Continual Flame, Dark Vision, Hypnotic

Pattern, Invisibility, Leomund's Trap, Mirror Image, Scare, Summon Monster II, Displacement, Flame Arrow, Hold Person, Illusionary Script, Invisibility Sphere, Major Image, Summon Monster III, Evard's Black Tentacles, Hallucinatory Terrain, Ice Storm, Illusionary Wall, Improved Invisibility, Phantasmal Killer, Rainbow Pattern, Shadow Conjuration, Stoneskin, Summon Monster IV, Cloudkill, False Vision, Greater Shadow Conjuration, Passwall, Permanency, Persistent Image, Seeming, Shadow Evocation.

Signature Possessions: Rapier of Delusion, Fraternity of Shadows sigil ring, silk lined velvet money pouch (containing roughly 100gp at all times), walking cane (concealing Rapier of Delusion), pocket watch, spell components and several assorted spell scrolls.

Drawn from his Voros origins, Gabrek has kept an unkempt appearance to him despite his efforts to appear gentlemanly. His thick black hair is worn in a ponytail that hangs to the top of his shoulders, tied with a slim black ribbon; his face is half covered by a great black beard. He is proud of this last feature and refuses to trim it most of the time, let alone go bare-faced. He believes this feature makes him more masculine in appearance, but he doesn't need much help in achieving such an image. Gabrek is an imposing man, standing tall and almost as wide; his great barrel chest and large build had developed during the earlier parts of his life in Vorostokov. Gabrek's eyes are pale brown in color and appear at odds with the rest of his features. They look hard, but he is a quiet man most of the time.

Gabrek has made his best efforts to fit into Richemuloise fashion and appearance and his sharp intellect allowed him to pick up Mordentshire surprisingly quickly. He dresses in fine, expensive suits and soft boots, always black with a white shirt and cravat. He carries a walking cane for fashion more than anything, but this item also contains his enchanted rapier.

When Gabrek speaks, he does so in a deep, yet soft voice. But when he raises his voice or laughs, it is like that of a wild bear.

Background

Gabrek was born in a forgotten world in a region that later became Vorostokov, approximately ten years before the domain was accepted by the Dark Powers. When Gabrek was young, the boyar Gregor Zolnik was still assembling his Boyarsky and had traveled to Gabrek's home in search of strong men to bolster his ranks. Gabrek witnessed his father's refusal of the young boyar's offers and nothing more was said of the affair. Gabrek's father and the remaining hunters banded together and decided to hunt the great Black Wolf that had recently entered the forests, as the fur from the creature would make a fine parka for the hunter who delivered the killing blow on the beast, and the meat would feed the entire village. When the men left for the hunt, none of them would ever be seen again.

Gabrek was grief stricken by the news of his father's death. His heart was saddened further at the news that so many other men had also perished hunting the Black Wolf. Gabrek immediately decided that he would one day hunt the cruel beast and bring it down to honor the deaths of his father

and those other hunters that had gone with him.

Gabrek was fourteen by the time he was allowed to hunt alone. On one such hunt, he had been stalking an elusive prey all day. The sun was setting and Gabrek was too far from the village, so he decided to camp out, building a fire to warm him throughout the night's bitter cold. As the fire crackled and popped, a piercing howl shattered the stillness and awoke Gabrek's half sleeping mind.

Immediately he grabbed his bow and went off to find the source of the baying. Deeper into the forest he traveled until he heard another sound, that of what could have been an animal in pain. Following it closer still, he happened on a scene that turned his heart and stomach to ice. Not more than a dozen yards before him, clearly visible in the pale moonlight, was the Black Wolf! Steadying his bow, Gabrek prepared to shoot the beast when something unexpected occurred. The beast that was once a wolf was changing: its limbs lengthening, the trunk of its body shortening and growing broader, the fur sinking into the skin, and the head growing rounder and more human.

Gabrek looked on, unable to move a single muscle, as the bitter enemy he had sworn vengeance on years before became a man his people had come to trust. Standing before him, clothed only in a black wolf's pelt, was his lord, the Boyar Gregor Zolnik.

Gabrek turned and ran from the forest, for the village that same night. Close to dawn, the sentry guards found his half frozen form prone in the snow near the palisade that surrounded the village.

Gabrek suffered from harsh fevers for several weeks before he regained his health. During the worst of it, he muttered of the Black Wolf and of Zolnik being a monster. All was put down to his fevers and nothing more was thought of his words. When he did recover, Gabrek secretly vowed revenge once more, this time on his true enemy, the boyar himself.

Months passed and no signs of the boyar were found in the region and Gabrek was about to give up hope once more when he heard a familiar call in the darkness one cold night. He ran through the forests following the sounds and he came to a stop suddenly to find the Black Wolf standing before him. The wolf watched him closely and changed into Zolnik before the terrified hunter. "Boy, you have seen more than you should have," the boyar chided him, "but I am a fair man. Remove your shirt and place the pelt from the forest floor over your shoulders and you may live, otherwise you die here tonight." Not giving Gabrek time to answer, Zolnik donned his fur once more and became the wolf. As Gabrek shook in terror of the horror before him, his mind quickly made a decision and he raised his bow and fired on the huge wolf before him, his boyar, his lord and his enemy.

The arrow bounced off harmlessly and as the wolf pounced, Gabrek wheeled and ran for his life through the trees. At every turn the wolf was at his heels, playing with him, wearing him down before the final kill. Gabrek felt all hope leave him as he stumbled. Not realizing his path, the hunter fell into a ravine, and the entire world went black before him. When he awoke, blinding pain wracked his body and he found that the world about him was dark. A soft voice he could not

understand spoke to him and he felt consciousness slip away once more. In time, Gabrek learned of where he was, but not how he journeyed there. But, he reasoned, if he got there it should be possible to return and find his enemy, find a way to kill it and save his people. Gabrek learned he was in a land called Richemulot, very different from the land of his youth, but for now he was safe to become strong again and even stronger. He made friends and allies, learned new skills, studied lore and he slowly sank into a world he could never have imagined possible.

Current Sketch

In the years since Gabrek entered the Fraternity of Shadows for his insatiable lust for knowledge and grasp on illusion, he has remained as determined as ever to return home and destroy the monster that his boyar turned out to be. However, though his intentions were once noble, his mind has become twisted with revenge and though he once wanted to free his people, today he wants to remove Zolnik so that he might replace him. He sees his people as backward, simple and above all ignorant of the world about them and their potential and this he plans to change when he returns to Vorostokov.

Gabrek spends much of his days locked away in his study, perusing forbidden lore and expanding his own skills, devising plans and seeking knowledge on mysterious pathways known to exist in the Mists. He plans to use one of these someday and return home where he will destroy the evil boyar and replace him as a wise leader to his people and lead them out of the dark ages. Gabrek has not noticed the alterations in his once noble plans, and his own all-consuming passion and want

for more power has left him nothing more than his mission in life. He ignores much of what else is happening in the world but, from his continuous study in the field, has greater insight into the dread realms than many other people alive.

His superiors see Gabrek as something of a liability, but they know his worth and he has unlocked various secrets over the years. In fact, they are still piecing some of them together as he continues to decipher the larger puzzles. Once his uses are over, however, he will likely be disposed of in some manner. It is doubtful that they would just let him leave and return to his homeland with the knowledge that he holds.

Combat

Gabrek prefers to remain in the background of a battle, though he is a competent fighter in his own right. He will use a human shield to defend him while he uses long range attacks and spells to destroy those he can, weakening the enemy before he moves in for the decisive finale.

Gabrek has access to many spells and scrolls that he has prepared over time and will not hold back from using any that may prove useful. He tends to carry about three and a half dozen scrolls at all times, just in case. When forced to enter into melee combat, Gabrek wields his magical Rapier of Delusion, a weapon that he enchanted himself and of which is very proud.

Rapier of Delusion: This magical weapon was forged within the Fraternity itself and later enchanted by Gabrek. A special order, the blade is crafted from solid silver and the cane that houses it is ebony soaked in wolfsbane. Whenever it strikes in melee, in addition to any damage it causes, the

rapier has a 15% (+1% per point of damage) of sending the target into *Confusion*, as per the spell until the beginning of the next round. In addition to this, the rapier may be used by the wielder to cast *Color Spray* as a 5th level wizard once per day. In the past year Gabrek has also improved on the weapon and enchanted it further so that when the blade is used in combat, its very movements can be used as a Hypnotic Pattern once per day as a 9th-level wizard.

Kristoff Lutemmi

By Dion "Midway Haven" Fernandez

Male Human Wiz5/FoS6:
CR11; Medium humanoid; HD 11d4 (34 hp); Init +1 (Dex); AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk dagger +3 melee (dam 1d4+2); SQ Lore of the Fraternity, Deeper Darkness, Winterboone Aura; AL NE; Saves Fort +1, Ref +1, Wil +4; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +7, Concentration +12, Craft (alchemy) +4, Craft (woodcarving) +7, Diplomacy +4, Gather Information +6, Hide +8, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +9, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Perform (harpsichord) +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Spellcraft +13; Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Still Spell.

Spellbook: 0-Arcane Mark, Dancing Lights, Daze, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Flare, Ghost Sound, Mage Hand, Mending, Open/Close, Prestidigitation, Ray of Frost, Read Magic, Resistance; 1st-Change Self, Chill Touch, Magic Missile, Reduce, Shocking Grasp, Sleep; 2nd-Alter Self, Blindness/Deafness, Blur, Invisibility, Mirror Image; 3rd-Gaseous Form, Magic Circle against Chaos; 4th-Hallucinatory Terrain, Illusory Wall, Phantasmal

Killer, Shadow Conjunction; 5th-Greater Shadow Conjunction, Shadow Evocation; 6th-Mislead, Project Image.

Signature Possessions: Fraternity of Shadows Sigil Ring, Winterboone Band, dagger +2 ("Dilim").

Esteemed Brother Kristoff Lutemmi is a 30-year old Fraternity member with a clean-shaven face, chestnut-brown hair and dark green eyes. He wears a black wizard's robe with dark-green trim. Since his initiation into the Fraternity, he has never been known to speak, letting his actions dictate his whims and emotions. Most of all, he prefers to let the shadows speak for him.

Background

Kristoff is one of the last remaining descendants of the cursed Winterboones, a noble clan rooted in Neblus, the tombstone city of northern Darkon. The curse's history remains hidden, but the aftereffects are potent: the Winterboones can stay in human form only in winter; for the rest of the year they remain as cold, lifeless statues. Thus, Kristoff was born and grew only in sleet and snow, with eyes that sought to go beyond the white world of his childhood.

Like many others in his family, Kristoff sought to lift the curse, "and what better way to remove it," he thought, "than by studying the arcane lore which brought this dismal pall over them in the first place?" In the sixteenth winter of his life, he commenced his studies in ancient magic and arcane lore, taking in as much as he could before the snows melted and the curse turned him and his family into stone once more.

Kristoff's quest into the hidden arts made him thirsty for more, but his nature prevented him from furthering his

studies. In the third winter of his learning, a direct descendant of the Winterboones returned triumphantly to Neblus. Fritz Winterboone, a warrior of exceptional virtue, held in his hand the Winterlass, a long lost heirloom sword which rendered him immune to the lithic curse. At that point, Kristoff wanted nothing more than to take the weapon as his own, to watch the changing of the seasons, to prolong his existence for more than one season a year. Obsessed with the Winterlass, Kristoff searched for something that could match its life-giving power to no avail.

It was then that, the shadows appeared to him. As he maddeningly peered through arcane tomes, three figures in black emerged from the darkness and spoke to him in dry, whispery voices. They claimed to be of a Fraternity that sought knowledge similar to what Kristoff desired, and they could give him what he wanted, provided he shared his knowledge with them. Desperate for a life beyond snow and stone, far from the nothingness of being a statue, he accepted their terms without a second thought.

It was the last day of winter when Kristoff sat in a magical circle, surrounded by the Esteemed as they chanted and painfully released him from the clutches of the Winterboone curse. As the first rays of the spring sun poured over him, Kristoff knew he was now forever at the mercy of the Fraternity's will, to aid them in their search for arcane perfection.

Dark shadows in high places assigned Kristoff to a particular manor in the outskirts of Ste. Ronges, in Richemulot, along with five other Fraternity members in the fall of 758. In the winter of that same year, Kristoff took out his rage on Fritz Winterboone,

who had by then become a member of the Celestines in nearby Barovia. With his knowledge of dark arts and forbidden magic, he stormed the Midway Haven Observatory, killing three Celestines and nearly killing Fritz himself. Had it not been for the reluctant wiles of a witch named Katyarna Ivanova-Rudenko, a minor Darklord of a wintery pocket domain called Aeli, the Haven would have certainly been obliterated.

Instead Katyarna's magic drove Kristoff away from Barovia, leaving him to recuperate until he could again exact his revenge on Fritz.

Current Sketch

Kristoff Lutemmi has turned out to be an exceptional member of the Fraternity of Shadows. Free from the curse that renders his family to stone, he now travels the Core in search of forgotten lore and ancient artifacts. He now regards the Winterboone curse as a sign of weakness, an inability of the clan to rise above its predicament. For all the success he has gained, however, his lips and his heart are forever as cold and silent as the stony curse he no longer bears.

Kristoff fights not one, but two nemeses: Fritz Winterboone, the holy warrior who now resides in Midway Haven and holds the Winterlass; and Katyarna Ivanova-Rudenko, the Ice-Witch of Aeli, who is also a Winterboone descendant. Although Fritz wants to bring Kristoff to justice, Katyarna wants the Esteemed Brother dead by her own icy hands.

Combat

As a member of the Fraternity of Shadows, Kristoff possesses certain abilities granted by that dark order.

Kristoff's Fraternity sigil ring allows him to cast *deeper darkness* thrice a day as a free action. This ring will not function for any other person, and is the symbol of his membership in the Fraternity. He also possesses a badge inscribed with the Winterboone coat-of-arms that he wears on his robe, which allows him to *endure cold* as the spell of the same name.

Kristoff has reached a degree of mental conditioning that provides him the chance to avoid the mental enthrallment of others.

Professor Viktor Hazan

By Joel "Gotten" Paquin

Male human III5/FoS6: CR 11; Medium size; HD 11d4; hp 39; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 13 (+3 dex); Atk 1, +3/+0; Face/Reach 5'x5'; SA spells SQ slippery mind AL NE; SV Fort +4 Ref +4 Will +16 (+4 wisdom, +2 Iron will); Str 11, Con 10, Dex 16, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +3, Concentration +9, Craft +6, Diplomacy +4, Gather information +4, Knowledge (arcane) +18, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +18, Profession +10, Scan +8, Spellcraft +9 (+2 illusion), Swim +2; Brew Potion, Enlarge spell, Empower spell, Extend spell, Heighten spell, Iron Will, Run, Summon familiar, Scribe Scroll, Slippery Mind, Spell Mastery (*color spray, invisibility, mirror image*).

Weapons: Dagger (1d4, crit 19-20/x2, 10 ft., 1 lb., Tiny, Piercing). Light crossbow (1d8, crit 19-20/x2, 80 ft., 6 lb., piercing).

Languages: Mordentish, Darkonese, Falkovnian, Lamordian, Vaasi.

Spells: 5/5/5/4/3/2 (incl. +1 spec. per level). Base DC = 14 + spell level, 16 + spell level for Illusion spells. Prohibited schools: Abjuration and Necromancy.

Spellbook: 1st-*Color Spray, Nystul's Magical Aura, Nystul's Undetectable Aura, Silent Image Unseen Servant*; 2nd-*Fog Cloud, Glitterdust, Hypnotic Pattern, Invisibility, Minor Image, Mirror Image*; 3rd-*Illusory Script, Invisibility Sphere, Lightning Bolt, Major Image, Phantom Steed*; 4th-*Hallucinatory Terrain, Illusory Wall, Phantasmal Killer, Shadow Conjunction*; 5th-*Greater Shadow Conjunction, Shadow Evocation*; 6th-*Mislead, Project Image*.

Signature possession: Fraternity of Shadows sigil ring, spellbook, round black tinted reading glasses, numerous hidden poison vials and powders.

Viktor Hazan is in his early fifties, short and thin. His salt-and-pepper hair is unusually long for a university professor and often left uncombed and flowing in all directions. At first, he appear disorganized (a false impression), calm and gentle. His manners are somewhat old fashioned, but in contrast he sometimes uses the latest slang of his students' expressions. His sense of humor is caustic, but he doesn't hesitate to make fun of himself or even of his university superiors or colleagues. Needless to say, the students at the university love him.

He usually wears the snobbish clothing of Dementelieu high society when at the University of Richemulot, or in social gatherings. His well kept

clothing, often dark red or black, contrast with his unruly hair.

When fishing (his favorite social activity outside of the university), he uses much less formal wear. To the ire of his university colleagues, he often goes fishing for an entire afternoon without notifying anyone of his absence (some of these absences are not always for fishing...). Once or twice per year, he goes fishing with his whole class, making them spend a whole afternoon quietly seated on rocks, fishing and discussing philosophical concepts, while the other professors wait in vain.

Needless to say, many university students would do many things for the privilege to work with him. Hazan often manipulates them and makes them research or confirm some of his own dark research.

Hazan's facial expression loses all gentleness when in a Fraternity of Shadows context, and then wasp's venom and malice seem to boil under his quiet features.

Background

After his graduation from Richemulot University with philosophy and numbers, the young Viktor went to the service of well known Dementelieu noble, Count Wilhelm von Lovenhorst of Port-a-Lucine. His first years in service of von Lovenhorst were used by the Count for diplomacy purposes, sending Viktor to negotiate for him on a countless number of important subjects and errands, often as far away as Darkon, where the Count originated. Some of these errands involved the Count's magic research. Viktor Hazan executed these tasks with great ease, using his diplomatic skills for his master.

During these years, he also developed magical skills of his own, that

where greatly encouraged by the Count. At the start of his training, after mastering a few cantrips, Hazan fell in love with the unreality concepts of illusions and figments, compared to the unnecessary bluntness of evocation magic, and those illusionists spells now make up the bulk of his spells.

During those early years, the Count never said a word to Viktor about the Fraternity of Shadows, of which he was an important member. But when Viktor had been in his service, the Count felt Viktor could take more and that this young and ambitious man could be involved in the secret order. So the Count took his young secretary for dinner at one of Dementelieu's private club. There, in a safe salon, the Count explained to Viktor some of the founding concepts of a 'theoretical' society, the Fraternity of Shadows. Viktor knew he was being tested, without knowing to which extent. He took the proposed concepts and developed them in an innovative way that pleased his mentor. The principles of the Fraternity fascinated Viktor and he soon became a member.

It was in that organization that his latent thirst for power and dark knowledge came forward in his life. Now, Viktor never hesitates to eliminate a person causing trouble to the Fraternity of Shadows that could not be otherwise manipulated, or to advance his own shadow research on the Ravenloft plane.

He doesn't mind taking risks for knowledge: he once had a long debate with a vampire claiming to be the ex-darklord of Gundarak (see COTN:W – 'Professor Arcanus' and the BoSecrets – 'Gundar'), to confirm a few of the Fraternity's hypotheses on darklord's prison-like existence and their link to the

land. He dreams of interviewing Barovia's Strahd XI on a similar topic.

After von Lovenhorst's mysterious disappearance in 742, Viktor left the Count's family and returned to Richemulot as a teacher for the University. In fact, Hazan went there to be part of one of the most active cells of the Fraternity of Shadows. While keeping the facade of a gentle professor loved by his students, Viktor is one of the most creative of all the Richemulot cell members of the Fraternity. His philosophical ideas are often initially viewed as weird, but they are often the key to solve a problem or debate in the Fraternity.

He is a close friend of Erik van Rijn and has worked with him on numerous projects, either for the university or the Fraternity of Shadows. Viktor's suspect Erik's attraction to magic forbidden in the Fraternity of Shadows ranks, but hasn't spoken of it to anyone, even to Erik.

Current sketch

Viktor's research for the Fraternity of Shadows takes most of his free time spent outside the fishing ponds. Officially a celibacy advocate, he is nevertheless having a secret affair with a married woman that teaches at the University. He lives on the University grounds in a small apartment on the third floor of the University private club, his favorite hang out place.

For his research, he might hire his students or adventurers to undertake a specific task such as a physical test in ether while on the Sea of Sorrow, recovery of a document, translation of an old manuscript, etc. He always gives false reasons for these tasks, often offering the reason that the desired article is needed for its philosophical or

scholarly value. No hired students or adventurers have all the clues needed to form a broad picture of any of Hazan's researches.

His current fields of studies include the following topics:

- ❖ How could drugs or potions increase the user's awareness and augment the quality of perception of the Demiplane of Dread and of the Plane of Shadows? He has found that a rare drug made out of the brain of the monstrous *cozseca* is known to heighten awareness.
- ❖ Viktor thinks the key to understanding the Demiplane of Dread mechanics is through studying the Plane of Shadows. He holds two principles as backing for this hypothesis: First, the Plane of Shadows is a highly morphic plane, often changing in ways similar to the changes in the Demiplane of Dread that sometimes occur; second, a large part of the illusion matter so dear to the Fraternity is drawn from the Ethereal plane, but also from the plane of Shadows. He plans deep testing of spells with a shadow component, like shades and shadow creations to better understand the magic planar matter components active in those spells.
- ❖ Another topic raised by his interest of the plane of shadow: Viktor suspects that all colors are unnecessary figments, distractions for the mind, and if one could see the universe as it truly is, all would be black, white or shades of grey, i.e. the true colors of the shadow universe. Because of that suspicion, Viktor often wear dark tinted round glasses, so his vision is the closest possible to monochromatic grey.

Combat

Viktor avoids physical combat whenever possible. He will instead flee from it, by running or with the aid of a spell. Since he isn't good at physical combat, he developed the art of poisoning, often trying new lethal substances on dogs or even on homeless persons. He meticulously doses the poison and clinically watches the effects on a dying person coldly, as if he is watching a trout wriggling in his basket.

With this poison knowledge, his cold, calculating side makes him a dangerous person to deal with or to provoke. He will search for revenge if the cause is worth it – for advancing his research, to silence someone or for the Fraternity of Shadow's good. He will attack stealthily, armed with a deadly combination of spells and poison, to assassinate the one causing trouble, usually with the deadliest accuracy and minimum physical risk for him.

Drusilla

Female Old Vampire Com 3/Adt 7/Exp 3; CR 11; SZ M humanoid (undead); HD 13d12; hp 90; Init +9 (+5 dex, +4 improved initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 23 (+5 dex, +7 natural, +1 dodge) (touch 16; flat-footed 17); Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+3, claw) or +11/+6 ranged (1d2 - 1d20, miscellaneous office equipment; 1d4, dolls); SA blood drain, create spawn, dominate, energy drain, neck slice; SQ damage reduction (20/silver and magic, fast heal 5, insanity, resistances (electricity 10, cold 10), spider climb, turn resistance +5, visions, water; AL CE; SV Fort +4 Ref +11 Will +9; Str 17; Dex 20; Con -; Int 19; Wis 10; Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +11, Concentration +8, Craft (doll making)

+10, Craft (knitting) +10, Diplomacy +13, Hide +10, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +9, Move Silently +10, Profession (house keeper) +5, Ride +10, Sense Motive +7, Sleight of Hand +8, Spellcraft +10, Spot +7, Swim +7, Use Rope +10; Alertness, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Negotiator, Persuasive, Point Blank Shot, Stealthy.

Languages: Darkonese, Balok, Mordentish, English, Gaelic

Spells: 3/3/2

Signature Possessions: Drusilla tends to dress in various types of finery and usually has a small dagger secreted about her person. She also travels everywhere with her collection of dolls. Drusilla carries only one magical item with her at all times, Freya's Strand.

Drusilla is a vampire. The teeth are something of a give away, but the wrinkly forehead when she vamps out is what gets the crowds screaming in terror or pain, depending on how long they've been in Dru's company. She has the physical appearance of your average nineteen year old. Her skin is a milky translucent white with pale blue veins shining through. These are only seen with careful study, but her face shows them quite easily, so she takes great pains in applying enough makeup to hide them. Drusilla is so thin she is almost emaciated, and her arms and legs look longer than the truly are due to the lack of muscle tissue on them. This only serves to hide her superhuman strength and physical prowess.

Drusilla's eyes are a deep hazel to match her almost raven hair, her lips are full and she almost always sports an

expression of curiosity and mischievous thoughts (though we suspect that we'd be lucky if those thoughts were only mischievous in nature). She stands around five and a half feet tall and talks in sultry tones with a thick cockney accent (which, oddly, she seemed to have even when living in Dublin before becoming a vampire). Drusilla drapes her body in all forms of finery and has a passion for corsetry, not having to worry about breathing; she takes great pride in sporting a 12" waist on occasion.

Probably the most important thing about Dru is that she is quite insane and loves being that way, but she can also be quite sweet if kept happy.

Background

Born and raised in Dublin, Ireland of Gothic Earth, Drusilla had been given the gift of Second Sight; the ability to see visions, the future and whatever else is beyond. This gift was coveted by a certain vampire, who sired her in an effort to take it for his own dark purposes. However, what he unleashed on the world was far worse than anything that he could ever aspire to be.

Dru traveled the world for a couple centuries, making life interesting for her companions and short for almost everybody else. Accomplishing several misadventures and other deeds dictated by her oftentimes incomprehensible visions, Drusilla was eventually dragged off by the Mists for eviscerating a group of would-be vampire slayers.

Current Sketch

In Ravenloft, Drusilla has found herself the ideal position. Hot and cold running water, a roof over her head, six men to sponge from constantly (who

may almost be as depraved as she is, something that came as a pleasant surprise) and all the comforts she could dream of. All she has to do in return is sit at a desk all day, look busy, shred all the mail that comes in, and make paper dolly chains (something she enjoys anyway).

Combat

Drusilla tends to shy away from combat, using her beguiling appearance and dominating gaze to subdue others. However, if this regular technique fails, she will rely on her magic and claw attacks to rend her opponents asunder. All of Drusilla's special abilities and attacks carry a DC 18 unless otherwise noted.

Create Spawn: All spawn created by Drusilla are full vampires and are not subject to her control. To control these creatures, she must dominate them. For Drusilla to create a spawn, the target must willingly drink of her blood (as well as vice versa) and causes 3d6 damage on Drusilla from blood loss. This damage is not recovered through her Fast Heal ability; only through feeding on victims (damage dealt from feeding is equal to the damage healed on Drusilla).

Dominate: Drusilla's ability to dominate may affect any sentient being, even outsiders, undead, golems, etc. Drusilla has fine-tuned this ability, making it deadlier than those abilities possessed by others of her kind. To reflect this, Drusilla's ability carries a DC 25.

Neck Slice: While holding someone with her dominating gaze, Drusilla may make a coup de grace on her dominated victim. Even if the victim survives the attack, their throat has been slashed by Drusilla's long, razor-like

fingernails and they will continue to lose another 1d6 hp each round from blood loss until the wound is healed or the victim stabilized somehow. Drusilla may also use this form of attack to feed on her victims.

Insanity: Drusilla is absolutely insane from the way she was sired into vampirism. Her mind has little grip on reality at the best of times. At the worst, she will go into long-lasting delusions and see the world as something utterly different. She occasionally claims that she is seeing into other worlds and dimensions. Drusilla's unique mind allows her to automatically pass all Will saves she is called to make. Any madness Check called for contacting her mind has its DC raised by 10.

Visions: Drusilla constantly suffers from visions; this allows her to make a Visions Check (DC 10) whenever she wishes. If she makes this check, she may alter one small factor in the next 12 hours (a dice roll, etc...). If she makes this roll in combat, Drusilla may add or subtract up to 10 from her next dice roll, the next dice roll made against her, or even force a reroll.

Water: Drusilla is not affected by water like other vampires; she frequently bathes and enjoys doing so. In fact, it is sometimes hard to get in the bathroom at the Fraternity mansion due to the fact that she spends at least seven hours a day bathing.

Freya's Strand

This enchanted item is a finely crafted gold chain that is all but invisible to the naked eye except when it reflects light or upon close. The chain is roughly 20 inches in length and is worn about the neck. It is said that the chain is woven from the gold hair of the Norse God Freya, but the actual truth is not known.

While it is worn, the wearer may take on the form of any person of either gender, so long as they are within the same size bracket. However, if worn by a vampire or an invisible creature, the wearer casts a reflection in mirrors (though they do not gain the ability to change appearance). The effects of the strand are not truly magical and may not be detected as such. If a *True Seeing* or similar effect is used on the wearer of the strand, the wearer may make an opposed Will save to avoid their true status being revealed. In Drusilla's case, this saving throw is automatically passed due to her unique mind.

Socko (Dread Sock)

Tiny construct (sybiot): CR 1 or Host +1; Sz t (18"); HD 5D10; hp 32; Init +2; Spd 5 (crawl); AC 14 (+2 size, +2 natural armor); Atk: +5 melee (slam 1D6); SA mind feeding; SQ arm-control, construct traits, sock lore, speak with sock, symbiotic qualities; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 11, Con -, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Ego Score: 12

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (construct lore) +6, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +6, Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +4, Perform (sock-puppet routine) +5.

Languages: Lamordian; Socko can also speak any language known by his host.

When dormant, the being known as Socko appears to be a yellowish-white, woolen sock, roughly 18 inches in length from end to end. The stocking is quite worn and bears a dark black patch at the heel, as well as a hole at the toe. Sewn into the sole of the sock are two

brown buttons. The garment is very old and is rarely washed; as such it possesses a slightly grimy texture and carries an unpleasant odor.

In its active state, Socko is given structure by the hand of its host. The host pushes his or her hand into the sock until his or her hand has reached the toe. There the host is compelled to spread his or her thumb and forefinger, giving the stocking the appearance of a mouth. The button eyes are always orientated upwards from the hand, giving the creature the appearance of eyes. In its waking state the creature known as Socko speaks in a loud, shrill voice similar to that of its host. Keen listeners will notice that the voice, though similar to the host, emanates from the makeshift mouth of the sock, which opens and closes exactly as if it were speaking.

Though nothing more than a sock-puppet, Socko possesses the same manual dexterity as an unhampered hand. Using his mouth, Socko may grip any object, weapon or tool, though doing so prevents him from speaking anything but angry mumbles. Socko possesses control over the arm that wields him and may move and act on his own volition, regardless of his host's wishes. The creature known as Socko may continue to act even should his host be rendered dead or unconscious.

Background

When a call goes out into the darkness, there is no telling what horrors might answer. So it was that an innocent, lonely wish spawned a creature from the shadows. Deep within a dank basement, somewhere beneath the surface, lurked a hideous caliban. Tossed away like so many rags, the disfigured child was disowned by his parents and forced to live in the catacombs beneath their

family estate. In the abyssal solitude of the tunnels, the miserable mutant prayed for a friend to keep him company. Inspired by profound madness, the creature placed a sock upon his hand and began to converse with it. Somehow, something in the darkness heard the pitiful discourse. Whether motivated by the opportunity to spread evil, or some perverse mercy, the sock became instilled with a semblance of life.

Overjoyed with his new companion, the caliban used the extent of his pitiful vocabulary to name him with a befitting title, Socko. Seated upon the left hand of the freak, Socko traveled the hidden corners of the plane, listening to the soundless whispers of the dead and learning secrets that no mortal man could discover. For many years the two lived in the dank depths of the catacombs, exploring the sunless sepulchers and haunting the endless caverns that honeycomb the Core. Yet as time wore on, Socko's intelligence grew, even as its host's simple mind lay stagnant. Upset with its companion's lack of sophistication, Socko became dissatisfied and irritable. Irritation turned to anger, and anger to open hostility. After many months of endless insults and verbal abuse, the poor caliban decided he was happier alone, discarded Socko and went off to live the rest of his life in blissful solitude.

Handless and alone, Socko fell into a state of profound lethargy. It discovered, to its chagrin, that it required mental energy to animate its mind, just as it required a hand to animate its body. For many months the dread sock lay amidst a pile of rubbish, perhaps never to rise again, had it not been for a chance encounter with a beggar. Desperate to warm his frozen hands, the tramp placed this discarded stocking on his hands,

awakening Socko from its torpor. Mad with rejection, Socko unleashed its most devastating tirade, verbally bludgeoning the hapless pauper into submission. The unfortunate beggar became a slave to the parasitic sock, forced to obey its alien will and endure its foul temper.

Purposeless, Socko and its host drifted across the Core, surviving by performing a puppet-show on street corners.

One day, while performing in Ste. Ronges, Socko's puppet show was heckled by a gnome. The dread sock and the inebriated gnome traded insults for an hour before the lush succumbed to his own drunkenness and collapsed. While rooting through his pockets, Socko discovered that his critic possessed great wealth, and rather than let the opportunity slip away, Socko abandoned its filthy host and joined with the wealthy gnome. Little did it know that it had attached itself to Ambrose Skully, the infamous author, scholar of the arcane, and member of the Fraternity of Shadows.

Current Sketch

As soon as Skully awoke, Socko attacked with a barrage of insults, hoping to subdue its new host. Unfortunately for the dread sock, the shameless gnome proved immune to criticism and broke the garment's spell. Socko might have been cast off again, had the gnomish bard not recognized him as an arcane curiosity. For many months, the agents of the Fraternity attempted to interrogate the sock to learn of its origins. The garment resisted all efforts, reducing more than one victim to madness. Eventually a deal was struck; the dread sock would serve the Fraternity in exchange for a host.

Socko now serves as a monitoring device; it is affixed to rebellious members of the Fraternity as a means of punishing them for disobedience and maintaining a constant vigil over their actions. Currently the sock has been reunited with its former host, being saddled with monitoring Ambrose Skully and supervising the "drying out" of the alcoholic author. The gnome and sock make a wicked combination, spreading pain, misery and insults wherever they go.

Combat

Being a parasite, Socko has no fear of injury in combat. In fact, Socko enjoys baiting potential enemies, if only to vex its host. In battle, Socko can prove surprisingly helpful, attacking on its own or using the Aid Another Action.

Arm Control (su): Socko binds to a host by grafting to an arm. Once grafted, it cannot be removed except by severing the limb or by persuading it to leave on its own accord. Unlike normal symbiots (if indeed there is such a thing), Socko retains control over the arm to which it is grafted, whether or not it possesses dominion over the host. The host loses the use of the arm, but Socko may use the arm to attack at its own base attack bonus, defend the host with a shield, assist the host with an Aid Another Action, or work at any task that can be accomplished with one hand (such as writing with a quill). The host does not suffer the normal penalties to dexterity checks or skill checks associated with the loss of an arm.

Construct Traits: Socko is immune to disease, fear, horror, madness, mind influencing effects, poison or similar effects. Socko is not subject to critical hits, energy drain,

subdual damage or death from massive damage.

Mind Drain (su): Socko sustains its existence by feeding off of the self-esteem of its host. At the start of every day, Socko must deal its host 1 point of temporary charisma damage. At the end of each day, the host normally heals 1 point of ability damage, and in this manner survives, if at a slight disability. Draining in this manner causes Socko to heal 1D8 hit points.

Sock Lore (su): As a dread sock, Socko has access to the collective knowledge of all footwear. Using sock lore, Socko may make a Bardic Knowledge check as a bard of fifth level, modified by its intelligence. Any such checks are modified by a +5 bonus if the information is related in some manner to footwear. The only restriction on the use of this ability is divining the location of lost socks. As a stocking, Socko refuses to betray the confidence of its fellow footwear and will never discuss the secret sock burial ground, the location to where all lost socks disappear.

Speak with Sock (su): Socko has the ability to communicate with any type of footwear, as a druid might use the spell Stone Tell. Using this ability, Socko may commune telepathically with anklets, boots, sandals, shoes, socks, stockings or any other type of footwear.

Through this communication Socko may learn anything that occurred near the target; including where the target has been and what the wearer of the target was doing while wearing the target garment.

Symbiotic Qualities (ex):
Damage; Socko never takes damage from an attack directed at his host. To receive damage, an attacker must direct the attack at Socko, at the cost of an attack of opportunity from Socko's host. Socko uses the host's dexterity bonus instead of its own, and gains any deflection bonus applied to the host.

Ego; Whenever the personalities of Socko and its host conflict, it may make an attempt to possess its host. The host must succeed against a will save against Socko's ego score to retain control. If the save succeeds the victim retains control of his or her body, but if Socko succeeds, it assumes dominance over the host's body for one day, or until a major event. At a major event, or after twenty four hours, the host may attempt another save.

Share Spells; Any spell the host casts upon him or herself (including those with the target "you") affect the symbiot. Such spells affect the symbiot, even if they do not normally affect constructs.

Perilous Pursuits

Fraternity of Shadows

By Nathan "Dmitri" Okerlund & Jason "Javier" True

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Nigel sat down and calmly placed both of his hands in his lap. He took a deep breath and slowly exhaled as the three shadowy figures sitting across the table from him, spoke in hushed tones. A drop of sweat slowly trickled down his forehead, but Nigel refused to wipe it away. He was extremely nervous, but it would be a mistake to show that he was not a master of his own emotions. No, he needed to thoroughly impress his peers if he was going to be accepted into the next level of the organization.

"And how long did you study this phenomenon?" the figure on the left asked in a deep and resounding voice which broke the looming silence.

"Every month for an entire year," Nigel responded in a slow but determined tone. "The first two times lead me to question just how likely it was that such an incident would reoccur, and I wanted to verify my results as being both precise and accurate."

"And are you now convinced?" the figure on the right asked as it flipped through a pile of notes that Nigel had presented. The black-gloved hand seemed to barely touch the parchment, yet each sheet casually flipped aside to show the next one beneath.

"I am," announced Nigel as another drop of sweat crept down his face and tickled at his cheek.

"Very well," the center figure added in its dry and raspy voice. "We will discuss your presentation, Brother

Nigel, and provide you with our decision tomorrow night. You are free to leave."

Nigel stood and nodded to each of the mysterious figures sitting at the opposite side of the table. Lifting his case of notes and papers, the young wizard stepped out of the dark room and into the hallway. Closing the door behind him, Nigel let out a soft sigh as a smile slowly crept across his face. The presentation had gone better than he expected, and he would be an Honored Brother by this time tomorrow night. Wiping the perspiration from his face, Nigel left the manoir and went home to rest for his upcoming promotion.

The Fraternity of Shadows began as a small group of mystics, philosophers, and scholars at the University of Il Aluk. It has since become one of the principal secret societies of the Demiplane of Dread. By their mental training and their mastery of the magical arts, they hope to create a new world in their image. In fact, although they would not admit to this, their goal is nothing less than overthrowing the Dark Powers and becoming the new masters of Ravenloft. The odds of this goal coming to fruition are anybody's guess, but the Fraternity has proven remarkably successful at collecting information on the Demiplane and its inhabitants.

The members of the Fraternity of Shadows are motivated by the principles that they can create reality by mental

effort and that only the mental is truly real. Hence, most members focus on illusions, which are the most mentally oriented of the arts. They believe that only an awakened mind, freed from the “illusions” of physical reality, can create a real world. They also believe that only the members of the Fraternity have “awakened” minds. Consequently, all persons who are not members of the Fraternity of Shadows are regarded as semi-intelligent animals of which can be manipulated, altered, or disposed.

The members of the Fraternity refer to the physical world as “Shadow” and take their name from the fact that they are, as they see it, bound in physical form and seeking release from Shadow into Enlightenment, which is the purely mental state that they believe the Fathers and Exalted Brothers have achieved.

Fraternity of Shadows

Most members of the Fraternity of Shadows are wizards, and many of these wizards are illusionists. Wizards may specialize in nearly any of the various schools of magic, although the practice of necromancy is strictly prohibited within the organization. In addition to this, the organization tends to look skeptically upon the less mentally inclined areas such as evocation and transmutation. Divinations and enchants are more favorable studies, but only wizards specializing in illusions are able to reach the highest positions within the Fraternity.

Other arcane spellcasters are able to join as well, but they tend to be much less common in the institution than wizards. The Fraternity of Shadows tends to focus heavily upon studying and learning, which tends to go against the principles of sorcerers and bards.

However, if the proper criteria are met, even these classes can become Brothers.

Hit Die: d4

Requirements

To qualify to become a member of the Fraternity of Shadows (fos), a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

Alignment: Neutral evil

Skills: Knowledge (arcane) 8 ranks, Knowledge (Ravenloft) 8 ranks

Spells: Ability to cast arcane spells of 2nd level or higher.

Special: Only illusionists are allowed to pass beyond seventh level, and necromancers are forbidden from taking any levels in this prestige class.

Special: Anyone wishing to gain a level in the Fraternity of Shadows must make some major presentation to a group of his peers that shows some new insight into the Demiplane of Dread. He must receive the approval of at least three members of a title higher than his own to earn this promotion. (For example, a wizard wishing to go from 2nd to 3rd level in the Fraternity of Shadows is gaining a level as a Brother of the order and must gain the approval of at least three other members with the ranking of Honored Brother or higher.)

Level	Title
1 st	Initiate
2 nd	Brother
3 rd	
4 th	Honored Brother
5 th	
6 th	Esteemed Brother
7 th	
8 th	Exalted Brother
9 th	
10 th	Father

Class Skills

The Fraternity of Shadows class skills (and key ability for each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Innuendo (Wis), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill points at each level: 2 + Int. Modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Fraternity of Shadows prestige class:

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Brothers of the Fraternity of Shadows prestige class are skilled with the club, dagger, heavy crossbow, light crossbow, and quarterstaff. Brothers are not proficient with any type of armor or shields. Armor of any type interferes with movements, which can cause his spells to fail (if those spells have somatic components). Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

Spell per Day/Spells Known: A Brother of the Fraternity of Shadows continues to train in arcane magic. Thus, when a new Fraternity of Shadows level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in an arcane spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (metamagic or item creation feats, and so on). This essentially means that he adds the level of Fraternity of Shadows to the level of some other arcane spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day,

spells known, and caster level accordingly.

Lore of the Fraternity (Ex): A Brother automatically gains 1 bonus rank in Knowledge (Ravenloft) and 1 bonus rank in any one other Knowledge skill of the Brother's choice for every level he attains in the Fraternity of Shadows prestige class.

Sigil Ring (Sp): At 1st-level, the Brother Initiate receives a silver ring that allows him to cast the spell *deeper darkness* three times per day as a free action. This ring will not function for any other person and is the symbol of his membership in the Fraternity.

Bonus Feats (Ex): The Brother gains a bonus feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 9th levels. These feats must be chosen from the following list: Iron Will, Skill Focus (only from Fraternity of Shadows class skill list), Spell Focus, Spell Mastery, Spell Penetration, or any metamagic feat.

Slippery Mind (Ex): At 5th-level, the Honored Brother of the Fraternity has reached a degree of mental conditioning that allows him the chance to avoid the mental enthrallments of others. If a Brother with a slippery mind is affected by an enchantment and fails his saving throw, one round later he can attempt his saving throw again. He only gets one extra chance to succeed at his saving throw.

Mental Shadow (Su): At 8th-level, the Exalted Brother of the Fraternity of Shadows gains the ability to temporarily dissociate mind and body. This process creates a mental shadow separate from the host body. The mental shadow, which can move and act as the Brother, possesses certain advantages and drawbacks. Activating this ability takes five full minutes of uninterrupted concentration.

The mental shadow functions as a psychic projection of the Exalted Brother's mind into the ethereal plane, and is therefore incorporeal, able to become visible or invisible at will, and walk through structures with an ethereal resonance of one. Only enchanted weapons or spells can harm the mental shadow; it has hit points, natural armor class, and movement rates equal to that of the Exalted Brother. It can manipulate physical objects of ten pounds or less, open normal doors, and other basic functions. It casts spells normally.

Equipment: The Exalted Brother using this ability can create the shadow equivalent of one pound of equipment per point of Wisdom. This ability allows him to equip his mental shadow with clothes, spell components, and so forth. Any item so "created" must be physically present with the wizard when he creates the mental shadow of himself.

Duration: Theoretically, the Exalted Brother may remain outside of his body for any length of time. However, there are two practical limitations to this power. First, while the mental shadow is separated from the body, the body remains in a comatose state. The body can live without water for as long as five days, due to decreased metabolism, but it will eventually expire. Death of the physical body transforms the mental shadow into a 2nd-magnitude ghost forever. Second, the Exalted Brother may only remain outside his body for a number of hours equal to his Wisdom score before he runs a chance of failing a Madness check upon returning to his body. The difficulty of the Madness check equals one percent per additional hour after he passes the mark. (For example, if a Brother with a Wisdom score of 15 remains outside his

body for 24 hours, he has a 9% chance of failing a Madness check on returning to his body).

Frequency of Use: The Exalted Brother using this ability must rest six hours for every hour that he spent in the mental shadow form. He can undertake some activity, but the activity cannot be exerting or spellcasting. If he does not rest, all his arcane spells have an additional 10% chance of failure due to the mental fatigue. He cannot reenter the mental shadow form until he gets adequate rest.

Drawbacks: The Exalted Brother using this ability runs several risks. If the mental shadow takes damage equal to the Brother's total hit points, then he automatically fails his Madness save and cannot use this ability again for 3-6 months. In addition, the Exalted Brother using his ability has no control over what is happening to his body while his consciousness is elsewhere. If his body hears loud noises, gets shaken, or is otherwise disturbed, then it will alert his consciousness that something is wrong. He must return to his body in some "normal" way (walking, teleporting, etc.) in order to determine what exactly is occurring. Use of this ability may, therefore, place the Exalted Brother in a very vulnerable position.

Shadowform (Su): A Father of the Fraternity of Shadows has achieved true mastery of mind over body. At will, as a full-round action, he is able to merge his physical body with the mystical energies from the ethereal plane.

In his shadowy state, a Father of the Fraternity appears misty, incorporeal, and translucent. He can become visible or invisible at will. He can travel in any direction, even up or down (albeit at half normal speed) and move through solid objects. The Father of the Fraternity

gains damage reduction 10/+1 while in his shadowform, although he cannot physically attack material creatures. Any spells he casts while shadowy, however, have their normal effect on physical objects and creatures.

A Father of the Fraternity no longer ages, is immune to poisons, and is not subject to bodily illness (including supernatural diseases such as mummy rot). However, this immunity does not apply to the disease-like curses such as lycanthrope.



The Fraternity of Shadows

Level	Base Attack	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	<i>Special</i>	Spells per Day
1 st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Lore of Fraternity, Sigil ring	+1 caster level
2 nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Lore of Fraternity, Bonus feat	+1 caster level
3 rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Lore of Fraternity	+1 caster level
4 th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Lore of Fraternity, Bonus feat	+1 caster level
5 th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Lore of Fraternity, Slippery mind	+1 caster level
6 th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Lore of Fraternity, Bonus feat	+1 caster level
7 th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Lore of Fraternity	+1 caster level
8 th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Lore of Fraternity, Mental shadow	+1 caster level
9 th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Lore of Fraternity, Bonus feat	+1 caster level
10 th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Lore of Fraternity, Shadowform	+1 caster level

The Show Must Go On

The Weeping Rose Actor Society

By Uri "Shadowking" Barak

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The Weeping Rose Actor Society is a vile society which provides its special services to a select group of clients. In Ravenloft's "enlightened" domains, rich nobles and merchants spend their lives in the pursuit of pleasure while the poor drown in hardship and filth. Through their hedonistic lifestyle, a few of these rich men and women have become so jaded that nothing excites them anymore or causes them pleasure. The Weeping Rose offers them the ultimate thrill - watching a life snuffed away.

Operating in Port-a-Lucine, Lechberg and Martira Bay, the Society performs shows of utter depravity including the torture and murder of victims. The Society's psychotic killers have become stars within the small audience. Indeed, their fans would pay a fortune to watch their favored actor "doing his thing". Those who attend these dark gatherings wear cloaks and crooked masks to hide their identities, for they are all respected members of society. The Weeping Rose Society also performs private shows in clients' houses and even allows the host to take part in the vile actions themselves- for the right price.

The victims are picked from amongst the most unfortunate and desperate; mostly junkies and poor young actors and actresses who are offered a chance to perform "the show of their lives". The victims are always poor peasants, thus no one notices or cares

about their disappearances. In the rare case someone takes notice, the Society silences any witnesses through its most powerful weapons: Bribes, connections and an army of thugs.

History

The founder of the Weeping Rose is Fabian Depierro, a frustrated, formerly well-respected playwright from Dementlieu. Seven years ago he was the rising star in Port-a-Lucine's theatrical scene, writing no less than 5 highly-successful plays. Eventually Fabian was given the funding to direct his own play. After months of hard work, nearly all of Port-a-Lucine's elite went to see the aspiring director.

Much to everyone's surprise, the play was a complete fiasco. Indeed, more than half the audience left it in the middle, demanding a refund. Described by critics as "a masterpiece of bad taste and cheap melodrama", Depierro became the laughing stock of Port-a-Lucine's thespians and nobility. After two shows, the play was cancelled. Depierro was thrown out of the Theatre, never to be given a second chance. Shame, poverty and rage caused Depierro to snap.

For nearly a year, Depierro roamed Port-a-Lucine's crime-ridden slums, wallowing in madness and despair. Developing an addiction to Mushroom Powder, Depierro spent most of his time in hallucinations in which he was the almighty director lording over an entire

theatrical universe. Then, in his dementia, he came to a solution for his wretched state and an opportunity to show his greatness to those who would appreciate it.

Many of those who had money were motivated by a new desire for pleasure. Yet these hedonists quickly experienced all the pleasures their money could provide and became jaded and bored. Depierro sought to provide them with a new thrill, the play of life and death. He knew his possible clients would pay handsomely for the ultimate power to take life.

During his life amongst criminals in the slums, Depierro came to know Martin Tyber, the ruthless leader of a gang of thugs. The playwright came to Tyber with his business offer which could turn them both into rich men. In return, he asked Tyber to provide him with his network thugs and drug dealers to serve as muscle, recruiters and kidnappers of victims for his shows of horror. The greedy thug immediately agreed and thus the backbone of the Weeping Rose Actor Society was founded. Tyber also introduced Depierro to Radiann La'Temple, a masterful con-artist and a devout worshipper of the Demon Graz'zt who could provide them with the connections they needed amongst Port-a-Lucine's nobles so that they might "advertise" their services.

Though Depierro had a stage crew, his victims and even a theatre, he lacked stars; main actors to lead his show. Traveling through the Core's worst prisons and asylums, Depierro hand-picked a crew of sadists and bribed their way to freedom. In return, these men became his stars, sating their perversions on the poor victims in front of the

enthralled audience. Thus, the Weeping Rose Actor Society was complete.

In the six years since then, the Weeping Rose has become the hottest name in the world of underground thrills. The Society even spread its activities to two other domains, Darkon and Borca, and had performed many private shows in Ivan Dilisnya's estate of Degravno. They are also considering expanding to Richemulot. As the money of the corrupt flows into the three villains' pockets and Depierro writes and directs increasingly more horrifying shows to sate his clients' desires. The demented playwright still dreams of the day he will make his triumphant return to Port-a-Lucine's theatres and receive worship his genius deserves.

Primary Alignment

Members of the Weeping Rose are predominantly chaotic evil and many are downright psychotic. Their selfish desires for wealth and material lusts have long since consumed any morality or respect for human life. Neutral evil members are also common, especially amongst the organization's thug ring. Such members don't revel in their vile actions but simply see them as the means for greater wealth and power. Generally, it can be said most of the higher echelon and all the four stars are psychopaths and perverts while the lower ranks such as the thugs and recruiters are simply greedy and don't ask questions as long as they get paid.

Organization

The Weeping Rose Actor Society is divided into three branches; security run by Tyber, Recruitment overseen by La'Temple and Direction, handled by Depierro. The Security Branch is the

largest, and is composed of Tyber's gangs of thugs. They are tasked with protecting the Society's bases, guarding the imprisoned victims until their execution, capturing new victims from the poor denizens of the streets and silencing escapees. While Tyber's branch also dabbles in drug dealing, thugs on duties are ordered to stay sober under threat of death.

The Recruitment Branch is composed of shrewd and charismatic men and women, all of whom are hand-picked by Radiann La'Temple from the cultists of Graz'zt. Their main duty is infiltrating social gatherings and finding the right clients who would appreciate Depierro's art. Their other missions include bribing the authorities and the blackmail of Society clients, whose elevated social status often allows them to bend the law to their will. As well, these recruiters are tasked with infiltrating theatres and luring poor young actors (whom Depierro prefers above all victim types) with promises of wealth and "the show of their lives".

The Direction branch is the smallest and is composed of Depierro himself and his four psychotic stars. The mad playwright conceives devious new spectacles which the stars perform on stage.

There is some internal strife between the Security and Recruitment branches. Recruiters look down on thugs as mindless brutes, while the thugs see Recruiters as weak-bodied Demon worshippers. Both groups recognize the Direction branch as dangerous, psychotic madmen and greatly fear them.

Beyond the orders of their leaders, the Weeping Rose has but two other laws. Firstly, all members must preserve the secret of their vile organization,

under the threat of a torturous demise. Secondly, no member of the Weeping Rose may rescue one of the chosen victims unless they supply a life to be snuffed in exchange. Referred by the members as "A life for a life", the law is rarely invoked.

Beliefs

Most of those who work for the Weeping Rose do so out of sheer, cynical greed. Many deny the existence of Gods, for the organization's actions are opposed to the doctrines of most religions. Depierro himself believes in nothing save the superiority of his Art, and mocks the Gods by designing his shows in mockery of religious rites. The sole exceptions to this atheism and selfish uncaring are the men who serve Radiann La'Temple and worship the Demon Prince Graz'zt, Prince of Lust. They revel in their own corruption and see the Society's actions as the natural state of things.

Recognition

As a secret society, Weeping Rose members must keep a low profile, for even their bribes and connections will not save their hides once proof of their existence is brought to the light. As a sign of recognition, staff and clients of the Weeping Rose Actor Society carry a white card with the Society's symbol- the gold-and-white mask of an Angel with rosy cheeks, crying a single gold tear.

To guarantee entry into one of the Society's hideouts, one must show the Card and speak a password, which changes before every show. La'Temple's agents give clients the correct password a few hours before the show begins. In addition, each of the five members of the Direction branch wears a distinct mask.

Depierro's face is hidden by the visage of the Weeping Rose, thus "the Weeping Rose" is the name by which lower members know him.

Base of Operations

The Weeping Rose has several bases of operation, located in the cities of Port-a-Lucine, Martira Bay and Lechberg. While the Society's first theatre is located in Port-a-Lucine, their largest and most complex hideout is within Borca, in close proximity to Degravno, the estate of their prominent client Ivan Dilisnya. Following its success, the Society's leaders have considered setting up base in Pont-a-Museau, Richemulot. They have several hideouts in each of the three cities where they are present and constantly move between them. All Weeping Rose hideouts appear to be ordinary buildings, albeit abandoned and run-down. The Society's thugs constantly patrol the outside and interior of the building to keep unwanted visitors out. During the nights the Society performs, thug presence doubles and patrols become much more intense. A guard force of 1d4 +1 thugs stands at the entrance and will only allow entry to those who show a white entrance card and give the password.

Upon entry, clients may rent a crooked mask and a thick, hooded robe to hide their identity. These voyeurs may also buy from a wide selection of drugs to enrich the experience. The interior of a Weeping Rose establishment is designed to appear much like any theatre in the League of Four, with several grim differences; there are no seats and the stage is smeared with blood stains and bits of human flesh and bone, despite the fact it is cleaned regularly. At the backstage lie

the warehouses for the props, the manager's office and the cells where the victims and the more unstable stars are held. A Weeping Rose base is typically a 1st or 2nd rank Sinkhole of Evil due to the repeated acts of torture and murder performed within it.

Each base is overseen by a different leader who owes an apartment in the same city. Tyber leads in Port-a-Lucine, La'Temple is responsible for Martira Bay while Depierro spends most of his time at Lechberg. Each of the bases was altered to fit its leader's whims. The Martira Bay base contains a shrine to Graz'zt, while the Lechberg base's cellar has a wooden maze where victims are being hunted by one of the stars, with the crowd watching through numerous peepholes to their satisfaction.

Membership

Tyber, La'Temple and Depierro each recruit for their different branches, for they all seek different qualities in their minions. Tyber values mostly strength and a minimal thinking ability and makes recruitments from the stocks of amoral criminals, thugs and thieves. La'Temple seeks personal charisma, cunning and connections in his agents; his main recruitment stock comes from the Society's debauched clients. Depierro handpicks his Stars at dens of human scum such as prisons and asylums for the Criminally Insane. At present, the Actor Society has 66 imprisoned victims and 51 staff members; 35 thugs, 11 Recruiters and 5 Stars.

Thugs are typically Warriors, Fighters or Rogues; Recruiters are usually Aristocrats, Rogues or Bards while Direction crew members come from a variety of backgrounds and occupations as varied as their mental

dementia. Besides the Star known as Jade, the Society has no powerful spellcasters (even the fanatical La'Temple is not a Cleric) and archives its goals through non-magical means, such as addicting lower members to rare drugs and ensuring their loyalty by providing them with constant supply. Nearly all members are human or Caliban males, but the Recruiters and Direction crew include few females.

Requirements to Join:

No one actively seek to join the Weeping Rose Actor Society, say their playthings. The Society's three leaders are responsible for the recruitment of new members from the different stocks they associate with. Generally, it can be said the Society as a whole seeks new employees who are ruthless, greedy and don't ask too many questions. Members of the Weeping Rose Actor Society are either Neutral Evil or Chaotic Evil. Only the truly Evil would serve such a vile organization and the many illegal activities performed by the Society alienates them from Lawful characters.

Members of the Security branch must be 2nd level or higher, have a Strength score of at least 12 and 2 or more ranks in the Intimidate skill. Members of the Recruitment branch must be of 3rd level or higher, have a Charisma score of at least 12 and 3 or more ranks in the Bluff skill. Finally, Members of the Direction branch must be 6th level or higher and have an appropriate criminal record. Other than these, members can be of any race, sex or class as long as they possess the necessary personality and abilities required to join one of the three branches.

Secrets

The mere existence of the Weeping Rose is a secret known only to a few across Ravenloft's Core. There is no way such a menagerie of villains could not exist without much intrigue and plotting from within. Here are the main intrigues, dread possibilities and secrets tied to the Weeping Rose:

- ❖ While the Weeping Rose is hidden from the public eye, the Darklords of all 3 domains they are currently operating in are all aware of its existence, yet they do not act against it. They simply care nothing about the harm it brings to their subjects, especially since it is usually the poor and useless who comprise the Society's victims. Both Azalin and Dominic have spies and secret informants within the organization, but they are currently dormant and will remain so as long as the Society does not attempt to gain actual political power. In the domain of Borca, the Weeping Rose actually enjoys governmental protection of a sort because the Darklord Ivan Dilisnya is one of their favored clients.
- ❖ Depierro is supremely convinced in his control over the Society. Unsurprisingly, he is terribly wrong. While Tyber and the Security Branch are loyal to him, La'Temple, tired of his position as a lackey, constantly plots the assassination of Depierro and his own take-over of the Society. Under him, it would undergo a transformation into a full-fledged Cult of Graz'zt, which will take a more active position in the Core's politics. Luckily for Depierro, La'Temple needs the co-operation of

either the Security branch or the Stars to be successful in his plan, and these two branches are both loyal to him, for the moment.

- ❖ The most unstable Stars of the Direction branch are bound to Depierro's will through doses of Borrowed Time, provided to him by the fellow art-lover Ivan Dilisnya. Depierro doesn't know the venom's creation method and is dependant on Ivan for its limited supplies. He mistakenly believes such drastic measures do not need to be taken with the other leaders.
- ❖ Depierro is currently working on a remake of the play that originally resulted in his expulsion from the Port-a-Lucine theatre. He is sparing nothing for his ultimate life's work, devoting the entirety of his time and wealth to it. Word is spreading in the underground community of the upcoming play, as more and more people are kidnapped off the streets to feed the playwright's demented vision.

Fabian Depierro "The Weeping Rose"

Male Human Expert 9: CR 8; Medium-size Humanoid (Human) (5 ft. 2 in. tall) HD 9d6 + 9 HP 50 Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30. ft. AC 14 Atk +8/+3 melee (1d4 19-20/x2, +2 Dagger) or +6/+1 ranged (1d10/x3, Pistol) SQ Addiction AL CE SV Fort +4 Ref +5 Will +5; Str 11 Dex 14 Con 12 Int 17 Wis 9 Cha 15

Skills and Feats: Bluff +9, Gather Information +13, Hypnosis +15, Intimidate +13, Innuendo +10, Knowledge (Local) +12, Knowledge

(Religion) +10, Perform (Acting) +12, Profession (Playwright) +20, Speak Language +4 (Balok, Darkonese, Falkovnian, Lamordian); Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Open Mind, Muse, Skill Focus (Profession-Playwright)

Languages: Balok, Darkonese, Falkovnian, Lamordian, Mordentish

Signature Possessions: +2 Dagger ("Quill"), Weeping Rose Mask (see below), Pistol, 7 mushroom powder doses

This man is small and unassuming, though he is wearing relatively luxurious clothes. Suddenly, he places a creepy doll mask on his face and madness flickers in his eyes. He speaks only a single sentence "Let the show begin!"

Fabian Depierro is the demented mind behind the Weeping Rose Actor Society. Depierro is utterly mad; a psychotic megalomaniac of the worst kind. He views life as a grand show, and himself as the playwright, a god who decides life and death at the swing of a quill. He is convinced that his is the ultimate entertainer, the one genius who helps those willing to cross the line and indulge their true lusts for pain and death. Depierro always wears his Weeping Rose mask inside the Society's compounds, only removing it while in the presence of the other two leaders.

Combat

Depierro avoids combat altogether, leaving it to Tyber and his men or his own crew of deadly Stars. Though he is armed with a dagger and a pistol for self-defense, he is an artist, not a warrior. Depierro will always attempt to flee or bluff his way out of combat rather than do battle himself. The sole exceptions to

this are the people who criticize Depierro's genius work; if Depierro is insulted enough, he will snap and attack the critic himself.

Addiction (Ex): Depierro is heavily addicted to Mushroom Powder. For every day he goes without taking a dose of Mushroom Powder he must pass a Fort save DC 36 or suffer 1d8 points of Dex damage, 1d8 Wis damage, 1d6 Con damage and 1d6 Str damage. The playwright is completely dependant on the drug for his daily life.

Weeping Rose Mask: This gold and white mask is shaped in the form of a Cherubic child crying a tear of gold. It confers a +2 Deflection bonus to the wearer's Armor Class and allows him or her to use Sorrow as a spell-like ability 5 times per day as a 5th level Sorcerer. The creation and use of this item draw Powers Checks.

Caster Level: 5th; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *Mage Armor*, *Sorrow*, an Innocent child's tear shed in sorrow; Market Price: 7500 gp Weight: 1 lb.

Martin Tyber

Male Human Fighter 7/Rogue 5:
CR 12; Medium-size Humanoid (Human) (6 ft. 2 in. tall) HD 7d10 + 5d6 + 28 HP 112 Init +3 (Dex) Spd 30 ft. AC 20 Atk +17/+12 melee (1d6 +6 +1 Vile 19-20/x2 +2 Vile, +2 Vile Sickle) plus +15/+10 melee (1d6 +5 +1d6 Unholy 19-20/x2 +2d6 Unholy, +1 Unholy Sickle) or +10/+5 ranged (1d10/x3, Masterwork Pistol) SA Sneak Attack +3d6 SQ Evasion, Failed Powers Check, Lost Ear, Uncanny Dodge AL NE SV Fort Fort +8 Ref +9 Will +4; Str 18 Dex 17 Con 14 Int 13 Wis 12 Cha 12

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +8, Appraise +13, Bluff +6, Climb +6, Disable Device +8, Gather Information +12, Hide +7, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (Local) +12, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +10, Sense Motive +10; Ambidexterity, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Improved Critical (Sickle), Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (Sickle)

Languages: Balok, Mordentish

Signature

Possessions:

Masterwork Chain Shirt, +2 Vile Sickle ("Ruin"), +1 Unholy Sickle ("Wrath"), Ring of Protection +2, Masterwork Pistol, 20 bullets

This man is bald and muscular. He wears utilitarian yet high-quality clothes and it is obvious he wears some manner of armor beneath them. Countless scars and tattoos betray a criminal past and twin sickles shine menacingly at his side. This is obviously someone you don't want to mess with.

Martin Tyber is the head of the Weeping Rose Security branch and the most experienced member of the organization. Born on Port-a-Lucine's worst slums, Martin realized from an early age that he had to be utterly selfish and merciless in order to survive. He performed his first act of thievery at the mere age of 5, and his first murder at the age of 11, stabbing another street urchin for some minor insult. Tyber even abandoned his disease-wracked mother when she became too much of a burden for him. Through a combination of brute strength, intimidation and cunning, Tyber formed one of the largest and most powerful gangs in Port-a-Lucine.

With his sense for seizing opportunities, he recognized the

potential in the fledgling drug industry and became Port-a-Lucine's major drug lord. In addition to narcotics, Tyber's gang dabbled in fencing, extortions and the occasional armed robbery. Unsurprisingly, Tyber's rise to power wasn't smooth. He had numerous run-ins with rival criminals and the law, costing him his left ear and several good years in jail. Even still, Tyber had become quite wealthy, though not enough to leave the slums.

Three years ago one, the former playwright Fabian Depierro came to him with a promising business offer. The fruit of this unholy pact was the formation of the Weeping Rose Society. Despite his position of power and relative intelligence, Martin Tyber is still a criminal and a thug at heart. Utterly ruthless and remorseless, he is motivated by a sick sense of greed. Suffering both poverty and imprisonment, he vowed never to return there and constantly strives for the top. Tyber views all other people as disposable pawns in his rise to wealth and power; he takes lives as it suits his interest. He is relatively silent and is not prone to powerful bursts of emotion but still exudes an aura of threat.

Combat

At the present, Martin Tyber leaves combat to his underlings. His fighting style combines a Fighter's brutality with the Rogue's finesse. Typically, Tyber weakens foes with pistol shots before wading into melee combat with Wrath and Ruin. His combined Power and Sneak Attacks are especially devastating.

Failed Powers Check (Su): Tyber's merciless cruelty brought the Dark Powers' attention upon him. His skin became like iron, granting Damage

Reduction 2/tempered metal. However, every 7th night Tyber suffers a terrible Nightmare (as the spell) where his diseased mother comes back to drag his screaming shape into the Underworld. He never told anyone of this weakness, and started resorting to his own drugs to ease his growing sense of guilt- a critical mistake for a drug-lord.

Lost Ear (Ex): Tyber had lost his right ear and suffers a -2 penalty to Listen checks.

Radiann La'Temple

Male Human Aristocrat 3/Rogue 7:
CR 10; Medium-size Humanoid (Human) (5 ft. 9 in. tall) HD 3d8 + 7d6
HP 56 Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative) Spd 30 ft. AC 16 Atk +11/+6 melee (1d6 +2 18-20/x2, +1 Fleshgrinding Rapier) SA Sneak Attack +4d6 SQ Evasion, Failed Powers Checks, Uncanny Dodge AL CE SV Fort +3 Ref +9 Will +4; Str 12 Dex 17 Con 10 Int 16 Wis 13 Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +13, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +6, Disguise +12, Forgery +13, Gather Information +8, Hide +8, Knowledge (Religion) +12, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +6, Pick Pocket +10, Search +10, Sense Motive +14, Use Magic Device +10; Dark Speech, Improved Initiative, Thrall to Demon (Graz'zt), Weapon Finesse

Languages: Abyssal, Darkonian, Dark Speech, Falkovnian, Mordentish

Signature Possessions: +1 Fleshgrinding Rapier ("Scorn"), Masterwork Studded Leather Armor

With a smirk, he turns towards you. His face is beautiful and a long blonde ponytail dangles behind his head. This handsome man is wearing the fashionable garb of a Dementlieu

nobleman, though you notice the faint signs of protective armor under his clothes. At his side rests an ornate, jewel studded rapier, and you suspect it's more than just for show.

Radiann La'Temple is the charismatic leader of the Recruitment branch. Radiann was originally born in Richemulot under another name to rich merchant parents who spoiled their child. Out of boredom, extreme selfishness and spite for his "weak" parents, young Radiann started performing minor acts of thievery and mischief, always blaming them on someone else. While his parents knew of his misdeeds, they chose to ignore the truth rather than admit their failure. However, at the age of 12 the truth blew up in their face, after Radiann was caught playing a shameful game with one of the servant staff's boys. To hide their disgrace Radiann's parents sent him to a Criminal Institute.

In that harsh environment, Radiann wholly embraced Evil, learning the subtle arts of thievery, forgery and con-artistry from the other inmates and coming into the worship of Graz'zt, Demon Prince of Shadow and Lust. He also performed his first murder there, out of sheer curiosity as to how it felt to take another man's life. He quite liked it, but not as much as the more subtle arts of deception and theft.

After his release for good behavior he shocked Richemuloise high society with a number of unexplained, masterfully-conducted crimes. Radiann eluded capture and escaped the Constabulary into nearby Dementlieu, where he adopted his current name and infiltrated Port-a-Lucine's nobility.. With his charming personality and gift for disguise Radiann lived in their midst like

a parasite, attending their galas to sate his desire for wealth and sex. From their noble ranks he formed a small Cult dedicated to his darksome patron Graz'zt. At that time, he also came to know Martin Tyber, having used his network of fencers countless times to buy and sell stolen goods. When Tyber came to him with a business offer Radiann gleefully joined the Weeping Rose Actor Society for the glory of the Dark Prince. Ever since, he used his connections, charm and wits to lure countless poor men and women to their doom as the Weeping Rose's victims.

Combat

Radiann shuns combat, viewing it as crude and beneath him. He is almost never alone; always surrounded by a select band of bodyguards from both the Security and Recruitment branches. When forced into battle Radiann prefers to attack with a combination of speed and stealth, using allies to flank opponents and utilize his Sneak Attack to its fullest potential.

Failed Powers Checks (Su):

Leading a life of sin, Radiann had already failed two Powers Checks. He had grown a sixth finger (+2 to Pick Pocket skill) and can see in both mundane and magical darkness. However, he suffers a -2 penalty to Search and Spot checks in daylight and those gazing into his eyes for more than 3 rounds see nothing but creeping shadows, forcing victims to make a Fear Check against a DC of 10. Radiann views these alterations as gifts from his patron Graz'zt, unaware other Dark Powers.

Minotaur

Male Caliban (Brute) Barbarian 8: CR 8; Large Humanoid (Caliban) (8 ft. 1. in. tall) HD 8d12 + 24 HP 112 Init +1 (Dex) Spd 40 ft. AC 14 Atk +13/+8 (1d6 +7 16-20/x4, +1 Keen Heavy Pick) SA Rage 3/day SQ Deformities (Deranged, Giant, Rough Skin), Fast Movement, Sadist, Uncanny Dodge AL CE SV Fort +9 Ref +4 Will +2; Str 23 Dex 13 Con 16 Int 6 Wis 8 Cha 10

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Craft (Tanning) +4, Intimidate +4, Intuit Direction +2, Swim +5, Wilderness Lore +3; Cleave, Improved Critical (Heavy Pick), Power Attack

Languages: Mordentish

Signature Possessions: +1 Keen Heavy Pick, Masterwork Hide Armor, 4 doses of Vodare

This vile monstrosity lumbers towards you with a heavy step, accompanied by the stench of a slaughter. Towering above any mortal man, its humanoid body bulges with muscles. The horrid visage its sports as a face is hidden by the decaying head of a bull, worn as a gruesome helmet. It wears a necklace of human finger bones, and several mummified babies are tied to its belt. With a blood-curdling howl, it swings its pick-axe...

The misbegotten child of generations of inbreeding, the Minotaur was born in an isolated village within Mordent's swamps. Physically and mentally deformed, his body matured at a rapid rate while his mind remained that of a cruel and sadistic child. Despite his deformities, the Minotaur proved an extremely strong and hardy farmer, though he occasionally tortured and killed farm animals. At the age of 13, while caught torturing a dog, the

Minotaur snapped his father in half. His mother found him there several hours afterwards, still playing with his own father's body parts.

Chased from the village by an angry mob, the hideous child was thought dead. Still, the vile thing survived in the wilderness, forgetting the human traits his parents tried to impose upon him and becoming a savage, murderous beast. For two years he haunted the swamps and moors of Mordent, slaying dozens of poor travelers. Donning a bull head as a helmet he became known as the Minotaur.

Eventually, Alanik Ray himself was called from Dementlieu to deal with this menace. After a tedious hunt he and the Lamplighters were able to shackle the Caliban and imprison him in the Mordentshire Asylum for the Criminally Insane. Four years after, Fabian Depierro bribed a corrupt warden for the caliban's release and gave the Minotaur a chance to kill and maim once more, as one of the Weeping Rose's stars.

The Minotaur is a sadistic psychopath who delights in tearing his victims apart in the bloodiest ways. Though mentally retarded, his strength and ferocity are truly monstrous. Upon his reeking clothing are the grisly trophies taken from each of his victims; the Minotaur looks and smells like a mobile slaughterhouse. The first sight of the Minotaur draws a Horror check against a DC of 12 since his presence is so disturbing.

Combat

The Minotaur rushes headlong into combat, entering Rage and attacking with his deadly pick. He often attacks to disable foes rather than kill them outright so he might torture them later.

The Minotaur is so dumb that he only notices he's wounded when reduced to less than 25% his full HP. At such a point he attempts to flee or if cornered flies into a suicidal Rage.

Addiction (Ex): For two months already the Minotaur is addicted to Vodare, a drug which makes him feel like a god and truly revel the kill. For every two days he goes without a dose of Vodare he must make a Fort save DC 14 or suffer 1d6 Wisdom damage, 1d6 Dex damage and 1d2 Con damage.

Deformities (Ex): Deranged, Giant, Rough Skin (See Brutes and Banshees QtR 8 for details).

Sadist (Ex): Should the Minotaur inflict 8 or more points of damage in a single round, he gains a +1 circumstance bonus to attack and damage rolls, skill checks and saving throws for the next round.

Silent Death

Male Human Expert 10: CR 9; Medium Humanoid (Human) (5 ft. tall) HD 10d6 + 20 HP 64 Init +2 (Dex) Spd 30 ft. AC 16 Atk +10/+5 (1d4 + 2 18-20/x2, +1 Bloodfeeding Scalpel) or +8/+3 (1d2 +1 19-20/x2 plus sleep Fort DC 15, Syringe) SQ Mute, Sadist AL LE SV Fort +5 Ref +5 Will +9; Str 13 Dex 14 Con 14 Int 15 Wis 14 Cha 11

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +8, Concentration +8, Heal +13, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (Local) +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Pick Pocket +5, Profession (Torturer) +12, Read Lips +10, Sense Motive +13, Spot +6, Use Magic Device +10; Evil Brand, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Syringe), Skill Focus (Intimidate), Weapon Focus (Dagger)

Signature Possessions: +1 Bloodfeeding Scalpel (Dagger), +2

Bracelets of Armor, Skull Mask, 10 syringes, 5 doses of sleep serum

You awaken from a drug-induced sleep to find yourself strapped to a cold iron table. With horror, you notice it is covered with blood, both dried and fresh. There is a large crowd of masked figures watching you. They cheer as a curtain opens, and small and thin figure of a man steps next to you. Dressed in stark white, his face is concealed by an unfeeling skull-mask. You gasp in horror as he draws a scalpel and moves forward, making no sound at all.

Silent Death is cold and detached; a complete psychopath who views all other beings as unfeeling objects to toy with. His origins are shrouded in Mists, though rumors claim he learned his profession as a torturer at the distant land of Pharazia. What is known is that he served the tyrant Duke Gundar for many years as the head of his crew of torturers. His mastery of pain was so great that he was said to be able to make a Paladin forsake his faith and confess a thousand sins he didn't commit. The silent torture owes his name to a grisly deformity; Duke Gundar clipped his tongue so he could not reveal the secrets he wrenched from his victims.

When Gundar's reign fell he posed as a madman and was imprisoned in an asylum rather than killed by the brief independent Gundarakite regime. He spent many years locked away in the darkness, surrounded by the whispers of the damned, until the corrupt Barovian burgomeister in charge of the asylum released him as part of his pact with Depierro. Silent Death now practices his craft on the Weeping Rose's stage, patiently inflicting terrible pain on poor victims for hours for his and the crowd's

enjoyment. Some of his old tricks include anesthetizing parts of his victim and watching their terror as he vivisects them, and using his scalpel to play horrid symphonies on his victims' vocal cords.

Combat

Silent Death distastes combat, as he cannot pay attention to his victims' fine points while they're moving. He usually attempts to put victims to sleep with his syringe so he could torture them later on, but his scalpel is a formidable weapon on its own.

Mute (Ex): Silent Death's tongue was removed by his former master and thus he cannot make verbal communication of any sort, although he makes a horrid clicking sound when he attempts to do so.

Sadist (Ex): Should Silent Death inflict 10 or more points of damage in a single round, he gains a +1 circumstance bonus to attack and damage rolls, skill checks and saving throws for the next round.

New Weapon

Syringe: Tiny exotic melee weapon; Cost 2gp; Dmg 1d2; Critical 18-20/x2; Range Increment -; Weight ½ lbs; Type Piercing.

Jade Needler

Female Sithican Elf Rogue 3/Sorcerer 6: CR 9; Medium Humanoid (Elf) (5 ft. 6 inch. tall) HD 3d6 + 6d4 HP 40 Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative) Spd 30 ft. AC 15 Atk +6 ranged (1d4 +4 /x2, +1 dart plus Large Spider Venom DC 16, primary and secondary damage 1d6 Str) SA Sneak Attack +2d6, Spells SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge, Weasel Dread Familiar

("Sap") AL NE SV Fort +3 Ref +10 Will +8; Str 10 Dex 17 Con 10 Int 15 Wis 14 Cha 19

Skills and Feats: Bluff +6, Concentration +5, Craft (Poisoner) +8, Hide +8, Knowledge (Arcana) +12, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +5, Move Silently +8, Spellcraft +12, Use Magic Device +10, Use Rope +8; Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Spell Focus (Illusion)

Languages: Balok, Mordentish, Sithican

Sorcerer Spells per day: 10/10/9/7. Base DC: 14 + Spell level (DC 15 for Illusion spells), Caster level 6th. Sorcerer Spells Known: 0th level- Daze, Dancing Light, Ghost Sound, Mage Hand, Detect Magic, Unnerving Gaze, No Light; 1st level- Mage Armor, Obscuring Mist, Charm Person, Silent Image; 2nd level- Invisibility, Darkbolt; 3rd level- Reality Blind

Signature Possessions: 20 +1 Needles (Darts), Masterwork Custom-made Leather Armor (no Arcane spell failure chance), Armor Spikes, Leather Mask, 10 doses of Large Spider Venom

Suddenly you see a flash and feel a stinging stab. You sense the poison coursing through your veins and collapse in weakness. The last thing you see is the shape of a lithe and graceful female, dressed in tight green leather armor decorated with sharp needles. "So beautiful..." is the last thought you think before she puts out your eyes with sharp needles.

The murderess now called the Jade Needler was once a simple Elf-maid from the domain of Sithicus. After losing her innocence and home to Azrael Dak's human thugs she ran until she reached the edge of the Great Rift. As

she prepared to throw herself into the gorge a shadowy whisper surrounded her. The feminine voice echoed in her mind, offering her untold power if she submitted her spirit. In her hate and despair, the Elf-girl sealed the pact with the darksome thing. From that moment on she would serve the wicked whims of her unknown mistress, inflicting misery, pain and death as she grew powerful in the ways of stealth and dark magic.

For years she stalked the shadows of Sithicus, preying on Azrael's men and innocents alike. Finally she was captured, but only after the brutal murder of a high ranking Prastroyka officer. She waited nearly a month for her execution, but miraculously Fabian Depierro bought her from the Dwarf for an unknown price. Now serving a new master, the Jade Needler delights in taking her vengeance on the Humans who harmed her in the shadowed past. Ivan Dilisnya is enamored of the Needler for her resemblance to his cousin Ivana, and watches her shows at every opportunity he gets. Dilisnya seeks to buy her from Depierro, but the mad director is unwilling to sell until he gets a better substitute. The Needler is intelligent, seductive and sneaky. She is driven by hatred for humans and males in particular. The Needler prefers to confuse and weaken her foes with needles smeared with various venoms before closing in for the kill.

Combat

Melee with the Jade Needler is deadly and confusing. She is equally reliant on her Sorcerer spells and Rogue abilities. In battle she is stealthy and swift, flickering in and out of the shadows to throw envenomed needles at her targets.

The Hunter

Male Human Ranger 10/Fallen Druid 1: CR 11; Medium Humanoid (Human) (6 ft. 3 in. tall) HD 10d10 +1d8 + 44 HP 118 Init +2 (Dex) Spd 30 ft. AC 16 Atk +16/+11 melee (1d8 + 7 and 1 Con damage 20/x3, +1 Marrowcrushing Longspear) or +12/+7 ranged (1d8 +2 20/x3, +2 Mighty Composite Longbow) SA Favored Enemy (Shape-changers) +2, Favored Enemy (Goblinoids) +2, Favored Enemy (Humans) +1, Spells AL CE SV Fort +13 Ref +5 Will +7; Str 18 Dex 15 Con 18 Int 14 Wis 14 Cha 13

Skills and Feats: Animal Empathy +8, Climb +4, Craft (Trapmaking) +10, Disable Device +6, Handle Animal +12, Hide +6, Intimidate +6, Intuit Direction +8, Knowledge (Nature) +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +6, Swim +4, Wilderness Lore +10; Blind-Fight, Power Attack, Scent, Skill Focus (Handle Animal), Track (Bonus feat), Weapon Focus (Longspear)

Languages: Unknown Prime Common, Balok, Forfarian

Ranger Spells per Day: 3/3;

Ranger Spells Typically Prepared: 1st level- Entangle, Magic Fang, Pass Without Trace; 2nd level- Cure Light Wounds, Sleep, Snare

Signature Possessions: +1 Marrowcrushing Longspear, +2 Mighty Composite Longbow, Mask of the Elder Druid, +2 Hide Armor, 20 arrows, 6 mastiffs (see Hound, Dread entry in Denizens of Darkness)

A tall humanoid figure steps out of the shadows. It carries a vicious-looking spear in one hand and the leashes of six large mastiff hounds in the other. With horror, you notice the stretched skin of an elderly human covering its actual face like some horrifying mask. "Run,"

he commands as he unleashes the hounds upon you.

The Hunter is a former warden of nature, a proud defender of the wilds coming from a land far beyond Ravenloft's borders. After chasing a murderous Werewolf into a patch of Mists, he was whisked into the Demiplane of Dread. For days he stalked his prey in the unfamiliar land. Eventually, he not only lost his prey but his sanity as well. The unnatural demiplane drove him mad through his intimidate connection to the Land.

For several years he stalked the Southern Core's woodlands, preying on civilization's fringes initially in the name of a fanatic ideology of preservation, and ultimately for his own sick satisfaction. The Hunter enjoyed capturing men and women, releasing them in the woods and stalking them for hours before closing in for the kill. He even tamed various canines to form a "pack" to aid his hunts. In the throes of depravity, the Hunter became a cannibal.

Eventually, the Hunter was captured in Falkovnia and sentenced to impalement. Depierro managed to arrange the Hunter's release by bribing Drakov's officers with a large shipment of Dementlieuse firearms. Given a new pack and a new master, the Hunter now stalks poor victims as part of the Weeping Rose's twisted shows.

Combat

As his nickname implies the Hunter is a stalker, and enjoys the chase more than the actual kill. He is a master of steal and can seemingly track his victims by the scent of their fear. The Hunter allows the hunt to continue as far as he can, for fear is his feast as much as flesh. Once he tires of the chase he

unleashes his pack of hounds while shooting arrows from afar or closing in with his deadly longspear. After his victims are dead, the Hunter salts, cooks and eats his prey (often on-stage) or stuffs especially worthy victims and makes trophies out of their bodies.

Typical Thug

Male Human Warrior 1/Rogue 1: CR 2; Medium Humanoid (Human) (5 ft. 8 in. tall) HD 1d10 +1d6 + 2 HP 15 Init +1 (Dex) Spd 30 ft. AC 13 Atk +4 melee (1d6 + 2 20/x2, Club) or +3 melee (1d3 +2 20/x2) SA Sneak Attack +1d6 AL NE; SV Fort +3 Ref +3 Will +0; Str 14 Dex 13 Con 12 Int 8 Wis 10 Cha 11

Skills and Feats: Appraise +4, Hide +4, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (Local) +4, Search +4; Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus (Club)

Languages: Mordentish

Signature Possessions: Club, Leather Armor

Combat

The Security branch thugs are bullies and cowards. They typically only attack those weaker than themselves and use pack tactics to maximize their Sneak Attack damage.

Typical Recruiter

Female Human Aristocrat 3/Rogue 1: CR 4; Medium Humanoid (Human) (5 ft. 4 in. tall) HD 3d8 +1d6 + 4 HP 19 Init +2 (Dex) Spd 30 ft. AC 12 Atk +6 melee (1d6 18-20/x2, Masterwork Rapier) or +3 ranged (1d10/x3, Pistol) SA AL CE SV Fort +2 Ref +5 Will +3; Str 10 Dex 14 Con 12 Int 12 Wis 10 Cha 14

Skills and Feats: Bluff +7, Disguise +6, Forgery +6, Gather Information +6, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +7, Knowledge (Religion)

+6, Perform (Acting) +5, Pick Pocket
+4, Ride +5, Sense Motive +6; Exotic
Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Thrall
to Demon, Weapon Finesse

Languages: Darkonian,
Mordentish

Signature *Possessions:*
Masterwork Rapier, Pistol, Courtier's
Outfit, 20 bullets, 3 silver bullets

Combat

Recruiters disdain combat, typically leaving it to the brutes of the Security branch. When they are forced into a fight, they typically weaken foes with pistol-shots before engaging them at melee with their rapiers.

The Lost Gazetteer

the Secret work of δ

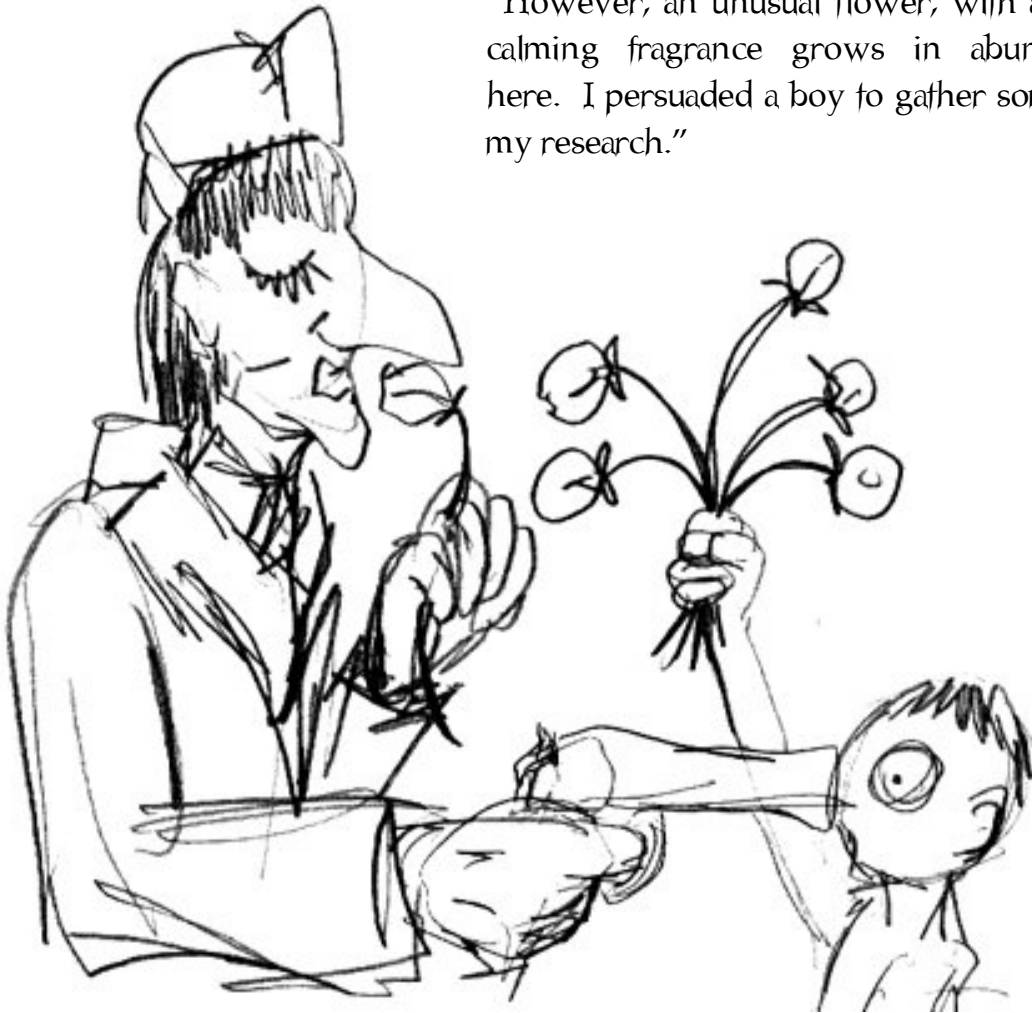
By Stanton Fink

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"So, I have arrived in this new domain... The locals are idiots, who are, in turn, governed by a moron."

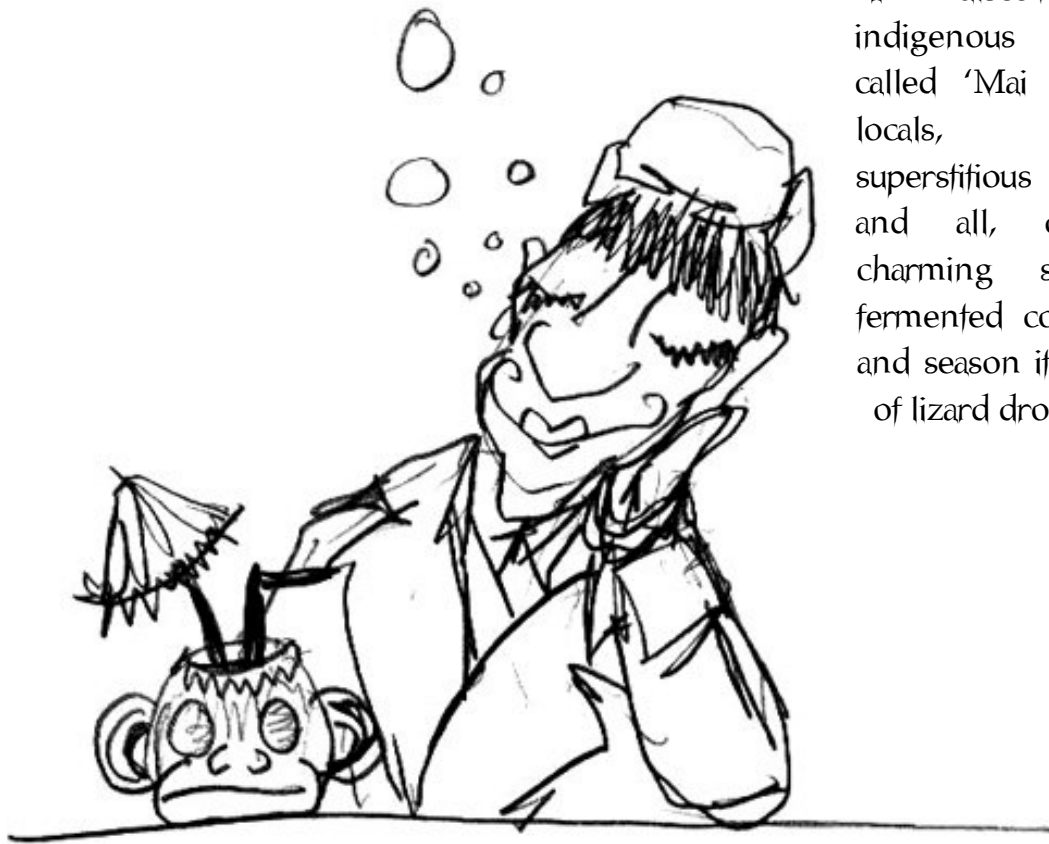


"However, an unusual flower, with a most calming fragrance grows in abundance here. I persuaded a boy to gather some for my research."



Quoth the Raven: Issue 10

"I discovered an indigenous beverage called 'Mai Tai.' The locals, though superstitious twits one and all, create this charming swill from fermented coconut milk, and season it with a hint of lizard drool."



What a lush.



Quoth the Raven: Issue 10

"Upon delving deeper into the legend of the "kahuna of evil," I discovered that it was none other than my old boyfriend from Port-a-Lucine, Pierre."



"Such was the unmitigated evil of this fiend in human guise that he attempted to sell me a fimeshare in Bimini five times in the first 3 minutes of our reunion."





"Had it not been for my knowledge of Mace, I would have probably succumbed to his nefarious charms. In retrospect, I am truly remorseful that I passed up the opportunity to vivisect him when we broke up."

André Duvet

The Man without Pity

By Thomas "Malus Black" Rasmussen

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"Kill them without sympathy, mercy, or malice, for we do not strike with hatred, but with purity in our hearts,"

-André Duvet, in a speech to his men

André Duvet

CR 3; Male human 2nd level fighter / 1st level rogue; medium-sized; HD 2d10+1d6+6; hp 26; Init +2 (+2 dex); Spd 30ft; AC 12 (+ 2 dex); Base attack/Grapple +2/+3, Full Attack +6 melee (1D6+1, masterwork rapier) or +4 ranged (1d10, pistol); SA Filth Scent, Pain Gaze, Sneak Attack +1d6, Trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Intimidate +5, Forgery +5, Gather Information +9, Search +5, Sense Motive +6; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Investigator, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Rapier).

Languages: Mordentish*, Balok.

Appearance

Tall, handsome and athletic, with icy blue eyes and wavy black hair and a small, finely-trimmed moustache, André bears himself with the pride and confidence of one who expects to be obeyed without hesitation or question. He wears his gendarme officer's uniform at nearly all times, otherwise sporting the latest in Dementlieuse fashion,

although he does not hold much affection for the wigs so popular among his peers. André typically favors bright, vivid colors and extensive gold and silver trimming, looking very much like he is a spoiled nobleman's child, which is what most people assume.

Background

André Duvet was born in 731 in Port-a-Lucine, Dementlieu. His mother died shortly after his birth due to complications, and so it fell upon his father, Gerard, to raise him. André grew up much like other noble's children. He showed great skill in fencing, although he was not much of an artist. Gerard tried, in vain, to instill the compassionate nature of his mother into André, but failed. Class equality remained a foreign term for his son.

In 746, André enrolled in the gendarme as a junior officer, a special favor from a friend of his father's. Although very young, Duvet showed great potential as an officer, and was treated with the respect of a man many years older. And so time passed until the year 748, when André was seventeen, and a lethal plague struck the city. It had started in a small hospice for homeless people in the Quartier Ouvrier and spread down to the Quartier Marhcand. Thankfully not widespread, but still lethal, the plague crippled André's father and killed several of his friends.

As André watched the pyres burning, he vowed that he would track down the source of the contagion and destroy it. While the city rebuilt itself, a diabolical plan started to form in André's twisted mind. In his hateful mind he knew that the homeless and the beggars were the filth of humanity, nothing more than parasites. Indeed, the epidemic was the proof of their harmful drain upon society. Though he was quite mad, he was perceptive enough to realize that most of his peers would not accept the methods he was prepared to use. Still, with him governing the family property due to his father's illness, and his inherent leadership and charisma, he knew that it would not be hard to get trusted men to follow him.

In 752, André was appointed the leader of his own squad. He handpicked two dozen gendarmes for their similar view on the lowest classes. It did not take many weeks before every man in his squad slavishly followed his orders. Those few who did not wish to participate in the "purification" were found floating in the bay one early morning.

His troops ready, André ventured into the Quartier Ouvrier after nightfall with a handful of gendarme. Clothed in black, they slipped through the night like lethal shadows. Many a poor beggar, huddled under his blanket, never woke up. Knowing they had to dispose of the bodies, Duvet and his "Scions of Purity" never killed more than two or three on their ventures. They would often bury the corpses outside the city proper, or drop them in the bay wrapped in chains. André stressed that they must not harm the working class, whom he believed they did a favor by "cleansing" their part of the city, nor should they kill children less than ten years of age, as they might

yet change into respected citizens. These children were usually sent off to orphanages far from the city anonymously, after being rendered unconscious in their sleep by various herbal mixtures. Those who were older were showed no mercy.

Despite their best efforts, word of the black-clothed assassins spread through the city. The government, fearing that the violence could escalate, ordered the gendarme to expose the murderous phantoms. With his usual style and self-confidence, André volunteered his squad as the investigators.

Current Sketch

Lately, things have taken a turn for the worse for André's mission. After a few months of fruitless investigation, André's superiors felt that some fresh blood was needed. While Duvet managed to convince them that he should stay in the position, he was unable to prevent the addition of another officer to lead the investigation. Jacques Mournier, a skilled young officer, joined the squad in 755 along with half-a-dozen of his most trusted men. His arrival has put André in a difficult situation. Simply killing Jacques will not solve the problem, as he will probably swiftly be replaced, and André also has no wish to make such an open move at this point. In fact, the two officers are, surprisingly enough, becoming friends, something which severely complicates André's plans.

He and his men continue their killings, but have been forced to reduce both the intervals between each attack and the number of victims in order to lower the risks of being discovered. At

the same time, André's father Gerard is, after years spent on his countryside estate south of Chateaufaux, becoming better, and, as he has now returned to Port-a-Lucine, more suspicious. Although André is quite good at making excuses for his nightly trips, Gerard knows his son well enough to know that he is hiding something. He does not in any way suspect that his son is involved with the killings in the Quartier Ouvrier but simply assumes that his son is sneaking out to meet with someone his father would not approve of, perhaps a young noblewoman or a troublemaking friend.

In the meantime, André has found a target worthy of his attention, a hospice similar to the one in which the plague which set him on his current course started. Nearly thirty homeless men, women, and children sleep there each night, and André needs only find out how and when to strike best before he moves in at full strength.

Combat

André is an expert fencer, although he rarely shows it. He and his men usually kill sleeping victims, so there has never been much need for weapon skills. When he does get into battle, however, he prefers to fight defensively and in a flashy way, often giving his foes a false sense of security before striking swiftly, precisely, and finally. At longer ranges, he is quite skilled with a pistol, although he prefers to close into melee.

Filth Scent (Ex): As the result of a failed powers check, André can smell poor people within a radius of 15 feet. With a Search check against a DC 10 for those directly adjacent to him, with +1 DC per 5 feet away, he can find the

general direction of poor people. This ability depends on the scent of the target. The richest man in Dementlieu will, if covered in smelling filth, be detected by this ability, although a poor, homeless man, if bathed and dressed in fine, clean clothes, will not. The downside of this ability is that André can no longer smell such things as the scent of a rose or a fine perfume.

Pain Gaze (Su): As the result of a failed powers check, André can, three times a day as a standard action, instill terrible pain in victims within 25 feet of himself with a gaze attack. The target must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 16) or fall prone for 1d4 rounds due to the terrible, searing pain which courses through their body. Even if the target succeeds, they still lose their next action due to minor pain. As with the *Filth Scent* ability, this ability only works on those André perceives to be proper targets, regardless of their actual wealth. The downside of this ability is that André's eyes reflect light in the dark, like a cat's. If with his men he never covers them, claiming that it is the "light of purity," although he wears smoked-glass glasses if he has to appear at social events after dark.

Adventure Hooks

- ❖ There are several ways in which player characters could be introduced to André and his diabolical plot.
- ❖ The PCs are introduced to André in a social event and may befriend him, only to discover, as his father did, the nightly trips, and decide to find out what he is doing. Alternately, they might meet Jacques in a similar fashion and be introduced to the investigation and André this way.

Quoth the Raven: Issue 10

- ❖ An inhabitant of the Quartier Ouvrier is an old friend of the PCs' and asks for help in stopping the mysterious shadow-killers before they kill again.
- ❖ The government, tired of the lack of progress in André's and Jacques' squad, employs the PCs as independent investigators to look at the case.
- ❖ André's father is concerned for his son's well-being and wishes that the PCs find out what he has been doing and then solve the matter discreetly.
- ❖ The owners of the hospice which André plans to strike calls for aid after strange men are seen spying on the hospice several nights in a row.

Aspects of the Four Horsemen

Fragments of the End

By Uri "Shadowking" Barak

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- 6:1** *And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.*
- 6:2** *And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*
- 6:3** *And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.*
- 6:4** *And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.*
- 6:5** *And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.*
- 6:6** *And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.*
- 6:7** *And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.*
- 6:8** *And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on*

him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

- From the Book of Revelations

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are terrifying figures of prophecy and legend. At the End Times, they will ride forth from the Nether Planes to end the Regime of Man and punish mortal-kind for their arrogance. However, until that dreaded time they lie imprisoned and dormant behind a Planar Barrier set by the Gods themselves.

Despite the Planar Barrier, occasionally the Horsemen manage to slip some of their wicked essence into the world of the living. By possessing the corpses of the slain the Horsemen create Aspects, allowing each of them to spread his own particular brand of mayhem. Through their actions, they show men and gods alike the sheer meaninglessness of life. While the Aspects are but shadows of the true Horsemen in power, intellect and malice, their mere presence on a Prime world heralds the coming of Doom.

This article represents one take on the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, which is different than the Biblical take on them. The creatures stated here are Aspects, fragments of the true Horsemen's essence possessing mortal

corpses. The actual Horsemen should be Outsiders rather than Undead, and Epic in power. This article provides one with the means to run an Apocalyptic campaign while giving PCs a chance at victory.

Aspect Common Traits

Each Aspect of the Four Horsemen carries a tiny spark of the Divine within its wretched form. It gains immunity to polymorphing, petrification, or any other attack that alters its form. In addition, it is immune to turning or rebuking attempts, vile damage, the corruption cost of Corrupt spells. As well, Aspects maximum hit points for every hit dice, gain immunity to one energy type and Resistance 20 towards two other types. Finally, Aspects receive the following special abilities:

Bonus Feats: Each Aspect of the Four Horsemen gains Dark Speech and Mounted Combat as bonus feats, even if they do not normally qualify for them.

Call Mount (Su): Upon its creation, an Aspect of the Four Horsemen gains the service of a mount. An Aspect treats its Undead HD as Blackguard levels for the purpose of summoning a Mount. Should the Aspect's mount be killed, it can summon a new one within a month. The mount is automatically destroyed upon the Aspect's own physical destruction.

Damage Reduction 10/good and silver (Su): An Aspect of the Horsemen takes full damage from good-aligned weapons silvered weapons.

Extraplanar Subtype: An Aspect of the Four Horsemen is a former mortal's corpse possessed by a fiendish spirit. Thus, it is not native to the Prime

Material Plane but to the Grey Wastes of Hades, and can Banished.

Evil Subtype: An Aspect is a creature of pure, unbridled Evil. It overcomes damage reduction as if its natural weapons and any weapons it wields were evil-aligned.

Rejuvenation (Su): By possessing a nearby corpse, an Aspect of the Four Horsemen automatically return to Unlife within four days after its apparent destruction. To permanently send its fiendish spirit back to the Nether Planes each Aspect must be destroyed in a specific way, detailed in its description. Once destroyed, a Horseman must wait centuries before it may project enough of its essence through the Planar Barrier to create another Aspect. The death of an Aspect ensures a long period of relative peace on the Prime Material Plane.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): 1/day: *Teleport without Error*. Caster Level 15, save DC 10+ Cha modifier + Spell level. Each individual Aspect has its own arsenal of spell-like abilities in addition.

Spell Resistance (Ex): An Aspect gains Spell Resistance equal to its Hit Dice plus its Charisma modifier.

Telepathy: An Aspect of the Four Horsemen can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet than has a language. In addition, the Aspects can communicate telepathically with one another regardless of distance, as long as they are found on the same Plane.

Undead Traits: An Aspect of the Four Horsemen is immune to death effects, mind-affecting effects, sleep effects,

paralysis, poison, stunning, disease, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. An Aspect is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage to its physical ability scores, ability drain, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or death from massive damage. It cannot be raised.

Aspect of War

The Destroyer, the Beast, the Red Hand

Size and Type	Large Undead (Evil, Extraplanar)
Hit Dice	15d12 + 75 (255 HP)
Initiative	+4 (+4 Improved Initiative)
Speed	30 ft.
AC	30 (-1 size, +5 natural, +11 Full Plate, +5 Large Steel Shield)
Attacks	+4 Heavy Flail +30/+25/+20 or slam +25
Damage	+4 Heavy Flail 1d10 +17 17-20/x2 and 1 Vile and Stun DC 20 or slam 1d6 +11
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks	Spell-like Abilities, Stun
Special Qualities	Armor Fusion, Art of War, Aspect Traits, Call Mount, Dark Resilience, DR 10/good and silver, Electricity and Sonic Resistances 20, Fire Immunity, Rejuvenation, Spell Resistance 20, Undead Traits
Saves	Fort +10 Ref +5 Will +11
Abilities	Str 32 Dex 10 Con – Int 16 Wis 14 Cha 20
Skills	Craft (metalworking) +8, Disguise +9, Handle

Feats

Animal +10, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (Tactics) +18, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Knowledge (the Planes) +4, Perform (Orator) +18, Ride +18, Sense Motive +12

Cleave, Dark Speech, Expertise, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (Heavy Flail), Improved Initiative, Leadership, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Trample, Vile Martial Strike (Heavy Flail), Weapon Focus (Heavy Flail), Weapon Specialization (Heavy Flail)

Climate/ Terrain

Any land and underground

Organization

Solitary or Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse
16

Challenge Rating

Treasure

+4 Heavy Flail, +3 Spiked Full Plate Mail, +3 Large Steel Shield

Alignment

Always Chaotic Evil

Advancement

None

This behemoth of flesh and dark gray steel lumbers towards you, causing the ground to tremble with every step it takes. It salutes you by lifting its visor, and you gaze upon the ever-shifting visages of the endless victims of war. As you fall back in fright and despair, it lifts up its flail for the kill...

The Aspect of War is the corpse of a victim of a battle. Possessed by the Horseman of War, it exists for the sole

purpose of making Men kill one other. While War is probably the most brutal of the Horsemen's Aspects, it is intelligent enough to understand the value of deception and stealth. War realizes it can only cause a limited amount of carnage by itself, thus it walks amongst mankind in disguise, manipulating events to ignite the sparks of hate and anger in Men's hearts.

War prefers to disguise itself as a demagogue leader and offers the masses salvation through conquest and war. Eventually, War subjugates all resources to fuel its grinding machine of war. There is no honor, justice or glory in the wars sponsored by the Aspect, only the wide-scale destruction and the pointless slaughter of the wicked and innocents alike.

While War encourages iron discipline and blind obedience within the ranks of its army, it often pits its own captains against one another both to its amusement and to test their individual might. Like all Horsemen, War serves Death due to its greater might. Still, it resents Famine and Pestilence and views them as cowards. When all Four Horsemen invade a world, it is always War who leads their charge.

Combat

While the Aspect of War revels in combat and likes to lead its armies on the front, it only does so once its flock is corrupted and terrified enough that they no longer care about their leader's true fiendish nature. Most often the Aspect simply acts through lesser captains and generals, sitting comfortably within powerful fortresses. War mostly relies on its melee abilities in combat, since it has the weakest spell-like abilities of all the Aspects and likes to deal with enemies in a close-and-personal way.

War is aware of its Rejuvenation ability and unafraid of destruction, and thus never flees combat. It targets unfeeling creatures above all others.

Stun (Su): Creatures struck by War's Heavy Flail attack must pass a Fortitude save DC 20 or be Stunned for 1d4 rounds. Creatures immune to critical hits are also immune to War's Stun ability.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp):
Constant: *Unnerving Gaze* (true form only), **At Will:** *Alter Self*, *Heat Metal*, *See Invisibility*; **3/day:** *Haste*, *Inflict Serious Wounds*, *Rage*, *True Strike*; **1/day:** *Animate Objects* (weapons only), *Resonating Resistance*, *Teleport Without Error*; **1/week:** *Symbol of Discord*. Caster Level: 15th; Save DC 15 + spell level

Armor Fusion (Ex): War's Full Plate Armor is fused into his body. The Aspect cannot remove its armor, but it can move at its full land speed, run and it suffers no armor check penalty or Arcane spell failure due to its armor. War also confers all its immunities to its armor.

Art of War (Ex): War is a master of combat. It has full Base Attack Bonus, gains Bonus Feats as a Fighter and is proficient with all weapon and armor types and with shields.

Call Mount (Su): War has an Iron Half-Golem Heavy Warhorse mount.

Dark Resilience (Su): The Aspect of War adds his Charisma modifier to bonus Hit Points and Fortitude saves.

Rejuvenation (Su): Should War be reduced to 0 hit points or less, it reappears in full power after exactly 4 days on the exact same spot it was destroyed. The only way for War to be permanently destroyed is to be struck down by a creature which is purged of petty emotions such as hate, pride and

wrath when landing the killing blow. This category includes true neutral mindless creatures such as most Constructs and Oozes (but not undead like Zombies and Skeletons), most Celestials or the purest Cleric, Monk or Paladin.

Aspect of Pestilence

Nergal, Plague, the Festering One

Size and Type	Large Undead (Evil, Extraplanar)
Hit Dice	15d12 (180 HP)
Initiative	+2 (+2 Dex)
Speed	30 ft.
AC	26 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +9 natural, +6 Breastplate)
Attacks	+3 Acidic Burst Halberd +20/+15 or 2 slams +15
Damage	+3 Acidic Burst Halberd 1d10 + 11 + 1d6 Acid 20/x3 and Disease or Slam 1d6 + 8 and Disease
Face/ Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks	Absorb Growth, Bud Growth, Disease, Spell-like Abilities
Special Qualities	Acid Immunity, Aspect Traits, Call Mount, Cold and Electricity Resistances 20, DR 10/good and silver, Rejuvenation, Spell Resistance 22, Undead Traits
Saves	Fort +5 Ref +7 Will +11
Abilities	Str 28 Dex 14 Con – Int 18 Wis 14 Cha 24
Skills	Alchemy +12, Bluff +12, Concentration +15, Craft (painting) +15, Disguise +10, Handle Animal +12, Heal +18, Intimidate +12,

Feats

Climate/

Terrain

Organization

Challenge

Rating

Treasure

Alignment

Advancement

Knowledge (Religion) +7, Knowledge (the Planes) +7, Ride +12
 Ability Focus (Disease), Corrupt Spell-like Ability, **Dark Speech, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Sunder**
 Any land and underground
 Solitary or Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse
 15
 +3 Acidic Burst Halberd, +1 Breastplate
 Always Neutral Evil
 None

This vile monstrosity is bloated with disease and corruption; a barely-humanoid mass of decayed, cancerous flesh warped nearly beyond recognition and held together only by a rusty breastplate. As it moves towards you it leaves acidic footprints on the ground.

Pestilence is the most disgusting of the Aspects of the Four Horsemen. With a special preference for children, Pestilence infests the corpses of disease victims. The fiendish spirit of Pestilence enters the Prime Material Plane with the sole purpose of causing the decay of all living things. While disease is a tool of nature, meant to ensure the survival of the fittest, Pestilence's contagion serves no purpose. Inflicting chaos and misery, Pestilence lays low the weak and strong alike.

Like its brethren, Pestilence is extremely intelligent and cunning. Although it is the second strongest of the Aspects Plague prefers manipulation to brute force. The Aspect's personality is humorous and refined. Indeed,

Pestilence sees itself as an artist of a sort. Using mortal flesh as its canvas, Plague strives to create the greatest masterpieces of disease and pollution. When not spreading disease and mayhem, Pestilence indulges in artistic diversions. Plague is a painter of no meager skill, although sane mortals would find his works deeply disturbing for it revels in all that is ugly and unwholesome.

Pestilence has several popular disguises it uses to mask its true nature, including a noble artist (its most popular guise), a doctor (who spreads disease instead of curing it), a charismatic leader of a nihilistic cult or a hideous leper. Regardless of the form it wears, the Aspect of Pestilence carries disease and rot wherever it goes. The Aspect respects Death's power and has a loose alliance with Famine but despises the brutish and inefficient (in its opinion) aspect War.

Combat

Pestilence prefers to kill its foes slowly through disease rather than grant them merciful death in combat. Nonetheless, Pestilence will enter the fray once it truly must. It attempts to infect weak-looking foes such as Wizards with its Disease and simply slaughter strong characters like Fighters with its halberd. Like Death and War, Pestilence is a fearless foe who trusts its Rejuvenation ability to protect its Unlife.

Absorb Growth (Su): As a standard action, Pestilence can re-absorb any of its animate Growths (see Bud Growth ability) within its reach back into itself to heal 1d8 +15 points of damage.

Bud Growth (Su): As a standard action, Pestilence can animate one of its countless cancerous Growths and send it

forth to act as a scout and spreader of disease. Statistically, these Growths are identical to Homunculi except they carry whatever disease Pestilence is currently infected with, rather than being poisonous. The Growths lack personality or intellects of their own, being mere extensions of Pestilence's will (they use its mental statistics). As long as it concentrates, Pestilence can see through any of his Growths' eyes. Growths remain active only for 1d4 days, afterwards they collapse into a pile of inanimate matter.

Disease (Ex/Su): Pestilence is always infected with some manner of mundane or magical Disease. It can change the exact Disease type as a full-round action which requires Concentration and may carry any Disease with a Fort save DC is 22 or lower. Changing diseases also affects Pestilence's appearance.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp):
Constant: *Stinking Cloud* (while in true form only); **At will:** *Alter Self*, *Delay Poison*, *Suspend Disease*; **3/day:** *Fly*, *Poison*, *Seething Eyebane*, *Wither Limb*; **1/day:** *Red Fester*, *Remove Disease*, *Teleport Without Error*, *Wall of Ooze*; **1/week:** *Pestilence*. Caster Level: 15th; Save DC 17 + spell level

Call Mount (Su): Pestilence has a Corrupted Heavy Warhorse mount.

Rejuvenation (Su): Should Pestilence be reduced to 0 hit points or less, it re-appears in full power after exactly 4 days on the exact same spot it was destroyed. The only way for Pestilence to be permanently destroyed is to be struck down by a creature who has suffered ability damage from disease and it still managed to recover without any magical aid.

Aspect of Famine

Penance, Hunger, the Scourge

Size and Type	Medium Undead (Evil, Extraplanar)
Hit Dice	15d12 (180 HP)
Initiative	+5 (+5 Dex)
Speed	30 ft.
AC	22 (+5 Dex, +7 Natural)
Attacks	+1 Strength Sapping Sickle +10/+5 and +1 Marrow Crushing Sickle +6/+1 or 2 claws +12
Damage	+1 Strength Sapping Sickle 1d6 +5 20/x2 and Exhaustion Fort save DC 15, +1 Marrow Crushing Sickle 1d6 +5 20/x2 and 1 Con damage, Claw 1d4 + 4
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Blight the Land, Famine's Touch, Insect Plague, Spell-like Abilities
Special Qualities	Acid and Fire Resistances 20, Aspect Traits, Call Mount, Cold Immunity, Compression, DR 10/bludgeoning, good and silver, Rejuvenation, Spell Resistance 20, Undead Traits
Saves Abilities	Fort +5 Ref +10 Will +12 Str 18 Dex 21 Con – Int 20 Wis 16 Cha 18
Skills	Bluff +10, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +10, Hide +18, Jump +9, Knowledge (Nature) +10, Knowledge (the Planes) +10, Move Silently +18, Reign Undead +12, Ride +12, Spellcraft +12, Use Magic Device +15

Feats	Combat Casting, Dark Speech , Empower Spell-like Ability, Mounted Combat , Two Weapon Fighting, Violate Spell-like Ability
Climate/Terrain	Any land and underground
Organization	Solitary or Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse
Challenge Rating	15
Treasure	+1 Strength Sapping Sickle, +1 Marrow Crushing Sickle
Alignment	Always Lawful Evil
Advancement	None

This creature is painfully thin and gaunt. There is virtually no distinction between its torn brown robes and nearly-mummified flesh. Its wasted face is concealed by a blank white mask, only revealing the gaping cold void where its eyes should have been.

Famine is the weakest and most cowardly of the Four Aspects, but also one of the most cunning and insidious ones. Indeed, it has claimed more victims than War and Pestilence combined. The spirit of Famine always chooses a victim of starvation to become its host, transforming its already emaciated form into a withered monstrosity.

Famine always acts in the wake of another cataclysm, such as the passing of another Aspect (like Pestilence). It stealthily rides through the domains of Man, using its powers to ruin crops, slay livestock and foul water sources. Combined with the preceding disaster, the results are devastating. However, Famine never completely depletes the

area. It always leaves a tiny amount of unspoiled food and water that people can fight over. Famine orchestrates the rise of petty depots that use food to exert control over the populace. It gloats in the vile deeds starved men and women are willing to do simply to live through another day. Once the land is devastated beyond any hope of recovery, Famine moves on to corrupt another.

Famine is wholly wicked, extremely intelligent and manipulative. It never acts directly or even in disguise. Darkness, confusion and animosity are its greatest allies. It always ensures there is some other element to blame for its activities, be it fate, nature or a hated minority group. Famine recognizes Death as the leader of the Four Aspects, and the realization of its own weakness has forced it to form an alliance with Pestilence. There is mutual hatred between it and War, though Famine enjoys sneaking in the wake of the violent Aspect and preying on the lands it leaves behind.

Combat

Famine might be the weakest of the Four Aspects, but its power should never be underestimated. It prefers to hurt its foes through their stomachs and will only engage them once they are exhausted. It allows foes to chase it over many miles of barren wastes, performing the occasional guerilla strike under the cover of night. Famine typically hovers above its opponents in combat while bombarding them with spell-like abilities, only closing in with its Sickles to finish off dying foes. It targets Rangers and Druids above all others. Despite its Rejuvenation ability, Famine is a coward at heart and will flee losing battles.

Blight the Land (Su): Famine can drain the essence of the land to empower its unholy being. As a full round action, the Aspect may feed within a radius of 40 feet. Depleted of nutrients, the tainted ground will not be able support plant-life for 40 years. Within the affected area plants with 1 Hit Dice or less shrivel and die. Plants with more than 1 HD must succeed at a Fortitude save DC 21 or take 8d8 +15 points of damage. A successful save halves the damage.

In addition, all water within the power's range becomes foul and mildly toxic. Creatures with 1 Hit Dice or less in the water at the time of casting die immediately. Anyone who drinks the water or is immersed within it must pass a Fortitude save against a DC of 21 or suffer 1d3 points of Constitution damage. If Famine affects only part of a larger body of water the entire body of water simply becomes foul-tasting and unable to support most aquatic life within 24 hours.

Famine may use this ability a maximum of four times each day. Each time Famine uses its Blight the Land power, it is healed for 4d8 + 15 points of damage. It can gain temporary hit points through use of this power up to twice its max, which last for 24 hours. Using this ability requires concentration for a full round.

Famine's Touch (Su): Any food or drink that Famine touches becomes foul and inedible. Magical food and water such as holy water and the food created by the Hero's Feast spell are entitled a Fortitude save against a DC of 21 to resist.

Insect Plague (Sp): Once every 1d4 rounds, Famine can spit a cloud of buzzing locusts. The cloud acts as an

Quoth the Raven: Issue 10

Insect Plague spell, cast by a 15th level Druid.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): At will: *Create Food and Water, Devil's Eye, Fly, Shriveling*; **3/day:** *Deeper Darkness, Desecrate, Improved Invisibility, Ray of Enfeeblement*; **1/day:** *Cone of Cold, Consume Likeness, Teleport without Error*; **1/week:** *Evil Weather, Horrid Wilting*. Caster Level: 15th; Save DC 14 + spell level

Call Mount (Su): Famine has a Bone Light Warhorse mount.

Compression (Ex): Famine is unnaturally flexible, being little more than skin and withered bones. It can squeeze through any gap of at least 1 foot diameter as a free action while moving. It can squeeze through a gap as small as 7 inches in diameter as a move action. It can pass through a gap of 3 inches as a full-round action. Famine cannot squeeze through gaps smaller than 3 inches across. It often uses this ability to sneak into warehouses and empty their contents.

Rejuvenation (Su): Should Famine be reduced to 0 hit points or less, it re-appears in full power after exactly 4 days on the exact same spot it was destroyed. The only way for Famine to be permanently destroyed is to be struck down by a pure embodiment of Nature, a category which includes all true neutral Elementals and Fey. Exceptional Druids and Rangers might also slay the aspect.

Aspect of Death

Grim Reaper, Harvester of Souls, the Bone Reaver

Size and Type Medium Undead (Evil, Extraplanar)
Hit Dice 15d12 (180 HP)
Initiative +3 (+3 Dex)
Speed 30 ft.

AC 26 (+3 Dex, +7 Natural, +6 Deflection)
Attacks +2 Ghost Touch Keen Vorpal Scythe +16/+11 or 2 claws +14
Damage +2 Ghost Touch Keen Vorpal Scythe 2d4 + 7 19-20/Death Fort Save DC 20, claw 1d4 + 7
Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Death Touch, Rebuke Undead, Spell-like Abilities
Special Qualities Aspect Traits, Call Mount, Cold and Sonic Resistances 20, DR 10/bludgeoning, good and silver, Force Immunity, Raiment of Souls, Rejuvenation, Spell Resistance 20, Undead Traits
Saves Abilities Fort +5 Ref +8 Will +13 Str 25 Dex 16 Con – Int 24 Wis 18 Cha 22
Skills (198 skill points) Concentration +15, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (Religion) +12, Knowledge (the Planes) +12, Knowledge (Undead Lore) +12, Listen +12, Profession (Undertaker) +15, Psychic +12, Reign Undead +15, Ride +15, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +15, Spot +12, Use Magic Device +15
Feats **Dark Speech, Mortalbane, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-by Attack, Spell Penetration**
Climate/Terrain Organization Any land and underground Solitary or Four

	Horsemen of the Apocalypse
Challenge	16
Rating	
Treasure	+2 Ghost Touch Keen Vorpal Scythe
Alignment	Always Neutral Evil
Advancement	None

This man-sized thing is wrapped in a pale shroud made of the screeching souls of the dead. Its only clear features are its leering, skeletal face and its bloody claws. As a spectral-looking scythe materializes in its hand you realize Death itself had come for you.

Death is the most powerful and feared of the Four Aspects. Its dark spirit inhabits the corpses of the long-dead, those far beyond the hope of Raise Dead and Resurrection spells. It is usually the first of the Four to be called into a world, but the last to act. The Reaper typically sends out the other Aspects before it rides out to end the Land's suffering. Death preys on the weak and helpless; those who could offer it little resistance. While the other Aspects delight in spreading misery, strife and wickedness, Death is probably the most merciful of them all. It cares very little for pain or misery, for the Aspect's sole goal is the oblivion of life. Young and old, good and evil, men and beasts; all shall inevitably perish under Death's Scythe. The Aspect likes to ride out in the open, spreading the terror of its coming amongst mortal hearts.

Death is the most intelligent of the Four Horsemen, as well as being the most powerful. It is focused on spreading death and destruction on a mass scale; killing is the only thing that brings joy to its bleak existence. On occasion, when it is feeling amused, it

might give a mortal being a chance to save its life through some manner of game or riddle. Still, Death is notorious for outwitting and cheating its foes in those contests. In fact, if it feels cheated or its pride was hurt, Death might not even keep its word. In addition to its love of games, Death is also said to empower itself through the death of its victims. The Reaper collects their souls to form its Raiment of Oblivion. Death commands legions of enslaved undead as well as the allegiance of the other three Aspects. The Horsemen fear its deadly might and respect Death for its capacity for destruction.

Combat

Death is rarely encountered alone. Typically it is found in the company of its legions of animated undead or the other Aspects. The Reaper sends its undead minions to scout, then when the time suits it, Death appears in person to spread terror. In battle the Reaper switches between its deadly Scythe and spell-like abilities as needed. Escape from Death is nearly impossible; it relishes in the chase and enjoys giving its foes the faint hope that they might escape. Death is completely fearless in combat; it has no fear of its own power.

Death Touch (Su): Six times each day, Death may perform a melee touch attack against a living creature. Should the attack succeed, the DM rolls 15d6. If the total is equal to or greater than the creature's current Hit Points, it dies immediately.

Rebuke Undead (Su): Death can Rebuke or Command Undead as a 15th level Cleric, nine times per day.

Spell-like Abilities: Constant: *Blur, Deathwatch; At will: Animate Dead, Death Knell, Dimension Door, Eyes of the Zombie, Fly, Inflict Light*

Wounds, Speak with Dead; 3/day: Circle of Death, Create Undead, Greater Dispel, Unliving Weapon; 1/day: Create Greater Undead, Destruction, Teleport Without Error, True Sight; 1/week- Soul Bind, Wail of the Banshee.
Caster Level: 15th; Save DC 16 + spell level

Call Mount (Su): Death has a Bone Heavy Warhorse mount.

Raiment of Oblivion (Sp): Death is surrounded by a shroud of stolen souls. The wailing mantle allows it to add its Charisma modifier to Armor Class and provide it with a constant *Blur* effect, as the spell cast by a 15th level Sorcerer. Successful castings of *Dispel Evil* or *Dispel Magic* negate the effects of the Raiment for 1d4 rounds, but nothing short of the Aspect's physical destruction can permanently end it.

Rejuvenation (Su): Should Death be reduced to 0 hit points or less, it reappears at full power after exactly four days on the exact same spot it was destroyed. The only way for Death to be permanently destroyed is to be struck down by someone who cheated death in some way. This includes deathless and undead who voluntarily chose their fate (like Liches), ascendant mortals and those who outwitted the Aspect in one of its games.

New Spell

Summon Aspect

Conjuration (Death, Evil)

Corrupt 6

Components: V, S, M, Corrupt, Ritual

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. /2 levels)

Target: One corpse

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: None

This spell was originally invented by a cult of nihilists seeking to bring about the Apocalypse. While they were not able to call the Horsemen themselves, they did manage to crack the Planar Barrier enough so they could summon bits of their essence to possess a mortal's corpse.

The *Summon Aspect* spell can be cast by even a single caster, but up to 3 other casters may contribute a 6th level spell slot to the casting and thus equally divide the Corruption Cost amongst themselves. This spell can only be cast at night, during the last day of the year. The caster draws a pentagram in Innocent child's blood and forms a triangle of 3 corpses who died in a manner specific to three of the Aspects. The caster then places the corpse required for the specific Aspect's summoning in the middle, holds hands with the other casters (if any) and starts chanting the actual spell, which takes an hour of uninterrupted Concentration.

At the moment the spell is complete, the caster pays the Corruption Cost as his health and sanity fuel the Aspect's entry into the Prime Material Plane. The spell's material components, save the target corpse combust in unholy fire, and the corpse mutates into the summoned Horseman. This

transformation lasts 1d4 rounds, after which the Aspect rises to its feet with full power and awareness, ready to unleash its evil on the unsuspecting world.

Aspects thus summoned are not obliged to obey the caster's orders; in fact, the caster is often their first victim. Horsemen summoned using this spell can remain on a world indefinitely. The only way to send their fiendish spirits back to the Nether is their true destruction.

Should the caster's Concentration be somehow disrupted during the spell's casting, the caster suffers the full corruption cost even if there are multiple casters. As well, an explosion of hideous energy erupts from the pentagram. All creatures within 100 feet of the blast suffer 10d10 points of damage. Half of the damage is Unholy and other half Force. A successful Reflex save against a DC of 24 halves the damage inflicted.

Material Components: An 8 foot-wide pentagram drawn in the blood of Innocent children, and 3 corpses for the absent 3 Aspects. Upon the spell's completion, the material components combust and turn to black dust.

Corruption Cost: 2d6 points of Con damage and 2d6 points of Wis drain. Multiple casters divide the Corruption cost equally amongst each other.

Apocalyptic Campaigns

The Horsemen in Ravenloft: The Aspects of the Four Horsemen are especially fitting for a low-level setting such as Ravenloft, allowing an Apocalypse-themed campaign without the need for epic-level PCs. An Aspect is an utterly vile, irredeemable foe, aware of Men's weakness but being completely

beyond them. It seeks nothing but pain and annihilation, and takes twisted delight in what it does.

Here are three suggested Ravenloft campaigns with the Aspects as the focus: the Cult campaign, the Infestation campaign and the Apocalypse campaign. The three types could be strung together into a single campaign with little DM effort.

Cult (Levels: Any): This campaign is mostly about investigation and atmosphere. Somewhere in the Demiplane, a Cult is attempting to collect the ingredients to summon one of the Aspects. As children disappear and corpses are stolen the PCs must delve into maddening eldritch texts and lore to learn what is truly happening. The clock is ticking as the last night of the year looms ever closer. While the masses are celebrating the New Year's coming, the PCs must breach the Cult's inner sanctum, stop their mad ritual and foil their plans for mass-destruction.

Infestation (Levels: 6-10): This campaign occurs after an Aspect has been summoned into Ravenloft, but before anyone knows of its existence. The Aspect is lurking in the shadows, manipulating Man's selfish nature to build itself a network of evil it can use to wreak destruction. The PCs must perform their investigations and discover the supernatural origins of the new fascist organization, the sudden plague, or the unexplained famine. They must collect enough evidences so they could expose the Aspect's true fiendish nature to the authorities and destroy it. However, if the government and the common masses are enthralled with the Aspect's public figure they will be unwilling to believe the terrible truth.

The Infestation campaign is more battle-intense than the Cult campaign.

PCs are battling the Aspect's minions and those poor men and women it manipulated into helping its wicked plans. There is even a place for failing Powers Checks, both for killing manipulated Innocents and when the Aspect might offer the PCs a place in its machine of destruction. At the campaign's end, the PCs might even battle the Aspect itself, which might escape or finally start its public crusade of death and destruction.

Apocalypse (Levels: 13-18): In this campaign, one or more of the Aspect acts out in the open. The Domain is ridden with disaster and anarchy, and the PCs receive a bid for aid from the local populace or ruler. The PCs must stalk their enemy over miles of devastation, a land destroyed physically and spiritually. They are exposed to the full, bleak horror of the Apocalypse and the fate which awaits their own homes should the Aspect be allowed to continue its rampage. In this grim period, it is unsure who is the hunter and who is the prey.

The Apocalypse campaign is thick with combat as well as atmosphere. DMs should emphasize the dire results of each Aspect's particular brand of the Apocalypse. It is an epic campaign in all but mechanics, and the PCs should feel that the fate of the Demiplane rests on their shoulders. At the same time, the campaign is about the final confrontation with an enemy that more wicked than any mortal man.

Traits in Ravenloft

In Ravenloft, the Aspects of the Horsemen gain traits to reflect the nature of the demiplane. Being a fiend-possessed undead, each Aspects projects

a 15,000 feet wide Reality Wrinkle around itself. Aspects rarely perform Power Rituals, for they value their mobility above the false power offered by Ravenloft's Dark Powers. Those who knew the Aspect's corpse host in life always recognize their loved one's features in the Aspect's mutated form and must make a Horror check DC 20 upon first seeing the unholy thing.

Each Aspect is tied to a Domain which embodies its particular brand of destruction. Should it be temporarily destroyed, the Aspect reappears randomly within such a Domain after 4 days. War is tied to Falkovnia, Pestilence to Nosos, Famine to G'henna and Death to Darkon.

Upon an Aspect's true destruction, there is a 25% chance that a temporary Gate out of Ravenloft opens on the spot where it was killed. Such a portal remains open for 2d4 rounds. The Gate's true nature may be realized by a Knowledge (Ravenloft) check against a DC 20 or a Knowledge (the Planes) check against a DC of 25. Those who step through the Gate emerge in another Plane of the DM's choosing.

Cults of the Four Horsemen

Some depraved mortals might worship one or more of the Aspects as Gods, seeking to gain power from the heralds of destruction. Clerics of the Four Horsemen have access to the Death, Destruction, Evil, Trickery and War domains and can choose any single weapon wielded by one of the Four Aspects as their Favored Weapons. Unsurprisingly, these heretics actually gain their spells from the Dark Powers.

Double Effects

Original Fan Fiction

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The house was a moderate sized, two-story house in the northern part of town. There were two small trees in front; shrubs under the windows; and no white picket fence. There were two doors in the front of the house. The door on the right side had a sign hanging over it: Muller's Furniture and Woodworking; the one on the left had the house number: 17. A light dusting of snow covered the ground. But the house was quiet, too quiet, especially for a house with two teenage boys living there.

A tall, lean man with square shoulders and wiry limbs in his later years paced nervously in the hallway of his home. He wore a tailored dark gray suit with a loose collared shirt, vest, and trousers. The only jewelry this man wore was a gold chain from his vest pocket, with a pocket watch and a fob hanging from the vest button. His thick head of hair was at one time a light brown, now more gray than brown was pulled back into a short ponytail that reached just past his shoulders. Signs of age and sadness lined his clean-shaven face; he had bushy muttonchop sideburns. He had a well-defined chin and high cheekbones. His blue eyes filled with grief.

A lean, similarly dressed man about thirty sat quietly on the floor watching the older man pace. He wore two gold hoop earrings in his left ear. His thick dark brown hair, cut much shorter than the older man's, was too short for a ponytail. He had a well-groomed almost black mustache and goatee with a prominent scar on his chin evident through the goatee; his darker skin weathered with much travel. His lean well-muscled frame and rough worn hands were evidence to a life of adventure. His dark eyes, opened long ago to the world's darker side, watched the older man with compassion.

A petite girl peeked around a corner watching the men; her long blonde hair braided into a ponytail that reached her lower back. She was in her mid-teens and dressed much more modestly than the men. Her pale blue eyes ignorant of anything but a well-sheltered life held sadness at the obvious pain the men felt. Her frame was thin and shapely.

"Father, this isn't going to make it go any faster," the younger man said.

"He's all I have left of your step-mother. He can't be," his voice trailed off. He stopped and put his face in hands rough from a lifetime of hard work.

"Dr. Estevez will do everything he can. You said that."

"I know what I've been saying."

"Are you starting to have doubts in the *good doctor*?"

"You never liked him."

"I have never disliked the man. He's fine for normal illnesses. But this is something different. We need a specialist. Seven children have died of this unknown sickness in the past three years. And another twelve nearly died. One of those seven

children was yours, Kurt only last month. And now your other son, Karl, Kurt's twin is lying in that room at death's door."

"Yes, I know. Maybe we *should* find someone. But who?"

"Father, there is something I should tell you. I've written..." the younger man was cut off by an opening door.

The door across from him opened and a tall, thin, pale completed man past middle age with long black hair hanging wildly past his shoulder blades stepped out. He wore a white silk shirt with a silk cravat, tight black breeches, a black vest, a black knee-length coat with large folded back cuffs and gold embroidery and tight white leggings worn up to his knees, with black, heeled buckled shoes. His black eyes that showed no emotion were wreathed with wrinkles that made him look older than his years. His long delicate, but not frail, hands carried a black bag and a small, smoky colored bottle. He had a black three-corner hat under his left arm.

"Doctor?" the older man said. "How is Karl?" He walked over to the tall man. The younger man stood; he was taller than the doctor.

"Well, Mr. Muller, Karl is still not responding to treatment. But he is no worse than last week. I gave him something to help him sleep." The doctor handed the senior Muller the small bottle. "Put two drops of this into a glass of water three times a day, with meals are best. If he wakes up and is hungry give him a dose. Otherwise, don't worry about today. I'll come back in a week to see if he responds."

"Thank you doctor," the senior Muller said, taking the bottle. The three men walked down the hall, passing the girl who stepped back into the shadows. They then walked down the stairs to the front door.

"If he gets any worse, send for me immediately."

"I will doctor." The senior Muller opened the door. He and the doctor shook hands. Then the senior Muller handed Dr. Estevez a small pouch that jingled. The sun was beginning to set.

"Have faith, Hans, all is not lost."

"Thank you Raphael."

Dr. Estevez walked out of the house and down the front walk. He passed a young man with a box walking up the walk to the house, but seemed oblivious to him. So oblivious the young man had to move or be run into.

The young man with the box stopped before the two men at the door. "Eric Muller?"

"I'm Eric Muller," the younger Muller replied.

The messenger held out a book. "Would you sign for the box please, sir? By the 'X'."

Eric signed the book. The messenger handed the box to Eric and took the book back. "Thank you, Mr. Muller." The messenger walked away.

The senior Muller closed the door.

"Who is the package from?"

Eric looked at the address on the box: 'Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove, Mordentshire, Mordent'.

"Just a lady friend of mine. We travel together sometimes."

"A lady thinks highly enough of you to send you packages? Perhaps you are not the confirmed bachelor you profess to be," the senior Muller smiled slightly.

"I should be so lucky. But we are just friends, Father."

The senior Muller put his hand on his son's shoulder. "Thank you for being here for me, Eric. I know we haven't always been close and I haven't always shown you the love a father should. But I don't know what I would have done if I had to bear this alone."

"Anything I can do to help, Father." He pulled the box close to him.

"I know you never liked your step-mother."

"You loved her deeply, Father. That I never doubted."

"Although I never treated your mother badly or abused her, I do realize I didn't show her the love and affection she deserved. Know doubt due to Lamordian prejudices. I did love her though. Then when I met your step-mother, and I showed her the love and affection I should have showed your mother, I'm sure that put a rift between you and your brothers." The senior Muller looked at the small bottle in his hand. "You should see what your lady friend is sending you. And I should see to this."

Eric hugged his father.

"I love you Eric."

"I love you too father." Then Eric walked down the hall toward the back of the house the box under his arm.

The senior Muller walked over to the girl who had followed them downstairs. "Did you hear what Dr. Estevez said about Karl's medicine, Olga?"

"Yes, sir," the teenage girl said.

He held out the small bottle. "Can you handle it?"

"Yes, sir," Olga took the bottle.

"I'll be in the workshop." He turned and walked toward the side of the house the furniture shop was in.

* * * * *

Eric closed the guest room's door and locked it. He walked over to the desk, lit the oil lamp and opened the box. Inside a letter rested on top of packing material. He took the letter and set it on the desk and sorted through the paper to find a syringe, a scalpel and twelve glass vials. He picked up the letter and read it.

My Dear Eric,

I am very concerned with the events you have written about. I believe your brothers and the other children are the victims of foul play; and your brothers to be in terrible danger. The symptoms you describe: headache, fatigue, dizziness, loss of appetite with nausea, stomach cramps and diarrhea, blurred vision associated with excessive tearing, contracted pupils of the eye, excessive sweating and salivation, rippling of surface muscles just under the skin; resemble more of poisoning than a sickness. Moderate symptoms to watch for: unable to walk, often complains of chest discomfort and tightness, exhibits marked constriction of the pupils (pinpoint pupils), exhibits muscle twitching, involuntary urination and bowel movement, and hair loss. Severe symptoms: incontinence, unconsciousness, and seizures. If poisoning continues

death is inevitable. I will come as quickly as I can with a doctor friend who is an expert in these matters. We should follow this package by a few days.

If the worst should happen before we get there, take samples. Needed will be a sample of your brother's hair with the root intact, blood, skin, fingernails and any medications they are taking. Also, take a detailed description of the body, meaning anything that seems out of sorts; sores, rashes, bruises, skin discoloration, etc; other than the symptoms you've already described.

Be discrete and tell no one, not even your father. We do not wish to tip our hand to the culprit(s). Below are instructions on taking the samples. Be careful, Eric. If those behind these events discover you suspect, your life could be in danger.

Yours

Always,

Laurie

Eric set the letter down. He opened a box on the desk and took a cigar out. He lifted the globe on the lamp and lit the cigar. Then he took the letter and lit it from the lamp. He watched it burn until he could barely hold it; then put it in the ashtray. He watched until there was nothing left but ashes. He removed the packing material. Then he pulled a valise from under the bed. He opened the valise; it had different sized padded compartments inside, most empty. He put the box contents inside. He closed the valise, locked the latch and replaced it under his bed putting the key into his vest pocket. He put the packing materials back into the box and put in under the bed next to the valise. He put out the cigar making sure to crush the letters' ashes, blew out the lamp and left the room.

He walked noiselessly through the silent, darkening house. He lit the sconces on the walls as he passed them. He stopped at his brother's door and listened. The room was silent; he entered. He was surprised to see Olga sitting by the bed with a handkerchief in her hand. She looked up when Eric entered the room. Tears filled her eyes.

"Hello, sir," she said. She quickly dried her eyes. He pretended not to notice.

"How is he Olga?"

"No change."

He walked over to the bed and stood next to Olga, placing a hand on her shoulder.

"I got here after Kurt died. Tell me, what happened?"

"Dr. Estevez was here when he died, giving them their physical. He let us look at Kurt but never touch him. He took Kurt's body with him when he left. He said he didn't want the body to bring infection on anyone else in the household. Something about dead bodies carrying diseases. I don't understand."

"Really," Eric said suspiciously. "When did my father hire you?"

"He didn't hire me. I asked to help just after your brothers took ill."

"You're not being paid to be their nurse?"

"I'm not a nurse. I'm just helping out. And I am getting room and board."

“Why?”

“I wanted to help them. We’re friends. Plus my mother’s gone and my father is drunk most times and isn’t particularly kind.”

“I see. When did my brother’s first become ill?”

“About six months ago. Why do you ask?”

“Curious. How old were the children that took ill?”

“Between 10 and 15.”

“And you?”

“I’m fifteen.”

“Did you get sick?”

“No.”

“Weren’t you afraid you would get sick being so close to them?”

“It didn’t matter, still doesn’t.” Eric smiled.

“The ones that got better, did they get this bad?”

“I don’t think so. I believe the doctor said they responded to the treatments before they got this bad.”

“I notice Karl’s hair is thinning. When did he start losing it?”

“How can you tell that?”

“Something common among the Muller’s is a thick head of hair, even unto old age.”

“About a month ago.”

“Did Kurt lose his hair too?”

“Yes.”

“How long before he died?”

“A month, maybe two.”

“Tell me about the children?”

“What do you mean?”

“Who were they? Were they friends? Were they wealthy? Did they play together?”

“Well, the only wealthy family to be stricken was the Stoltz’s. One of their daughters, I believe she was one of the first. I don’t believe *all* the children played together. Some did.”

“Who were the children?”

“Well, ah, the Schneider’ girls I think were the first to get sick. Lucy Schneider was the first to die, about a month later Lilly died. I think the Stoltz girl got sick next. The Farrell boys got sick next. They both died. The Turner girl was next; then the Mier boy. I think the Edwards boy was next, the Steinware girls. They both died. Then the Klaus boy; then there was,” Eric interrupted her.

“Schneider girls, Farrell boys, Steinware girls? Siblings? Any other siblings get sick?”

“I think two of the Edwards children got sick, but the girl didn’t get sick until recently. There were two other siblings that got sick.”

“How old were these siblings?”

“Wow, let me see. I think the Edwards boy is 10 and the girl 15. One of the Heimrich boys is 13 the other 14. The Schneider girls were 12. The Farrell boys were 13. And the Steinware girls were 11.”

"And Kurt and Karl were, are 14. Twins? Schneider, Farrell and Steinware were twins?"

"Yes."

"Identical twins?"

"Yes."

"Like Kurt and Karl. What did Dr. Estevez have to say about that?"

"He said because they were so close, so much alike that it was very likely they would have the same results."

"And he took all the bodies."

"Yes."

"Have they been buried in the cemetery?"

"No, I believe he cremated them."

"Really?"

"Yes, to prevent the spread of disease. Something like that."

"Thank you Olga. You've been most helpful."

"You're welcome, sir."

"Which of my brothers holds your heart?"

"Excuse me?"

"And was, is it returned?"

She smiled at him, embarrassed. "Kurt, and yes it was."

"Why don't you call me Eric."

"All right."

"Did my father know?"

"Doubtful. He seemed oblivious to much of their activities. I notice your skin is darker than Kurt and Karl's."

"My mother was Vistani."

"What happened to her?"

"Tuberculosis, also called Consumption, when I was four. Have you given Karl his medicine yet?"

"No he hasn't woken up."

"Did Kurt have the same medicine?"

"I don't know." She picked the smoky colored bottle up off the nightstand and looked at it. "The bottle isn't labeled, neither was Kurt's. The doctor took Kurt's last bottle of medicine when he took his body. I think some of Kurt's older medicines are still in his room, though."

"They had separate rooms?"

"Yes, shortly after their mother died. When Kurt got sick, the doctor thought it a good idea to keep them separated to try to prevent Karl from getting sick, too."

"It didn't help."

"No, it didn't. Your father put Kurt in here about a week before you came home."

"Which room was his?"

"The next room. You and your brother's weren't close were you?"

"No. Can I see the bottle?" He held his hand out. She handed it to him. He opened the bottle and smelled its contents, it was odorless. "What color is the medicine? And did Kurt or Karl mention a flavor when they took it?"

"They were all clear, and they said it tasted nasty."

Eric put his finger over the bottles mouth and turned it upside down; then righted it. He felt the consistency of the liquid; then he tasted it. "They were right, it's nasty."

"Was that wise?"

"It's medicine, it shouldn't hurt me. Mind if I go look in Kurt's room?"

"I don't care. Your father hasn't let the maid clean in there since he was moved."

"I'm surprised the doctor didn't say to burn the linen. If the body has diseases, the sheets could have them also. Thanks, Olga. Please don't tell my father I asked all this, all right? He doesn't need to be bothered."

"All right."

Eric left the room and went to the next room. He opened the door and looked inside. There was a lamp on the nightstand. He lit a match and closed the door; he walked to the nightstand and lit the lamp. He opened the drawer of the nightstand. There were four small smoky colored bottles. He picked them up one at a time and inspected them. They were all the same; they looked, felt, smelled, and tasted the same. He put them in his pockets and shut the drawer. Then he looked at the bed. He noticed hair on the pillow. He pulled the covers back and picked up the lamp. He examined the covers. He didn't notice anything, except a slightly yellow spot where Kurt probably wet the bed. Eric was surprised it didn't smell. He put the covers back where he found them, picked up the hair, and put the lamp back on the table. He blew out the lamp and walked slowly and carefully to the door. He listened at the door. Then opened the door slowly, and stepped into the hallway. He closed the door behind him and went back downstairs to the guest room.

Inside he locked the door then walked to the desk. He set the hair on the desk and lit the lamp. He pulled the bottles from his pockets and put them on the desk next to the hair. Then he pulled the valise from under his bed, unlocked it, pulled a vial out, and put the hair in it. He put the vial back into the valise, then put the medicines into empty slots, closed the valise, locked it, and put it back under the bed. He walked to the water closet with the lamp and looked at his tongue in the mirror. It looked a little irritated where he tasted the medicines. He took out his tooth powder and toothbrush and brushed his mouth, several times. Then he dropped the toothbrush into the garbage can. He walked back to the desk and got a cigar from the box. He lit it from the lamp and sat on the bed, waiting to be called to dinner.

* * * * *

Eric felt ill all evening, and his tongue was irritated as well. He tried not to let Olga notice. Not that she spent much time outside of Karl's bedroom. Eric and the senior Muller sat quietly at the large dinner table.

"Do you feel all right, Eric? You seem to have no appetite."

Eric hesitated. "It's just the package I received from my friend."

"What could be wrong about a package?"

"There was no letter with it. And she always sends one."

"What did she send you? Maybe no letter was required?"

"She sent some supplies for a," Eric hesitated. "We were on a mission of sorts when I heard about Kurt and Karl, one with a rather nasty vampire. We used some of my supplies from my alchemy kit. Since she was the one who, uh-m, *invited me* to

accompany her, I guess she felt obligated to replenish my kit. She usually does that anyway. But she still sends a letter with the materials. I'm just worried."

"What sort of *lady* would go hunting vampires? Not that I believe in vampires."

"She's the kind of lady who has, or rather had, Rudolph van Richten as her uncle. Though you've probably never heard of him."

"Yes, I've heard of him. He was some kind of a monster hunter wasn't he? Dr. Estevez has several of his books. When the children started taking ill, he consulted them. Although no creatures' victims seemed to exhibit these exact symptoms, he still had us search about the area for any signs of foul creatures."

"Dr. Estevez isn't from Lamordia is he?"

"No. I think he said he's from Borca. And you say your friend is the van Richten's niece?"

"Yes, adopted rather than blood. Dr. van Richten and their uncle George Weathermay were quite close, even hunted together. He was around so much he was like an uncle to them. When he died they took up his mantle."

"They?"

"She and her sister, Laurie and Gennifer Weathermay-Foxgrove. They tend to hunt and investigate together. When they need someone, they tend to call on me."

"Do you think there might be a problem at home? Where is their home, by the way?"

"Mordent. And possibly, but more likely they're about to go on an investigation of sorts and she didn't want to take me away from my family in this dire hour."

"You do get paid for your services, don't you? You do have to make your living. Especially since you don't care to live at home any longer, and take up *my* mantle."

"I know woodworking and how to make furniture, father, and I worked in your shop until I was 22. And you and Karl need me. I'm going nowhere until Karl recovers."

"You have a great deal of confidence for having little trust in the doctor attending him."

"I trust in more things than you realize, father. Just not the same things."

"A follower of Ezra?"

"Gods do tend to grant favors to their faithful."

"You didn't answer my question."

"No father, like you, I believe in no god."

* * * * *

Eric awoke the following morning to a knock at the guest room door. He got out of bed and walked to the door. A middle-aged woman in a maid's uniform waited patiently for him to open the door. When he did, she smiled.

"Is Karl all right?" Eric asked.

"Oh, he's no worse than yesterday. But you have guests, Mr. Muller."

"Thank you, Greta. I'll dress and be right out. A lady and a gentleman?"

"Two ladies and a gentleman."

"Twins?"

"Yes, sir. They're very pretty."

"I know. Tell them I'll be a few minutes. What time is it?"

“Almost eleven.”

“I slept so long. Why did no one wake me earlier. Mr. Karl and Miss Olga are the only ones awake. They said to let you sleep.”

“Has he had his medicine yet?”

“I don’t believe so.”

“Good. Should I shave?” Eric smiled rubbing the stubble around his goatee. Greta smiled and nodded then turned to leave. He closed the door. He got dressed quickly, then went to the guest bathroom and shaved. Then he returned to his room and got his valise from under his bed. He unlocked it, got the vial with Kurt’s hair and the medicines, put them on the desk, locked the valise and returned it under his bed. He got the box Laurie sent the materials in and put the vial and medicines into it using the packing materials to protect them. Then he left the guest room with the package under his arm.

He walked down the hall to the entry, where his guests were waiting.

One woman wore light brown tailored trousers favored here in Lamordia, a tight-fitting gray coat with black trim, a white ruffled shirt and black riding boots. Her dark hair hung about her shoulders. She had a holstered firearm on her right hip, and a Parthian rapier at her left. Her icy blue eyes lit up when she saw Eric. This was Laurie.

The other woman, of identical features, wore a dark blue dress with a flaring pleated skirt, fashionable in Mordent. She also wore a tight-fitting dark blue coat. The high collar of her dress rising above the coat’s collar. Her dark hair was pulled loosely into a twist. There were no weapons visible. Her icy blue eyes showed joy at seeing Eric. This was Gennifer.

The athletic built gentleman with them was taller than the ladies, but shorter than Eric. He had dark blond hair that hung wildly past his shoulders and a clean-shaven face. Wrinkles inched their way across his face. This man, who seemed in his early 30’s, wore a white silk shirt with a silk cravat, green breeches, vest, knee-length coat with large folded back cuffs, tight white leggings worn up to the knee, and black, heeled buckled shoes and he carried a three-corner hat in his hand. He had a holstered pistol on his right hip and a dagger on his left hip. He had bright green eyes that seemed to laugh when he smiled a broad toothy grin.

“Laurie, Gennifer, how are both of you?” Eric said hugging them.

“Eric, we should be asking you that?” Laurie replied.

“Oh, I’m fine, considering.” He gently shoved the box into the gentleman’s chest, then smiled at him. “You, Lorenz, were not what I was expecting. But you are more than welcome.” The men shook hands.

“Nice to see you too, Eric,” the man said.

“You’re from Borca right?” Eric asked.

“Yes, but you should have known that.”

“How are your brothers?” Laurie whispered.

“Karl’s apparently awake this morning, but he’s bed ridden, more or less. Kurt died just before I got here.” He nodded to the box. “I got your package yesterday.”

“I’m so sorry,” Laurie said. “You didn’t mention that in your letter.”

“Where are you staying?”

“At an inn, hopefully,” Gennifer replied. “We didn’t see one when we entered town. Our horses are at the gate.”

“There is only one in town. My horse is being boarded at the livery in town. Everything is within walking distance, if you don’t mind walking that is. Luckily, the inn isn’t that far. Just let me tell Olga and the maid I’m leaving.” Eric went up the stairs two at a time. He returned shortly, then he went down the hall toward the guest rooms. He disappeared into an open door halfway down the hall. When he returned he grabbed his leather duster off the coat rack next to the door. Then he opened the door and waved his friends through.

They stepped outside into the chilly late-morning air. There was a light blanket of snow on the ground.

The three guests grabbed their horses reins and the four walked south.

“Talk to us, Eric,” Laurie said. “You seemed hesitant to talk in your home.”

“This is *not* my home. What might have been my home, if I had a good childhood would be in the south side of town. This is my father and brothers home,” he said with some bitterness in his voice. Eric’s three friends looked uncomfortably at each other. “I arrived a week after Kurt died. That was three weeks ago. My father hasn’t been very forthcoming, neither has many of the townsfolk. All I know is from what Olga said. The doctor, a Raphael Estevez, who according to my father might be from Borca,” Eric look directly at Lorenz, “was here giving my brothers their checkup. Kurt died during this checkup. Dr. Estevez took the body with him without letting anyone near it, because dead bodies have diseases. He apparently cremated the body, like with all the children who died from this mysterious disease. Apparently all the children stricken were between 10 and 15. The children seemed to be sick for several months before either getting better or dying. And those that died were all identical twins. My brothers were identical twins. Also the siblings did not necessarily die one right after the other. Kurt began loosing his hair about a month maybe two before he died. And Karl started loosing his hair about a month ago. In the box is Kurt’s hair, which I got from his pillow, and four of his medicine bottles with some medicine still in them. His linen has not been changed. There was a yellow stain on his sheets. The medicine is odorless and colorless, feels a bit sticky to the touch, and tastes nasty. And I can vouch for the taste. And all the medicines taste the same including Karl’s.”

“Was that wise?” Lorenz asked.

“You think this medicine might be the poison?” Eric replied.

“Possibly.”

“Well, I figured it this way. If it was the poison, it took several months before anyone died from it. My brothers became ill six months ago. So I would be ok with a little taste. Besides, the doctor said to put two drops of this *medicine* into a glass of water three times a day. Also, I noticed an irritation to my tongue and I felt sick to my stomach all evening.”

“Now that you mention it,” Laurie began, “you do look a bit pale.”

“Thank you for noticing.” Eric smiled at Laurie.

“I was expecting a doctor or alchemical professor. You mentioned bringing a doctor friend with you, Laurie. So tell me Lorenz, what makes you such an expert in poisons?”

“It’s how I made my living in Borca. I apprenticed to one of the best Court Poisoners in Borca before going on the road. It’s a legitimate profession in Borca.”

“But not honest,” Eric smiles slyly at Lorenz.

"I guess that depends on one's point of view. Or maybe who's paying you. If the ruler of a country pays you to take out an evil rival or someone planning a coup than you're doing a service. I'm not saying it's right. But it is commonplace in my domain. Now I don't recognize the doctor's name. Maybe if I get a look at him, I might recognize him. I don't remember this kind of thing happening back home. But then I was rather sheltered."

"So you can test this medicine and see if it's the poison?" Eric asked.

"Yes, I brought my portable lab with me." Lorenz patted the bags on his horse.

"Plus I believe Gennifer has a spell or two that could help," Lorenz said pointing to her.

"Magic doesn't always work in Lamordia. Sometimes spells fail. Lamordians do not believe in magic, unnatural creatures or forces. Lamordians believe in science not magic, whether through sorcery, wizardry or faith. And any unnatural creature discovered is either dismissed as natural phenomena or something garnered through science. I'm not saying Gennifer's spells will fail, but they could fail. And for anyone who depends solely on their spells, might find themselves in deep trouble if they don't have something else to fall back on."

"You need not worry dear sir," Gennifer smiled playfully, "for I have other skills at my disposal."

"Plus, dear lady," Eric returned the playful smile, "I would never allow any harm to befall you if I can at all prevent it."

Gennifer giggled. Eric and Lorenz laughed also.

Laurie smiled uncomfortably. "What chivalry."

"How do you know this Olga can be trusted?" Lorenz asked. "She could have lied."

"I believe her. She was in love with Kurt."

* * * * *

The four friends walked through the main street. The inn was near the center of town. It was a simple two-story building that took up most of the block. There were two doors. The door near the north end of the building had the sign 'Heimrich's Rest' over the door. The door near the south end of the building had the sign 'Heimrich's Kitchen'. The next building down was the livery. They tied their horses up in front of the inn. Eric took the ladies two medium-sized bags, while Lorenz handed the box to Gennifer, who was closer, and gently removed his two large bags from his horse. They entered the building. Directly inside was the front desk, with the stairs behind it. To the right was two open double doors. Over the doorway was written 'Heimrich's Kitchen'. Inside could be seen tables and chairs and a large bar but no people.

There was a young man behind the front desk. He put on a smile and greeted them. "Good morning. May I help you," he spoke in Lamordian.

The four walked up to the desk and set their bags down next to them. "Good morning," Eric greeted. "My friends will need rooms."

"Very well, how many rooms?"

"Two," Laurie replied. "My sister and I will need one and this gentleman will need the other."

"You will not be staying with us sir?" the young man said to Eric.

"No thank you," Eric replied.

"Very well, will you please sign the register?" the young man said turning a book toward Laurie and handing her a quill. She signed the register and handed the quill back to the man. Then he slid the book toward Lorenz and held out the quill. "Sir?"

Lorenz just stood there. Eric leaned over and whispered in Mordentish, "sign the register."

"Oh, sorry," Lorenz smiled embarrassed and took the quill from the man, then signed the book.

"You do not speak Lamordian sir?" the young man said in Mordentish to Lorenz.

"No, I don't," Lorenz replied in Mordentish.

When Lorenz was finished signing, the young man made a note next to Lorenz's name.

"What does that mean?" Laurie asked.

"It is our symbol for a Mordentish speaking person. So anyone attending the room will know to speak that instead of Lamordian."

"My sister does not speak Lamordian either. But she does speak Mordentish," Laurie added.

"Very well." The young man put two symbols by Laurie's name, one the same as Lorenz's.

"The other one means Lamordian?" Laurie asked.

"Yes miss," he nodded. "Between all the staff, we know ten languages of the core and dwarven."

"Including Balok?" Eric asked.

"Yes sir. We know the native languages of all the town's residents."

"Dr. Estevez is Borcan then," Eric stated.

"Yes sir. You know the doctor?" the young man asked curiously.

"Dr. Estevez is treating my brother Karl."

"Oh, I'm sorry Eric. I didn't recognize you. I'm terribly sorry about your brother Kurt. Are you staying with your father?"

"Thank you, Dieter. Yes, I'm staying with my father. I'm just here to comfort my family. And do anything I can to help them. Are the rooms ready?"

"The rooms need to have sheets put on the beds, fill the pitchers to wash up with and towels. I will get one of the maids to ready the rooms. It will take a few minutes. If you'd like you can wait in the restaurant and we can call you when they're ready. We can also take your bags up for you."

"Thank you that would be nice," Laurie said. "We can get lunch while we wait. I'm starved."

"So am I," Eric said, "I haven't had breakfast yet."

"I'll hang on to the box and my two bags. There are some delicate things inside," Lorenz said.

"Very well sir," the young man said. "Would anyone be needing a bath drawn?"

"Not until this evening if that's alright," Gennifer replied.

"That will be fine. Just let whoever's at the desk know."

"What about the horses?" Eric asked.

"We can have someone take them to the livery if you'd like?" the young man said.

“Perfect, it’s the three right outside.” Eric picked up one of Lorenz’s bags and Lorenz took the other. “You would get the lighter of the two,” Lorenz said. Eric smiled at his friend.

The four walked into the restaurant and looked around. There were only six patrons, two dwarves sat together in a back corner, two men at different places along the bar, and three women giggling quietly just inside the door.

A tall stout woman called from behind the bar, in Lamordian. “Just sit anywhere. Today’s menu is on the board next to the door. Those written in white are always ready, those in pink must be prepared, and the ones marked with a star can be served as group meals.”

Laurie and Eric, speaking Lamordian, moved toward a large round table with five chairs near the center of the room but not too close to the other patrons. Gennifer and Lorenz followed. Eric set the bag down on one of the chairs and stepped to the chair to its left. Laurie walked to the other side of the table and sat down. Gennifer stepped to the chair between Laurie’s and Eric’s. Eric pulled the chair out for her.

“Thank you, Eric,” Gennifer said smiling broadly.

“Anything for you Gennifer,” Eric replied, returning the broad smile. Then he sat down in the chair between Gennifer and the one with Lorenz’s bag.

Lorenz put his bag down next to the chair with the bag and the remaining chair; then he sat next to Laurie.

“And the menu for today is,” Eric said. He turned to look at the board with the menu. He noticed the menu was written in Lamordian, Mordentish, and Balok and written in white and pink chalk. “For those who do not speak Lamordian, ‘those written in white are always ready, those in pink must be prepared, and the ones marked with a star can be served as a group meal’.”

They all looked at the menu.

“Why don’t we all share the roasted pork with vegetables meal?” Gennifer suggested.

They all agreed.

The woman from behind the bar came over to the table. “I overheard you speaking Mordentish. My name is Inga. Are you ready to order?”

“We’ll share the roasted pork with vegetables,” Eric answered.

“Very good, all meals come with a drink: red or white wine, ale or beer, coffee or tea; and the tea can be hot or cold.” Gennifer and Eric got cold tea, Laurie red wine, and Lorenz wanted beer. “Are you registered here at the inn?”

“They are,” Eric said, “I’m staying with my father.”

“Really, and who is your father sir?”

“Hans Muller.”

“Oh Eric, I didn’t recognize you. You probably don’t remember me, but we went to school together, Inga Heimrich.”

“Yes, Inga, I remember you. You were one of the few children who talked to me.”

“I suppose you’ve returned for your brothers. I’m so sorry about Kurt.”

“Thank you Inga.”

“You’re welcome Eric. I don’t know if Dieter at the front desk told you, but since the three of you are staying here, breakfast is free and lunch is half price. And we’ll just pretend you Eric are staying here too.” She patted Eric on the shoulder smiling broadly.

"Thank you Inga, but I wouldn't want you to get into trouble," Eric said.

"No problem." She leaned in close and whispered. "I hear you travel the realms a great deal. Perhaps your friends are here to help you with our little problem. Some of us kept asking your father to write you, but he wouldn't. Then your brother's were stricken. If he had written sooner, perhaps Kurt," she trailed off, then cleared her throat. "I'll put your order in and get your drinks." She walked to the back of the restaurant and disappeared through a swinging door.

Eric whispered, "perhaps not everyone is happy with the good doctor's work."

"I think she likes you," Laurie said.

"I think she did when we went to school. But her father and brother, Dieter, didn't."

"Is every business in town a family run business?" Gennifer asked.

"For the most part. Sometimes women take up some aspects of their husbands business after marriage. Children usually take up their father's work, unless they have no skill."

"What about you?" Lorenz asked.

"I'm quite handy with woodworking."

Inga returned from the back room and placed four plates with silverware on the table along with a pitcher of dark liquid with ice in it. Then she went behind the bar. She got a glass of red wine, a stein of beer, and two glasses, then put them on the table. "I'll be right back with your lunch." She disappeared through the swinging door again.

Eric picked up the pitcher and pored Gennifer a glass of tea while Gennifer handed out the plates and silverware.

"Thank you," Gennifer said smiling warmly.

"You're welcome and thank you," Eric returned the smile. Then he pored a glass for himself.

Inga came through the swinging door with a large plate of steaming food. She placed it in the center of the table with a carving knife, serving fork and spoon. "Enjoy your meal."

Eric began carving the roast, then gave everyone a thick slice and vegetables.

"Why didn't Dieter and their father like you?" Laurie asked.

"Racial prejudice. My mother was Vistani," Eric said.

Lorenz looked to the two women, who seemed not to react. "But your father married her right? So that should have made it alright."

"Should have, but didn't. She wasn't treated well from what I remember. By my father either."

"From what you remember?" Lorenz asked.

"She died when I was four, consumption."

"Did this Dr. Estevez treat her?" Gennifer asked.

"He hasn't been here that long. He wasn't here when I left and that was about eight years ago. But he was here every time I visited since. "Inga," Eric called.

"Can we trust her?" Laurie asked quietly.

"We'll see," Eric said.

She walked over to the table. "Yes, Eric."

"How long has the good doctor been here in town?"

Inga leaned down. "He came to town about a seven years ago, about a year after you left. Shortly after he and his wife got here the apothecary was driven out of town."

"Convenient," Lorenz said.

"Why's that?" Inga asked.

"Competition," Lorenz said, "and the only person who could tell if the doctor was doing something wrong."

"Olga said two Heimrich boys were stricken. Your brothers?"

"No, Yann's children."

Eric looked to his companions. "Yann is Inga and Dieter's older brother."

"So how many people here in town don't care for the doctor?" Lorenz asked.

"Most of the younger townsfolk, especially the children and teenagers. He and his wife are creepy. Some of the parents, too."

"I didn't know he was married," Eric said.

"She's a doctor also, and pretty much stays in the office. I think I've only ever seen her out maybe once a week. They come in here for dinner every Saturday night. The general store, butcher and market all deliver to the house. Or he gets it when he makes a call."

"Wonder why," Eric said curiously.

"You said when he makes a call. Does he make a lot of house calls?" Laurie asked.

"That's all he does with the sick children and teenagers."

"Must pull in quite a coin for the house call," Laurie said.

"He does," Inga stated, disgusted.

"Thank you Inga," Eric said smiling. Inga returned the smile and returned behind the bar. "So," Eric began. "What do we do?"

"I'll test the medicine," Lorenz said.

"Why would anyone want to do this?" Eric said. "Is it the money? If it's not him, what would someone get out of killing twins? And what would he want with the bodies?"

"Let's check out the wife," Gennifer said. "Inga?" she called.

Inga returned to the table. "Yes miss?"

"Sorry to keep bothering you," Gennifer apologized.

"It's no bother miss. Besides, if you can help us, we would be most grateful."

"Tell us about Mrs. Estevez."

"Well, let me see. She's not Borcan I know that. She can't speak Balok or at least pretends not to. She always speaks either Lamordian, without an accent, or Mordentish, with an accent. She looks Lamordian. You know, hair, eyes, features, skin tone, mannerism, clothing. I've never heard her first name."

"In other words, she's a bit of a mystery." Gennifer crunched up her nose.

"Not really much help, am I," Inga said.

"Yes, you are, Inga," Eric smiled. "If you think of anything else, let us know. And keep it under your bonnet."

"Keep what," Inga said innocently. "Just old friends getting reacquainted."

"Thank you," Eric smiled.

"Inga," Lorenz began. "Your nephew's medicine, do you know if they still have some of it lying about?"

"I don't know, it was a while now but I can check. Discretely of course."

Lorenz opened the bag setting on the floor and pulled out a small vial with a cork stopper. "Here, a small sample would be fine. Less likely anyone will notice if the bottle is still there." He looked about the room to see if anyone was looking; then slipped the vial into Inga's apron pocket.

"I'll check tonight after work. My husband and I are having dinner at their house tonight. Then I'll get back to you tomorrow morning at breakfast." She smiled and curtsied then returned to the bar.

"Maybe I got a way to meet the doctor's wife," Gennifer said.

"What," Laurie asked.

"Eric can conveniently drop Karl's medicine. It's in a bottle right." Eric nodded. "Then go to the office to get another bottle. I'll come with you," Gennifer volunteered.

"See what I can pick up, so to speak."

"What will we say you are?" Eric asked.

"I'm your fiancé." Eric raised his eyebrow.

"I keep telling my father I will never marry. All of a sudden now I am. Besides he knows Laurie is the one sending me packages. I believe he thinks she likes me." Eric looked over to Laurie, hoping for a response.

"Of course I like you. We're friends." Laurie smiled innocently.

"Or will you say you're Laurie." Gennifer smiled mischievously. "I can still tell the difference between you. Even when you swap clothes. But we will only say that if anyone asks."

"I guess it's a plan then," Lorenz began. "Laurie and I will get to work on what we've got, and you two can check out the wife."

The four finished lunch and split up. Laurie and Lorenz went up to the rooms and set up. Laurie changed clothes and put a dress on, to look more like Gennifer. Lorenz began setting up his lab.

Eric and Gennifer went back to his father's house. Eric's father had already shut himself into his workshop with the doors locked. So they went upstairs to see Karl. He was awake eating a meal in bed. Olga was sitting in the chair next to the bed.

"You're awake," Eric said. "Good. It's nice to see you up. You look pale."

"I don't feel much like eating."

"I'd like you to meet a friend of mine," Eric turned to Gennifer. "This is my friend, Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove. Laurie this is my brother Karl and his friend and nursemaid Olga."

"It's nice to meet you both," Gennifer said.

"It's very nice to meet you Miss. You are one of Rudolph van Richten's nieces, right?"

She looked uncomfortably at Eric, who just shrugged. "Yes, I am. How do you know about me?"

"One of my friends has a sister who left Lamordia. She writes about lots of things strange and unusual. She hasn't been reachable lately. I'm not sure if I believe all the things she writes about, but they do make good stories." Karl spoke very fast with great enthusiasm. "I've only seen a few of the letters Eric writes. Whenever father gets one, he reads it and burns it without letting Kurt or I see them. And father never writes back. Once in a while we would intercept them. Since Olga's been here, she got more of them."

Eric spoke about you and your sister in the last letter he wrote before coming here. He said something about fighting a vampire. Are they real?"

"Outside of this domain they are," Gennifer replied.

"Are you here to help?" Karl asked.

"If I can."

"Were you the one Eric wrote to?"

"How do you know I wrote to someone?" Eric inquired.

"Olga said. She overheard you say something about it yesterday when the doctor was with me."

"You hear more of what I say than my father does," Eric smiled at Olga.

"He has a lot on his mind right now," Olga said.

"My father has never heard anything he does not want to hear. And he does not want to hear me."

"He hasn't heard much of what Kurt and I were saying either. Or maybe Kurt would be here right now." Karl looked over to the empty bed on the other side of the room. Everyone else looked also. Karl's eyes got misty.

"May I see your medicine bottle?" Eric asked, changing the subject. He held out his hand and Olga put the bottle in his hand. He conveniently let it fall to the floor. The bottle shattered. "Oh how clumsy of me," Eric said with a complete lack of emotion. "Looks like I'll have to go get you another bottle. Laurie, will you be so kind as to come with me to the doctor's office."

"Of course Eric," Gennifer said.

Everyone smiled.

"What about this?" Karl held up his full glass of water.

"I don't know about you, but I'd have a hard time drinking something that tastes that nasty without bringing it right back up."

"Perhaps we should go get the medicine. We wouldn't want Karl to be without it for too long," Gennifer said.

"Then when you come back," Karl began putting the glass back on the tray. "You can tell me about the vampire. And all the things my brother did to help you."

"I'd be delighted," Gennifer curtsied and smiled warmly.

The two left the room. Karl looked to Inga and motioned at the door. She ran to the door, opened it and listened.

* * * * *

When Eric and Gennifer got downstairs, the maid was waiting.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Eric," she said.

"Good afternoon, Greta," Eric greeted.

"Mr. Muller would like me to extend an invitation to your three friends for dinner tonight. He would like to meet them. Especially the ladies."

"We would be delighted," Gennifer replied, curtsying.

"Very good, dinner will be at seven. If that's alright."

"Seven will be fine," Eric said.

Greta curtsied and went down the hall toward the back of the house. Eric and Gennifer left the house.

Then a loud crash came from upstairs.

* * * * *

They stepped outside. The air was cold, a thick blanket of snow covered everything. Eric and Gennifer walked through town toward the doctor's office. Eric took a 5" wide, 1½" thick, 6" long leather cases from his duster's inside breast pocket. It held 4 cigars. He took one out, replaced the case and smoked a cigar along the way. As they passed Heimlich's Tavern a carriage pulled up to them. "Need a lift?" They got into the carriage and told them where they wanted to go. One silver piece per ride, five silver for the day. They had just passed the Gunsmith and could see the doctor's house and office at the next corner.

"I always liked the smell of your cigars," Gennifer said.

"Your sister doesn't."

"Yes she does. She just says that to pick on you. She wouldn't want you to think she likes you too much."

"The gods forbid."

"I've seen the way you look at her. I think you like her more than you'd want her to know, also."

"And you play these little affectionate games with me. Teasing. Trying to get her jealous? Or do you maybe like me more than you're willing to admit? After all, you both have said on more than one occasion that you will not marry."

"That's more because people, especially suitors, expect women to assume a certain path in life and we choose another path. One that the social stature of our birthright does not agree with."

"Perhaps then you should look for someone who wants you just the way you are, adventurous, outgoing, outspoken, full of life, by no means boring. Someone who would not want to shackle you down to a dull, boring, lifeless, existence."

"A man who embraces our calling in life and encourages it and even accompanies us on our adventures. Someone maybe like," she paused for effect, "you." She smiled at him mischievously.

"Who would want one of those women who just sit around all day, eating chocolates, gossiping with other boring women, giggling about another woman's out of date fashion, and how that woman's husband is stepping out with a much more exciting woman, changing outfits constantly trying to find just the right dress for the occasion. Uhg!" Eric shuttered. "I'd rather be a bachelor for the rest of my life."

"Someone who wouldn't look down on you for your heritage." Eric looked uncomfortably at Gennifer. "I guess we're perfect for each other. You're looking for someone like us, and we need someone like you. Even if none of us are willing to admit it."

"Here we are," Eric changed the subject. "The good doctor's office."

They pulled up to the doctor's office. He put his cigar out on the brick road. Eric asked the carriage to wait. The building looked a lot like Eric's father's house, only smaller. The second floor was not nearly as big. The house was on one side and office on the other.

There was a sign by the door and a pull string.

Office hours: Monday-Friday, sunrise-sunset.

Appointments preferable.

House calls by appointment only.

Walk-ins during office hours on a first come first serve basis;

Appointments have priority.

After hours emergencies, ring bell for entry.

No one seen Saturday's 6:30pm-7:30pm.

They walked in the door. A bell over the door rang when the door opened and closed. There was no one in the waiting room. The waiting room was simple. There was a low table in the back with small chairs around it and several toys on the table. Around the room chairs lined the walls, small tables with books on them were between every other chair. There were three doors in the room, other than the front door. One door was on the inner wall near the front, blocked by a small table and chair. The second was on the inner wall by the back of the room. The third was on the right side of the back wall close to the inner wall.

After several minutes, they heard the faint sound of a door closing. Then the door along the back wall opened. A lean, attractively built woman with wiry limbs came through the door. She was a little taller than Gennifer. She had a well-defined chin and prominent cheekbones. Her completion was ruddy as if from the cruel Lamordian winter winds. Her slate blue eyes were without emotion and her flaxen blonde hair was pinned up. She wore a plain, modest gray woolen dress with a high collar and long, tight sleeves and a tight white bonnet.

"Yes, may I help you," she said in Lamordian, with no accent.

"You must be the other Dr. Estevez," Eric said in Lamordian. "I'm Eric Muller, Hans Muller's son."

"Yes, what can I do for you? Is there a problem with Karl?" She said without emotion.

"Nothing that a new bottle of medicine wouldn't cure. I'm afraid the bottle broke."

"No problem. I'll get another bottle from the doctor's office. If you'll wait here?" She turned and walked back into the back room. She left the door open.

They moved for a better look into the room. Inside the doctor's office, they noticed a desk, a chair behind the desk, and two chairs in front of the desk, and a closed door along the back wall. There were some papers framed on the wall behind the desk.

After surveying the room, Gennifer walked over and sat down at the chair blocking the door. She pretended to look at the books on the table.

There was a clicking sound from the doctor's office and a creek of hinges. Bottles could be heard tapping against each other. Then came the creek of hinges and a clicking sound again. Shortly thereafter the woman came through the door and walked toward Eric. Gennifer stood and stepped next to Eric. Dr. Estevez handed Eric a smoky colored bottle.

"I could use to powder my nose," Gennifer whispered in Eric's ear in Mordentish.

"There you are Mr. Muller. That's ten silver pieces. Is there anything else I can help you with?"

"Is there someplace where my friend could powder her nose?" he asked. Getting his change purse out. He dug inside.

"The door in the back." She pointed to the other door along the inner wall.

Eric translated. Gennifer smiled shyly and curtsied, then walked to the door. She disappeared into the room the door closed slowly. Eric handed Dr. Estevez the money.

"If that is everything?" Dr. Estevez said.

"Yes it should be."

Dr. Estevez turned her back on Eric and left the room, closing the office door behind her. He didn't hear the sound of another door opening.

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It was a simple privy under the stairs, a lit oil lamp sconce just inside the door on the wall, a high table with a pitcher and bowl, a mirror on the wall behind, and a large pot on the floor with wiping paper. Gennifer pulled a compact out of a hidden pocket and powdered her nose then replaced it and left the room.

Eric was waiting silently when Gennifer emerged from the privy. She joined him and they left the office. The bell above the door jingled as they left.

They stepped up to the carriage, told him where to go and they headed back toward Eric's father's house. "You actually did powder your nose," Eric noticed.

"You noticed." She smiled.

"I always notice."

When they got to the Muller house, he paid the carriage driver and set up for him to come back about five to take Gennifer back to the inn and again at six to bring her, Laurie and Lorenz for dinner tonight. The carriage driver tipped his pointed hat and was off.

They went inside. The house was quiet. They went up to Karl's room. Eric knocked. "Come in." Eric opened the door and found Karl sitting up in bed. Olga sat in the chair next to the bed.

"How was the doctor?" Karl asked.

"If you mean Dr. Raphael Estevez, I wouldn't know. I don't think he was there. Mrs./Dr. Estevez helped us. Quite a charming woman."

"Your sarcasm is overwhelming," Karl said. "She's about as friendly as a bear with a bad case of fleas."

They all laughed.

"Now," Karl said, with some excitement in his voice, "tell me about the vampire."

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The carriage arrived for Gennifer as scheduled and returned her to the inn. Laurie was finishing her bath as she arrived. Gennifer got her bath while Laurie dried herself. After Gennifer finished, Lorenz took a cold bath then shaved. All three used the same bath water. Then they dressed for dinner at the Muller house. Laurie and Gennifer helped each other with their corsets. Both wore dresses.

Eric also took a bath and shaved, but before he could dress, Olga knocked on the door. Karl needed help with his bath, and their father wasn't available to help. So Eric helped Karl. Then he helped Karl dress. By this time, Olga was bathed and dressed.

Eric returned downstairs and finished dressing. After he finished dressing, he went to see if Karl needed help getting downstairs. He did. Eric just picked Karl up effortlessly and carried him to the living room.

Eric, Karl and Olga sat in the living room. Karl had lost so much weight, he looked as if he was a child playing dress up in his father's clothes. The double doors to the dining room were open. Senior Muller was talking to Greta in the dining room about dinner as she set the table. The grandmother clock on the mantle chimed quarter to seven. Eric heard something outside. He got up and walked to the window. The carriage was outside and Lorenz was helping the ladies out. Eric walked to the front door and opened it. He smiled as his friends walked up to the house. The ladies looked almost identical. The only difference was the color of their dresses. One wore a dark blue dress the other wore a forest green dress. Eric watched the ladies.

When they got to the door, Eric opened his arms and hugged the ladies. He kissed both on the cheek and greeted them by name. Then he shook Lorenz's hand. And waved them into the house. Karl and Olga were on their feet. The senior Muller walked into the living room. Eric closed the door behind his friends. He grabbed a walking cane from the umbrella stand by the front door and escorted them into the living room. He handed Karl the walking cane.

"This is Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove," he introduced them to the woman in the green dress. He smiled and winked at Laurie. "And her sister Gennifer," he smiled at Gennifer then winked at her too. "And this is Lorenz Suarez."

"Such beautiful ladies," the senior Muller kissed each of the ladies hands. "You have good taste in friends, Eric." He winked at Eric. "And Suarez?" the senior Muller asked. "You're from Borca then?"

"Yes, sir," Lorenz replied.

"Dr. Raphael Estevez is from Borca."

"That sounds like a Borcan name."

"Do you know Dr. Estevez?"

"I don't recognize the name."

"Perhaps I'll introduce you two. Maybe you know each other."

They all went to the dining room. They enjoyed a polite conversation over dinner. Karl played with his water, but did not drink it. Then they retired to the living room for drinks. Karl was particularly interested in their travels together. He enjoyed hearing the stories about them vanquishing evil. They downplayed the magical aspects. The senior Muller paid particular attention to how Eric reacted to the ladies. Everyone noticed.

"You must have a word with your brother, Eric," the senior Muller said.

"Why, Father?" Eric asked.

"I'm quite angry with him. First he breaks his medicine bottle, then he dumps his lunch tray with his glass of medicine onto the floor. I don't know what's in his head. How is he supposed to get better if he doesn't take his medicine?"

Gennifer and Eric both look at Karl.

"I'm just frustrated," Karl said. "I dumped my tray after you left for the doctor's office. Greta was not happy to clean up the mess."

"If he won't take his medicine like the doctor tells him. I'm going to have to see if the doctor has a different method of getting it in him."

“We wouldn’t want to anger the doctor now would we?” Eric said to Karl. Eric winked at Karl.

“Wouldn’t want that,” Karl said. “Maybe if it didn’t taste so bad. That stuff makes me want to vomit.”

“You know very well, Karl that just because something tastes bad doesn’t mean it’s not good for you. And just because something tastes good doesn’t mean it not bad for you.”

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The carriage arrived at ten to return the trio to the inn. The senior Muller invited them to dinner again tomorrow night. They accepted graciously. Eric saw them to the carriage. Eric asked if they wanted him to accompany them to the inn. They said it wasn’t necessary. So they planned to meet for breakfast at the inn in the morning. Eric arranged for the carriage to pick him up. Then he wished his friends good night. The senior Muller retired to the workshop. Eric helped Karl upstairs to bed. Then he retired himself, leaving Greta with instructions to wake him early.

* * * * *

The next morning, Greta woke Eric like he asked. He shaved, dressed and checked on Karl before he went to wait for the carriage. When it arrived he went to the inn. There was more than an inch of snow on the ground and everyone’s breath, even the horse, came in thick clouds. His friends were not in the restaurant. Dieter at the front desk said they were awake, so he went up to their rooms. He knocked on the ladies room door first.

“Come in.”

Eric opened the door. Gennifer, in a dress, was putting a jacket on and Laurie, in pants, was slipping her boots on.

“You should be careful who you give permission to enter.”

“I saw you get out of the carriage,” Gennifer said. “We do have a birds eye view of the street.” She pointed to the window.

Laurie stood and walked toward Eric. “I’ll get Lorenz.” She walked past him and into the hall. Eric watched her walk away. He frowned and turned to look at Gennifer.

“You’re Laurie.”

“You can tell by the way we walk?”

“Maybe it comes from having twins for brothers.”

“Maybe you just like to watch us walk.”

“That too.”

They both laughed.

“What are you two laughing about?” Lorenz asked.

“Private joke,” Eric said. “Right Laurie?” he said looking at the woman in the dress.

“I thought this was Laurie,” Lorenz said pointing to the woman in the pants.

“I’m hungry,” Eric said. “How ‘bout some breakfast?”

“Must be nice having twins for brothers,” Lorenz said.

"I know more about these twins than I do my own brothers, my father saw to that."
"Shall we?" Laurie in the dress said. She locked the door and walked downstairs.
The other three followed. They went to the restaurant. Inga was working behind the bar.

"Just sit anywhere," Inga said, smiling at the group.

They sat at a table near the front, away from the rest of the people in the restaurant. Inga came over to the table.

"Good morning, the special is written on the board. Can I get you all something to drink? Coffee and tea, either hot or cold, come with the breakfast."

They all ordered. Inga went into the kitchen to place the order. When she came out, she brought their drinks. She placed the cups on the table. Then she put her hand on Eric's shoulder.

"How is your brother today?" Inga asked.

"About the same."

"I hope he gets better soon," Inga smiled. She slipped her hand down Eric's chest to his coat pocket. Then she patted his chest. "Your food should be done by now. I'll go check."

The others looked at Eric then to Inga as she walked to the kitchen.

Eric smiled and looked at Lorenz. "I'll give it to you later."

"Give what?" Lorenz asked.

"How quickly they forget," Eric said looking at the ladies. "Have you forgotten?"

"No," Laurie said. "I remember."

"So do I," Gennifer said.

Inga brought their breakfasts and returned to behind the bar.

"So Lorenz," Eric began, "have you found out anything yet? Or is it too soon?"

"Well, I do have my portable lab set up. And I did get a preliminary look at the medicines. But I haven't found out a lot yet. They are all the same. Just different strengths."

"Are they medicines?"

"I don't think so. They don't seem to have any medicinal qualities. But I can't tell whether they are the poison or not. I need more time."

"How much more?"

"A day, if I'm lucky. Maybe two."

"Hopefully Karl has that much time. So should we tell Karl to stop taking this medicine?"

"I don't know. But I don't think it would make any difference if he didn't take it for a day or two."

"I'll tell him after breakfast. I didn't notice anything out of the ordinary at the doctors' office. Did you Gennifer?"

"No, but I heard something when I was in the privy. It was muffled; I couldn't tell what it was. I didn't notice any magic. But if she is Lamordian, she wouldn't believe in it, would she?"

"No. You said, Dr. Estevez was at your house when Kurt died, right?" Lorenz asked.

"That's what Olga said."

"Inga," Lorenz called.

She came over to the table. "Yes sir?"

"About the kids that died," Lorenz spoke quietly. "Do you know if the good doctor was at their houses when the kids died? Giving them a check up, maybe?"

"I don't know. But I can find out about one of them. Mr. Farrell is at the table near the back with four other men. I can ask him."

"How can you ask that kind of a question discretely?" Gennifer asked.

"You can't," Inga said. "But I don't think he's too happy with the doctor. He got really angry with the doctor after his boys died. He did say something about not being able to grieve for them. His wife was apathetic. She's since completely withdrawn. They were the Farrell's only sons. They do have a daughter, she's eleven and just started getting sick when the boys died. He wanted to run the doctor out of town. But the town elders wouldn't allow it."

"Interesting," Lorenz said, curiously. "Any other interesting things happen concerning the good doctor?"

"Nothing I can think of right now. If I think of anything, I'll let you know." The gentlemen got up to leave. "Mr. Farrell," Inga called.

One of the gentlemen came over to the table.

"Yes Inga," the man said in Lamordian. He had a frown that looked permanently etched into his brow.

"I know this is going to be a strange question," Inga said quietly. "But was Dr. Estevez at your house when your sons died?"

"Yes," he said in a low volatile voice. "Estevez was giving them both their weekly checkups when they died. Why?"

"And see if he took the bodies not allowing anyone to touch or get near them? What about the other children who died?" Lorenz asked.

Gennifer leaned in to Eric and whispered in Mordentish, "What are they saying?"

Mr. Farrell looked angrily at Gennifer; then began speaking in Mordentish. "Yes, he took the bodies without allowing anyone to get near them. I believe he was attending the other children when they died also. Again I ask why? Who are you people?" Mr. Farrell was getting angry.

"There is no need to get angry, Mr. Farrell," Eric speaking quietly and calmly. Eric stood slowly. "I'm Eric Muller, Hans Muller's son. And these are my friends, Laurie and Gennifer Weathermay-Foxgrove and Lorenz Suarez. We've come to help."

"Why haven't you come sooner?"

"I came as soon as I heard. Please, Mr. Farrell. Sit down. Inga get him a drink." Eric grabbed a chair from the next table and set it next to him for Mr. Farrell. "We're trying to keep this low key until we know more."

"Your father's a fool," he said sitting down. "He's lost one boy to this monster and he's about to lose another. And I think he lost you a long time ago with the way he, and the rest of us treated you."

"It's alright Mr. Farrell," Eric said reassuringly.

"Just because he seems the most obvious explanation, does not mean he is behind this," Lorenz suggested. "Are there any other reasons you suspect the doctor?"

"And why didn't the town elders at least investigate him?" Laurie asked.

Inga came over quickly with a stein of beer. She mouthed, "I'm sorry." Eric smiled at Inga.

“Mr. Farrell, I thought you were one of the town elders,” Eric said.

Mr. Farrell seemed to calm down a bit. He took a few deep breaths then took a drink of his beer. “I’ll tell you what I know. A couple months after you left, Mayor Wagner’s wife was called home to Leidenheim to tend to her sick mother. When they came back, they brought the doctor’s Estevez with them. Apparently they were looking for a place to practice and the Wagner’s thought that we could use real doctors instead of just a simple apothecary and alchemist. I don’t know if you remember him, but Mr. Dolf was an ancient man. He always griped about wanting to go home to wherever that was to spend his final days.”

“Hadn’t he had been saying that forever?”

“Yes, ever since his wife died. The only thing he said was keeping him here was there would be no one in town to take care of the town’s medicinal needs. Well, Mayor Wagner gave Dolf his long awaited opportunity and ushered him out of town. The doctors moved into Dolf’s Apothecary and Alchemy shop until a new house with an office could be built. The Estevez’ brought three dwarves in to put in a foundation for the house before they allowed the Wolf brothers to build. These dwarves put a large tent over the land and brought in stones and mortar. They worked for almost three months. Then one day they were done and gone, over night. Then the Wolf brothers built the house on top. By the time the house and office were built they had already bought everything to put in the house. Most of the furniture was from your father.” Mr. Farrell took a deep breath.

“Anything with the doctors before the children began getting sick?”

“My boys always said they smelled funny.”

“Do they live alone? Do they have any children?” Gennifer asked.

“Yes, they live alone and have no children.”

“What about pets?” Gennifer asked.

“No.”

“Do they have like a hospital section? Maybe for patients they need to watch closely?”

“No. No one ever stays at their house. The kids in town don’t like to go to their office. They say it’s creepy and they hear noises. I *was* an elder, until I started investigating the doctor. The mayor is really tight with the doctors. The mayor and Estevez both said it was grief from losing my boys. There is nothing new in this town. There hasn’t been since the doctors came to town. And before that when your mother and father married. Things in this town change very infrequently and very slowly. We don’t like change. There has been no changes to nature that we can tell. Nothing with the river, the trees, the grass, the air, the small crop of rye the Grunwald’s raise, the Mier’s vegetables, the fish the fishermen bring in, the Gebhart’s poultry, my pigs. According to Mr. Jobl the veterinarian none of the animals have anything wrong with them. Just the children. And I’ve noticed only the children who can afford to go to the doctor on a regular basis are the ones that got sick. Olga who’s helped watch over your brothers, for example, her father’s the sail maker. Since his wife died six years ago, he’s been drunk most of the time. What money he does bring in goes right to booze. So sending her to the doctors was not going to happen, especially with the prices they charges. I don’t think she’s gone to the doctor since her mother died. And she never got sick. As for the ones that died, only twins have died. Except of course the mayor’s 14-

year-old twin girls. They go to the doctor every six months for checkups and they haven't gotten sick. And when anyone says anything bad about the doctors, the mayor is the one who shuts them up. Your father is also one of the town elders who've sung the doctors praises. And even though your brothers took ill, he hasn't spoken against the doctors."

"From what Eric wrote about the children's symptoms, poisoning looks like what's making the children sick. But if the doctor is doing this, how does he make them sick. We're looking at the medicine as what's poisoning the children. How could he make them sick so he can give them this poison medicine?"

"Vitamins," Mr. Farrell said. "All the children who go see the doctor on a regular basis all get vitamins. They take these vitamins once a day."

"In what form are these vitamins?" Lorenz asked.

"Tablets."

"Swallow? Not chewed."

"When they were younger they chewed them. When they got older they swallowed them."

"Did your kids ever tell you how these vitamins tasted?"

"The ones they chewed tasted like fruit. But when they turned nine the doctors gave them the kind they swallow with water. They said they tasted nasty."

"Got any?" Lorenz asked.

"Yes, I think I still have some. If not there's my daughter's."

"I'd like to see them."

"I'll get them for you."

"I'd love to get in that house," Gennifer said.

"I can't see how. Mrs. Estevez, never leaves the house," Mr. Farrell said.

Eric smiled, "Yes she does. Every Saturday evening, they come here for dinner, 6:30 to 7:30."

"Today's Saturday," Mr. Farrell said.

"Lucky us," Lorenz said. "I should be done with my tests by this afternoon, if I'm lucky. Or at least enough."

"Their going to have some kind of defenses on their house," Laurie said. "Probably the dwarven kind. I don't know any dwarves."

"I do," Mr. Farrell said. "I'll talk to them and get back to you."

"We can meet for lunch," Laurie said.

"I should be able to get something from them then," Mr. Farrell said standing to leave.

"Don't say anything to anyone else. We need to keep this as quiet as possible," Eric said.

"No problem. See you at lunch." Mr. Farrell left the restaurant.

"I'll go talk to the locksmith and see if they put any extra defenses on the house," Eric stood to leave.

"I'll go with you, again." Gennifer stood also. "Maybe we can open a shop here." She winked at Laurie.

"This circle of people in the know is getting larger and larger," Lorenz mentioned. "That's dangerous."

"We only have one more day till we can do something," Gennifer mentioned.

"We've said that before. Then the roof caves in," Eric said.

"Than maybe we should be prepared to move at a moments notice," Gennifer said. "I'll be right back." She left the room and went upstairs.

"Maybe you should change," Lorenz suggested to Laurie. "Pants would be easier to move in."

"Good idea." Laurie got up and went upstairs also.

"Maybe you should get to work, Lorenz," Eric suggested. "Tell Gennifer to make sure she has her gloves." Eric took a vial from his pocket and handed it to Lorenz. "From Inga."

Lorenz nodded then also went upstairs.

Eric finished his coffee and paid for his breakfast. Then he went into the lobby and waited for Gennifer. Dieter was at the front desk.

"Dieter," Eric began, "Heimrich, and Heimlich. Your two families are related right?"

"Yes, when my great-grandfather died without naming his heir, my grandfather and his brother had a falling out, over the family business, the inn. So the town elders were consulted and they awarded the inn to my grandfather. My uncle married the only daughter to the tavern owner and changed his name to Heimlich and got the tavern. They rarely spoke though. My father and cousin are on better terms. At least they speak to each other."

"Who did your sister marry?"

"One of the Gebhart boys. He's a cook in the restaurant. They supply all our poultry."

"So I guess Mr. Gebhart isn't inheriting the family farm or the butchery then," Eric observed.

"No, he just hates farming. She always liked you though. Still does I think."

"With the way the town acted toward me, marrying anyone here was highly unlikely." The two men smiled. Eric looked up and saw Gennifer coming down the stairs. She wore a larger coat, one that could hide more things beneath. He leaned in close to Dieter. "As for now, my heart is already taken," Eric whispered. He stood upright when Gennifer reached him. "Ready?" he asked her.

"I believe I have everything I need."

"Good. Thank you, Dieter. We'll see you at lunch."

"I'll make sure there's a table for four."

"We might have Mr. Farrell joining us," Eric informed.

"Not a problem, Eric. Ma'am," Dieter nodded to Gennifer and smiled.

"Should we get our horses?" Gennifer asked.

"No, we'll just rent a carriage for the day." They stepped outside. Then he whispered, "less attention that way."

They walked to the Steinware livery stables and rented a carriage for the day. First they went back to his father's house. He ran upstairs and talked to Karl about his medicine. Then he and Gennifer went to his room. He got two worn, brown, soft leather bags and an equally worn brown backpack from the wardrobe. He removes several things from the bags then put the bags back into the wardrobe. He removed his duster and the suit jacket then put a pistol shoulder holster on then put the pistol in the holster. The holster hung under his left arm. He changed his belt, putting on one with a dagger

sheath in the back. Gennifer hung up the suit jacket in his wardrobe and got his leather removable caplet for the duster and put it on the duster. Then she helped him put the duster on. He put his bullet pouch in the duster's outside right hip pocket and a 5" wide, 1½" thick, 6" long leather cases that looked like a cigar case into his outside left hip pocket. Then he put a foot long twine of fuse into the pocket with the leather case. He got two 1" wide, 1½" thick, 6" long leather cases and slipped one into each of his boots. Then he put matches into his breast pocket. He picked up a 8½" long, 5½" wide, and 3" thick leather case and slipped it into an inner pocket. Then he tied his whip onto his belt by his right hip with a bit of leather.

"Am I missing anything?" he asked.

"For work, doubtful. But you might want to fill your cigar case."

"Good point." He got his cigar case from his duster's inside breast pocket, opened it and got two cigars from the box on the desk and put them into the case. Then he took another cigar from the box and lit it from the desk lamp. "Shall we go?" He held his arm out for her.

"Lets," she put her arm in his and they left the room locking the door.

They went outside to the waiting carriage and went to Richter's Locksmith. He put his cigar out before going inside.

They walked into the office. It had samples of every type of lock they sell on racks along the walls. Behind a counter along the back wall stood a man with wire rimmed glasses.

"Good morning, can I help you?" the man said in Lamordian.

"I'm Eric Muller, you probably know my father, Hans Muller. Do you speak Mordentish?" he said in Lamordian.

"Yes, Mr. Muller. How can I help you?" he spoke Mordentish.

"This is a friend of mine. She and her sister have a shop in Mordentshire and were thinking about opening one here. What kind of locks and other building defenses do you have?"

The gentleman showed her all the locks for buildings. Eric paid attention.

"I suppose everyone in town uses these kinds of locks," Gennifer mention.

"Yes, although some people have more than one lock, depending on the business. What kind of business do you run in Mordentshire? Is it something valuable, like jewelry? We don't have any jewelers here in town."

"But then most people in Lamordia do not wear jewelry," Eric volunteered.

"True Mr. Muller."

"It's an herbalist shop. Herbs and spices mostly for cooking, although some can be used for medicinal purposes."

"Well we do have a doctor here in town, Miss. But then I'm sure Mr. Muller has told you about that, since his brothers are," he caught himself, "brother is ill."

"Yes I know. I'm no doctor, nor is my sister. We just provide the herbs and mix them if required. Provided we have a recipe. So we wouldn't be stepping on the doctors toes."

"I see. Well the doctor did purchase several of our best door locks and several padlocks when he built his house and office."

"I doubt there are many on the old apothecary's shop," Eric commented.

“Well, the shop does have a door lock on the outer doors. They were the best for the time. But that was years ago, when old Dolf had the place. Were you planning on building or buying? Old Dolf’s place is still available. And it does have living space. And it would be much cheaper to buy that place and fix it up, with new locks than build a new place. Unless you’re planning on putting in special modifications. And old Dolf’s place does have a cellar.”

“Cellar,” Gennifer said, acting interested. “Cellars are good for growing and storing some herbs.”

“The doctor liked the cellar. Only it wasn’t fortified.”

“Fortified? I’m not sure of any herb that would need to have fortification to protect. But then I’m no doctor.”

“That’s why he brought those nasty dwarves in to build a fortified cellar.”

“I suppose he would have his medicines,” Eric said. “They would have all kinds of uses, some good, some bad. He would need to protect them. Probably grows some of his own.”

“I know nothing of that. But I do know the Wolf brothers were really angry about bringing those dwarves in. After all, they could have made the cellar also. But since they did get to build the house and office on top, they weren’t too upset.”

“Who would we see about the apothecary shop?” Gennifer asked.

“Wagner’s Land office is next door to your father’s house,” he said to Eric.

“That’s right, I forgot it was there. The mayor’s son.”

“Thank you,” Gennifer said. “You were most helpful.”

“You are quite welcome.”

They left the locksmith. They checked the time.

“Let’s go back and see how Lorenz is doing,” Gennifer said. “Let them know what we found.”

“Sounds good.” They told the carriage driver to return to the inn.

* * * * *

When they got to the inn, they noticed Lorenz and Laurie in the restaurant with Mr. Farrell and a dwarf. They went into the restaurant to join them.

“Well, I think we’re missing something,” Eric said walking up to the table. Eric thought he recognized the dwarf.

“Not really,” Laurie said. “They just got here.”

Mr. Farrell stood. “This is Jarne Stonebreaker.” He introduced Eric and Gennifer. “He was telling me how his brother and two sisters disappeared about 8 years ago.”

Eric held the chair for Gennifer. “Really,” Eric said sitting down. “Weren’t you here in the restaurant yesterday? You were sitting in the back of the room with another dwarf.”

“Yes. That was my nephew, Laamon. His father, my brother Leemon is missing.”

“Where is he? Your nephew I mean.” Gennifer asked.

“Upstairs in our room. He has less patience than I do. He’ll accompany me on these wild goose chases but he lets me chase down the leads before he gets too worked up. Our family is from Darkon. We go all over the core building stone fortifications. We were contracted to build a fortified building for someone in Leidenheim. So Leemon

and one of our sisters, Tanta, went to work out the details. They settled the negotiations then sent for stone about a month after they left. I shipped the stone with another of our sisters, Britla. They never came back and I haven't heard from them since. I've been going back and forth between Darkon and Leidenheim to try and find out what happened. The people in Leidenheim haven't been very helpful. But finally someone in Leidenheim put me in touch with Mayor Wagner. He was not helpful either. And the people here are not very friendly. I bumped into Mr. Farrell by chance when we came to town. Then this morning he came to me and told me about these doctors and their dwarven built stone basement and I told him about my missing family. If I could get a look at this basement, I would know if my family did it. We have a unique style of building."

"I told Jarne that although I do remember the three dwarves I couldn't tell him anything about them. Except that they were men, so they weren't his family."

"Dwarven women also have beards, Mr. Farrell," Eric commented. "And to someone who doesn't have much contact with dwarves, you probably wouldn't be able to tell the difference."

"I see," Mr. Farrell said interested. "Well then, I'm no help there. I also told him that the doctors are suspect in a quiet investigation concerning the deaths of our children," Mr. Farrell continued. "And that we need to not go to the doctor just yet. He's agreed to help."

"Does your family put any security features into these fortifications when you build them?" Lorenz asked.

"Of course, that's part of what people want when they fortify buildings."

"And you could disable them," Laurie asked.

"Naturally."

"Mr. Farrell," Gennifer began, "Did you get your son's vitamins?"

"Yes, I dropped them off with Lorenz before I went to talk to Jarne. I couldn't find any of the chewable ones though."

"I got a preliminary look at them. They look the same as the medicines, only in tablet form. And I did get enough done with the medicines, they are poison."

"How can anyone make a poison that is in tablet form and liquid?" Laurie asked.

"Tools of the trade, my dear Laurie. Tools of the trade," Lorenz smiled. "Harder to tell their poisons then."

"Now we have to get a look at their house," Laurie said.

"I need to get to Karl," Eric stood. "I'll be back."

"Wait," Mr. Farrell said standing. "I'll go with you."

"Wait," Lorenz said standing. He handed them two flasks. "This should neutralize the poison. There's two doses in each flask."

Mr. Farrell took the flasks and put them in his pocket then the two men left quickly.

"Jarne, maybe you should get some things ready for tonight," Lorenz said. "I'll go get my things ready also." He got up and left the room.

"Tonight? What's tonight?" he asked.

"We act," Laurie said. "Inga," she called. Gennifer and Jarne left the room.

Inga came over from behind the bar. "Yes miss."

"Can you get a lunch for six ready and have someone bring it up to our room for us?" Laurie asked.

"Yes miss."

“Something quick.” Laurie left the room also.

* * * * *

Eric and Mr. Farrell went to Eric’s father’s house. Tiny snowflakes fell from the sky, adding to the blanket that covered the ground.

“Have the carriage turned around by the time we get back out,” Mr. Farrell ordered the driver.

Greta was dusting the living room when they arrived.

Eric asked, “Where’s my father?”

“In the workshop like always.”

“Good, here’s the key to my room.” He dug it out of his pocket and handed it to her. “Get my bags from the wardrobe and the valise from under the bed along with my cigars on the desk and take them to the carriage outside. Then watch for my father. If he comes out before we leave, distract him. Keep him in the back of the house.”

“Yes, Mr. Eric.” She took the key and disappeared down the hall.

Eric and Mr. Farrell ran upstairs. Karl was eating lunch in bed and Olga was sitting beside him in a chair.

“Olga, get Karl’s things quickly. Just dump them in a pillowcase or wrap them in the sheet, anything handy.”

“What’s wrong?”

“No time. We’ll talk on the way. And forget the medicine.” Eric grabbed the glass of water from Karl’s tray and dumped it into the washing pitcher on the dresser. Then he grabbed the medicine and did the same. Then he went to the window at the back of the house, opened it and dumped it outside.

Olga scurried around the room getting his clothes and shoes and other things from the wardrobe and dresser and dumped everything quickly into the sheet from Kurt’s bed. Then she grabbed his coat.

“What’s his coat doing up here? Shouldn’t it be downstairs?” Eric asked amazed.

“Your brother hasn’t left the house in four months. Your father put it up here.”

“Is your coat downstairs?” Eric took the coat from her.

“Yes, Eric. In my room.”

“Go get it and get your things too, quickly. Then meet us outside. There’s a carriage waiting. And try to avoid my father. If you see him, lie.”

Olga tied the sheets corners together then darted out of the room, bundle in hand. Eric stripped the covers off Karl. Karl had socks on. “Good.” He helped put Karl’s coat on, then wrapped the blanket around him and picked him up effortlessly. The three left the room, Mr. Farrell first. They raced downstairs. Greta was in the hallway. Eric turned to her.

“Your things are in the carriage, Mr. Eric.”

“Good. If my father asks, you know nothing. You never saw us. Got it?”

“Yes Mr. Eric,” she said puzzled.

“You’re sure he’s still in his workshop?”

“Yes Mr. Eric?”

“Greta, we will not be here for dinner.”

Mr. Farrell looked out the window and studied the street for a minute. Then he went outside and as casually as possible looked around the block, then waved Eric on. Olga ran quietly down the hallway, two bundles in hand. Her coat was on. Then the three left the house going as quickly and carefully as possible down the snow covered walk and got into the carriage.

"Take us to my farm," he told the driver. "Take the long way by fisherman's village, avoiding the doctor's office." He handed the man five gold pieces. "And if anyone asks, you saw nothing."

Mr. Farrell handed Karl one of the flasks Lorenz gave them. "Drink half of this."

He drank half the contents of the flask. Color came back to his face almost before he finished drinking.

"You look better," Eric said. "Now how do you feel?"

"Much better. I don't feel sick any longer. But I still feel weak and hungry."

"Then it is poison," Mr. Farrell stated taking the flask back.

"Is my father in on this?" Karl asked.

"Doing nothing is just as guilty as giving it to you," Mr. Farrell stated. "He could have written your brother much sooner than he did."

"My father didn't write me," Eric said.

"What?" Mr. Farrell said shocked. "Then how did you find out?"

"We did," Karl said. "Kurt and I. Olga intercepted one of the letters Eric wrote us. Eric always wrote, even though my father never replied. That's how we knew where Eric was. So we wrote him and Olga slipped it out without our father knowing. He refused to write. Said the Estevez' were all we needed."

"Fool," Mr. Farrell said.

They rode the rest of the way to the Farrell farm in silence. When they got there, Mr. Farrell led the way. Eric carried Karl inside, Olga carried the two bundles. Mrs. Farrell sat quietly staring at the fireplace, while the group went upstairs. Mr. Farrell showed them to a room. Eric put Karl in bed. Olga dropped the bundles on the floor.

Mr. Farrell left the room and walked across the hallway to his daughter's room. He grabbed a bottle of pills off her nightstand and put it in his pocket.

"Pappa?" she said. She was very pale and looked sick.

"You won't be taking these any longer." He handed his daughter the flask Karl drank from. "Drink this."

She drank the remainder of the flask. Nothing happened. She was still pale and sick.

Eric stood in the doorway. "Give her the other flask."

Mr. Farrell handed her the other flask. "Drink half."

She drank half the contents of the flask. The color returned to her face.

"I feel much better, Pappa. And I'm hungry."

"Get dressed sweetheart," he said gently. "And go downstairs and make something for you and Karl to eat."

"Alright Pappa."

They left the room while she dressed.

"Why did it take two doses for her? She wasn't as sick as Karl."

"Magic," Eric said.

"What?"

"Lorenz gave us two flasks. Maybe there were two different remedies."

"So we're going to move on the doctors tonight?" Mr. Farrell said.

"You're not going anywhere."

"Yes I am. I want to help. Especially now that I know I've been right all along."

"Very well then. You can be at the restaurant tonight. If we aren't back by the time they leave, make sure they stay longer. Even if you have to start a fight."

"My pleasure."

* * * * *

Eric went back to the inn. Dieter was at the front desk.

"The ladies said you are to go to Mr. Suarez' room. There's a lunch waiting."

"Thank you, Dieter."

Eric smiled as he passed Dieter and went upstairs. He knocked softly on Lorenz' door.

"Come in," one of the ladies said.

Eric opened the door. Lorenz was working over the dresser, filled with test tubes. The ladies sat on the bed eating. There was a large platter on the bed with what looked like the roast pork with vegetables they had yesterday. There was also a round table with four chairs around it.

"The *neutralize poison* potions in the flasks worked. Both Karl and Mr. Farrell's daughter recovered immediately. Well, she needed 2 doses. The first one didn't work."

"The medicine is poison," Lorenz said. "And the vitamin pills seem to be the same. I haven't finished with all the tests on them."

"So one or both of the doctors are poisoning the children. Why?" Eric asked.

"And what are they doing with the bodies once they've taken them?" Laurie said.

"I guess we'll find that out in a few hours," Eric said walking over to the bed. He grabbed a chair from the table and sat down.

"This is probably a new poison he's come up with and he's using the children as test subjects."

"That's dangerous," Gennifer said. "If anyone would find out, he'd be in big trouble."

"That's probably something he'd plan for," Lorenz said.

"When he was at the house giving Karl his weekly checkup, he did have his doctor's bag with him."

"All he would really need is a list of ingredients and their amounts."

"I could use some more ice tea," Gennifer said standing. She walked to the door and left the room.

Eric took a plate and filled it with food. There was a pitcher of ice tea on the dresser, more than half full. Laurie got up from the bed and filled a glass and handed it to Eric. He thanked her. Then she sat back down on the bed.

"Has he eaten yet," Eric said pointing to Lorenz.

"No."

After a few minutes Gennifer entered the room with another pitcher of tea.

"Inga said, whenever the doctors come for dinner, they both have their doctor's bags with them. Hers is bigger than his. They also own a carriage and two horses that

the livery brings them every morning and picks up every night. She said it has a large chest built into the back of it. She said she's never seen it opened."

"Convenient," Lorenz said.

After another hour of working Lorenz finally took a break to eat. He ate quickly, drank some tea and got back to work. Eric took the tray and the empty pitcher of ice tea downstairs to the restaurant. He returned to the room.

After another hour of Lorenz working and Eric, Gennifer and Laurie talking quietly, someone knocked on the door. Eric looked at his pocket watch.

"It's too early for Mr. Farrell." He got up and went to the door. "Who is it?"

"Jarne," was the reply.

Eric opened the door. Jarne stood outside. He had on a strange looking leather suit covered with dozens of various pouches and tool holders. There were tools hanging off the suit; several different size hammers, axes, a hand-sized pickaxe, other smaller wire-like tools that resembled thieves picks, files, and scissors. There were glass vials with cork stoppers, sticks of dynamite, fuse. And a huge battle-axe strapped to his back. Eric smiled broadly and ushered him inside quickly.

"I'm ready to go," he said enthusiastically.

Gennifer snickered. "So we see."

"You look a bit obvious," Laurie said.

"What do you mean? I have everything here I'll need to get into a fortified stone structure, especially one of my families designs. There's some acid, dynamite, fuse," Eric put up his hand to stop him.

"Although the acid could prove useful. We want to get inside and look around, not blow the building up. We want to find evidence that they're doing something wrong and bring it back in one piece." Eric pulled the leather cigar-like case from the outside pocket of his duster. He opened it and pulled out a vial of black powder. "I have these nice little gunpowder vials, and fuse. I've found they open doors very nicely without bringing down the wall along with it."

"Why do you carry something like that?" Jarne asked.

"I explore tombs a lot. Tombs which could have various undead things inside. I also use some fine tools like you have on your harness as well. Tombs tend to have traps of various kinds. Sometimes all that's needed to avoid or defuse a trap is a lock pick and other times a little blast is needed."

"Oh," Jarne seemed disappointed.

"We don't want to draw too much attention before we get there," Laurie said.

"We're going to at least look like we're not up to something when we leave the inn."

"Oh," Jarne frowned.

"Well," Lorenz said trying not to laugh, "perhaps if you had a large coat. Your outfit would be all right beneath it. And I don't think we're going to go into battle. So you might want to leave the battle-axe behind." Lorenz hesitated.

"But what if we get into one?" Jarne argued.

"You have several other axes," Gennifer volunteered. "I'm sure that in a town setting like this, in a doctor's house, they will be more than," she hesitated, "we'll need."

"Plus we'll be there also," Laurie said.

“And although some of us do have large weapons we like to use,” Eric added. “I’m sure between the five of us, we’ll be able to handle anything a couple of doctor’s can come up with.”

“Oh, all right. I’ll be right back,” he said walking to the door.

“Make sure you have gloves with you,” Lorenz mentioned.

“Why?” he asked.

“Because the male doctor likes to use poisons,” Lorenz said.

Jarne nodded and left the room. After a few minutes, there was a knock at the door. Eric opened it. Jarne walked inside wearing a large bulky coat that reached to his knees. “I left the battle-axe in my room. Will I need to wear the gloves?”

“No, just have them handy for when we get inside,” Gennifer said.

“Well then, what’s the plan?” Jarne smiled.

“Well,” Eric began. “We’ll leave the inn and wait down the street in the carriage. Close enough so we can see the doctors enter the inn but far enough so we have a head start to get into their house and office.”

“When they enter the inn we’ll move to their house,” Laurie continued.

“I should be able to get us into the house,” Eric said. “If my skills can’t do it, we could use your acid. But we want to try and make an entry as unnoticeable as possible. Just in case we don’t find anything.”

“Both outside and inside,” Gennifer continued, “I’ll check to see if there’s any magic in use.”

“Which is doubtful since Mrs. Estevez is Lamordian,” Eric said.

“What does that have anything to do with it,” Jarne asked.

“Lamordian’s don’t believe in magic,” Eric said.

“Meanwhile,” Lorenz interjected. “I’ll be checking for poisons.”

“You think there’ll be poisons on everything, like doorknobs?” Jarne asked.

“Possibly,” Lorenz answered. “The male Dr. Estevez is quite handy with them. It appears he’s been poisoning the children here in town the past few years.”

“And no one noticed?”

“The ones that did seems to have been chastised by the town hierarchy,” Eric said.

“After we get inside,” Laurie continued. “We’ll try to locate the entrance to the basement. Then do what we can to gain entry.”

“And that’s where I come in,” Jarne said proudly. “Of course our family does provide excellent trap doors that are extremely hard to detect.”

“Then you could be helpful at finding the entrance also,” Gennifer added.

“Once we get into the basement,” Eric said. “We find out what the doctors are up to. And we’re getting there by carriage?”

“Yes,” Eric said. “We rented the carriage for the day.”

“With a driver?” Jarne asked.

“Yes.”

“Won’t the driver get suspicious if we go to the doctors place when the doctors are out?”

The four friends looked at each other.

“We didn’t think of that,” Gennifer said.

“Maybe we could see about getting the carriage without the driver,” Lorenz suggested.

"Maybe we could pay him to be quiet," Laurie suggested.

"The driver we've had this morning has been young. So I doubt we can use his children being poisoned by the doctors as leverage," Gennifer mentioned.

"What about Mr. Farrell," Lorenz commented.

"Mr. Farrell is having dinner here in the restaurant between 6:30 and 7:30 to try and keep the doctors here longer if we aren't back by then," Eric mentioned.

"Perhaps I should get my nephew. He can sit in the carriage and make sure the driver doesn't do anything that could jeopardize our efforts."

"Only if we can't get the driver to stay behind," Eric said moving to the door. "The carriage driver is a Steinware. I'll be back in a few minutes." He left the room.

Jarne took off the coat and began checking through his equipment. He opened pouches, counted tools, inventoried everything on his suit.

"I've never seen a dwarf wear something like that," Lorenz commented. "I've seen gnomes. It's kind of like leather armor that they put all manner of tools and gadgets and things on. They use it when they work."

"Yes, I've seen those too. This is very much like them," Jarne said, continuing his inventory. "Most dwarves don't like it. In fact, they tend to make fun of me, call me names, some even shun me. But I have everything I'll ever need, it's all here, within reach. Except of course my battle-axe."

Eric entered the room. "What room are you and your nephew in?"

"14."

Eric left the room.

"Guess the driver's along for the ride," Jarne said.

The room was growing dark. Laurie lit the lamps.

After a few minutes, Eric returned with Jarne's nephew. Laamon Stonebreaker didn't look much younger than Jarne. He wore a cloak over his clothes that seemed to have something sticking up behind his left shoulder. He also had something in his hand. He walked over to the table and sat down in one of the chairs. He looked frustrated. He lifted his hand with the object in it and opened it. It was a book.

The group waited in the room. Jarne inventoried his suit over and over; Lorenz eventually stopped with the poison and gathered his tools; Laurie and Gennifer looked through the items they were taking; Eric sat and smoked cigars; and Laamon read his book. When it was six o'clock, the group was startled by a knock at the door. Eric got up and asked who it was. It was Mr. Farrell. Eric opened the door and let him in. He looked anxious.

"So," he began, "is everything ready for tonight?"

"Looks that way," Eric said.

Mr. Farrell noticed Laamon sitting at the table. "Is he going along with you?"

"To watch over the carriage driver," Laamon said, disinterested. "Just another wild goose chase."

"Not for us, master dwarf," Mr. Farrell said. "Our children are at stake."

"Perhaps. And that's good for you. But for us, this is just another of my uncle's wild goose chases. This will be just like all the other times we've tracked down leads. It will be fruitless. There comes a time when we should just give it up and move on."

"Fine," Jarne said. "Fine, this is the last goose chase you will have to come on. Just do your part with as much enthusiasm as you put into your building and I will ask no more of you."

"Deal," Laamon said, perking up. He set the book down on the table.

"Two of the Steinware girls died to this poison. Maybe we can appeal to the driver's sense of justice or revenge. If that's the case, Laamon, you'll have an easy evening."

"Good! When do we leave?"

"About 15 minutes," Gennifer said.

"Mr. Farrell," Laurie began, "if you do have to stall the doctors, make sure you don't tip our hand."

"I understand," he said. "We don't want the mayor and the elders coming down on you before you get evidence."

They all sat down and went over the plan once more. When everyone was aware of their parts to play, they gathered their things and left the room, locking it behind them.

They descended the stairs. Dieter was behind the front desk. He turned and watched the group. Mr. Farrell walked into the restaurant. The rest of the group left the inn. Dieter smiled. He walked to the door to the restaurant and nodded to Inga behind the bar. She smiled back. Dieter returned to the front desk. She came from around the bar with a stein of beer and sat it at a table and ushered Mr. Farrell to it. Mr. Farrell took the hint.

She whispered, "This will give you the best view." Then louder, "would you like something for dinner Mr. Farrell?"

* * * * *

Outside, the sun had just set and there was an inch of powdered snow on the ground. Good, everyone thought, they have cover of night, but bad that the snow would show their tracks. The group got into the carriage. Not everyone fit, convenient, so Laamon got up with the driver. They said, to take a casual stroll south to the butcher. When they got to the butcher they noticed a two-person carriage approaching from the south. It was the doctor's carriage. When the doctors passed, Eric leaned out of the carriage and watched. The driver got a bit nervous. Eric patted him on the arm and smiled warmly. When the doctors got out and went into the inn. Eric told the driver to go to the Open Market Place, which was just past the doctor's house. The driver commented that it was closed. Eric told him again. When they reached the market Eric told the driver to pull into the first section on the left side, just behind the doctor's house. Everyone but Laamon got out of the carriage. The driver looked nervous. Everyone but Eric stepped into the line of shrubs between the doctor's house and the market.

Eric looked to the driver. "Steinware, how were the girls who died from this mysterious disease related to you?"

"My daughters sir," he said.

"I wouldn't have thought you that old."

"Thank you sir."

"Do you want to know what really happened to them?"

"Yes sir,"

“Do you want to prevent this from happening to anyone else’s children?”

“Like your brother Karl? Yes sir.”

“Do you want the person behind this to pay for their crimes?”

“Yes sir,”

“Then you’ll turn a blind eye now.”

Eric turned and disappeared into the shrubs.

The others were waiting by the backdoor to the house. The door was solid with no windows. Lorenz and Jarne were looking at the doors locks. There were three. Eric stepped up beside them and looked at them. He recognized the locks from some the locksmith showed Gennifer and him earlier.

Lorenz whispered. “There doesn’t appear to be any foreign substances on the locks.”

Gennifer whispered. “I hear noises.”

Everyone listened. There were muffled noises coming from the house. Jarne held his hand up and listened. He turned his head from side to side trying to find it’s location. He leaned down, turned his head several more times, then got on his hands and knees.

“It’s coming from the basement,” he declared. He looked at the others. “Comes from years in the mines.” He smiled.

Eric pulled one of the leather cases from his boots. He opened it and pulled out tools and began picking the locks. It took only a few minutes and he opened the door a crack. He held up his hand. Everyone waited while he put his tools away. Then he pulled the 8½” long, 5½” wide, and 3” thick leather case from an inside pocket. He opened it and pulled out a mirror with a long curved handle. He slipped the mirror into the door and looked around. A lamp burnt in the hallway. It was enough to illuminate the area enough for him to see there was nothing above or around the door. He opened the door a little more and looked around using the mirror again. Then he opened the door further. He did this enough times until the door was open enough for the largest person, namely Jarne, to get into the door. Then he looked at the floor. He could not see anything unusual about it. So he stepped inside.

He looked around again then waved the next person inside. Once everyone was inside he looked at the doorway. He didn’t notice anything unusual about it. Lorenz looked also. They closed the door gently.

Eric waved at Jarne and he began inspecting the floor. Lorenz and Eric also looked about the floor. It took 15 minutes before Jarne noticed something different in the floorboards. He waved everyone to the spot. He, Lorenz and Eric inspected the area. There was a hairline square-shaped seam in the floor in the corner along the back wall and the east wall farthest from the office. Lorenz nodded that it looked all right to him. And stepped back. Jarne and Eric looked more closely at the area. Jarne shook his head and pointed to himself. Eric moved back a bit. Continuing to look at the floor, Jarne pulled several tools from various places on the suit. He started poking at the square in the floor.

Laurie and Gennifer were looking around the hallway. There were no windows in the back of the house. The only windows were the two door-length windows on either side of the front door. They were covered by curtains.

After a few minutes Jarne managed to find the latch for the trapdoor. It was closest to the back wall. He lifted it a bit and waved Lorenz over. Lorenz looked at the area, he

nodded his approval, then Jarne waved Eric over. Eric looked at the area. He didn't notice anything and nodded his approval. Jarne was about to grab the handle when Lorenz caught his attention. He motioned to his hands and put his gloves on. Everyone except Eric put their gloves on. Then Jarne grabbed the handle and lifted the trapdoor. It didn't budge. He frowned. He slipped something under the handle so it would not fall flush with the floor and stood up. He motioned around the walls and mouthed, "five feet."

Everyone began looking around the walls. Eric found something on the back wall above the trapdoor. He waved to Jarne. Jarne looked at the area and nodded. He took out a few more tools and poked at the area. There was a clicking sound.

Everyone held their breaths a moment. Nothing happened. Jarne kneeled down and grabbed the handle. The door lifted. He stopped when the trapdoor was up about an inch.

They all heard voices from below. But no one could discern anything.

Eric looked at the area. He didn't notice anything. Then Lorenz looked at the area. He didn't notice anything either. So Jarne opened the door more. This went on until the door was open and laying on the floor. The room below went silent.

There were stone stairs beneath the door. The room beneath was lit. Jarne and Eric leaned down and looked at the stairs. They noticed nothing out of the ordinary.

Then came a noise that shocked everyone. They heard a baby cry.

Everyone held their breaths again. Then a voice came from below.

"Well," a young man said. "Are you going to take care of him or what?"

"Kurt!" Eric exclaimed. Then forgot all caution and bolted down the stairs.

"No!" Gennifer exclaimed. Gennifer followed.

"Jarne," Laurie said. "Can you make sure the door doesn't close?"

"I can remove it from the hinge."

"Do it," Laurie said. "Lorenz go with them. Call if you need help. I'll stay here with Jarne."

When Eric reached the bottom of the stairs he couldn't believe what he saw. The room was filled with 11 exam tables, 3 along the south wall had 3 dwarves chained to them and 8 along west wall, beneath the doctor's office, 7 of the tables had the *dead* children strapped to them. Kurt was one of them. All of them wore nightshirts and had bare feet. The girls and two of the dwarves nightshirts had blood stains on them and there was dried blood on the floor at the base of their tables. But in front of him were two rows of cribs. He could see movement in them. And one of them was crying.

"Kurt!" Eric exclaimed, running to his brother's table.

"Eric? What are you doing here?"

"Rescuing you." Eric looked at the restraints. "Gennifer, what time is it?"

Gennifer checked her pocket watch. "Five past seven."

"Help free them," Eric stated. He took the dagger from its' sheath at his back and cut the straps.

Gennifer walked to the children and looked at the restraints. They were strapped down. She pulled out her dagger and began to cut the straps. She noticed two of the girls, one set of twins, were obviously pregnant. The children were paired up by twins, twin girls at the end, then twin boys, then twin girls, then Kurt and an empty table. There were signs on the wall at the children's heads, from nearest to farthest: M1, ST2, ST1, F2,

F1, SC2, SC1. The dwarves were labeled from closest to the stairs to farthest: L, B, T. The cribs had signs on them also. Along the east wall the first three were unlabeled, the remainder from nearest to farthest: B-ST2/L, B-ST2/L, G-ST1/L, G-ST1/L, B-SC2/L, B-SC2/L. In the center of the room the first was unlabeled, the remainder from nearest to farthest: B-T/F1, G-T/F2, B-B/F2, G-T/F1.

Lorenz went to the dwarves. He looked at them. They all looked like they were male, but he could tell at least one was female, because she looked pregnant.

“One of you wouldn’t be Leemon Stonebreaker would you?” he asked.

“Yes,” the one closest to the stairs said.

“Then I would guess that you two, ah, ladies, would be Tanta and Britla.”

The other two replied. “Yes.”

“Jarne,” Lorenz called.

“Yes, Lorenz.”

“I think we can tell your nephew this time you didn’t drag him on a wild goose chase after all.”

“Leemon!” Jarne called.

“Yes, Jarne. We’re here.”

“Stay up there,” Lorenz called. “We’ll call if we need help.”

Lorenz inspected the dwarves bindings. They were chained. “I would guess the straps didn’t hold you three did they? I’ve got chains here.”

“No, I broke my straps three times before they decided to use chains,” the pregnant one said.

“And you would be?”

“Tanta,” she said.

“What are they doing to you, inbreeding?”

“Mix breeding,” Tanta said.

“Excuse me?” he said shocked.

“The woman has been trying to get a half-dwarf, half-human.”

“I wouldn’t think that was possible.”

“I don’t know what she’s been doing? Or how? The ones she doesn’t like she kills and dumps in the next room.”

Eric helped Kurt up. “Can you stand?” he asked.

“They cured us once we were brought here.”

“Good, help get everyone freed.” He handed Kurt the dagger. Then he walked to the dwarves’ tables.

“Maybe I can help.” He looked at the chains and the locks on them.

“We’re running out of time,” Gennifer announced. “It’s quarter past seven.”

Once all the children were free, the children and Gennifer walked to the cribs. They started picking up the babies.

“What are they doing here?” Gennifer asked.

One of the non-pregnant girls picked up one of the babies. “These two girls are mine,” she said. The two baby girls were labeled G-ST1/L. “She wasn’t terribly happy with them. Their features are a little off, but they were twins so she kept them.”

One of the twin boys spoke. “She keeps all the twins no matter what they look like. But the single births, they have to have certain characteristics for her to keep them.” He

picked up one of the boys closest to where his table was labeled B-T/F1. "He's mine with Britla. He was born a month ago."

Eric pulled out his lock picks and started to pick Britla's lock. "I could use some help with these locks," he called.

"Jarne!" Leemon called.

"Yes Leemon."

"Do you have any acid on you?"

"Yes I do."

"I'll get it," Lorenz said. He went up the stairs enough to get the vials of liquid Jarne handed down. "Thanks." He walked back to the dwarves tables opened the vials and began dripping the acid onto the locks. It took only a moment for the acid to eat away the locks.

Leemon jumped from the table and ran up the steps to the waiting arms of Jarne. They hugged laughing.

"We don't have time for a reunion," Laurie said. "We need to get out of here."

"Right," Leemon said breaking away from his brother's embrace. "I'll help with the babies." He raced down the stairs and went to the cribs. He picked up two of the babies. The children grabbed the rest of the babies and they all headed up the steps to freedom. Everyone raced upstairs except Eric. Gennifer stopped at the top of the stairs and looked back.

"What are you waiting for?" she asked.

"I want to see the other room."

"No!" called one of the girls from the top of the stairs. "The door has some trick to it. The lady takes five minutes to open it."

"Eric," Gennifer said gently. "We can come back. We need to bring the doctor's crime to everyone's attention."

"True," he said. Then went up the stairs.

Eric was the last one out the door. He closed it. When he got to the carriage, Leemon and Laamon were hugging happily. Mr. Steinware was on the ground hugging his daughters as they held the babies. They were crying. The four girls got into the carriage, with the babies, as did Gennifer and Laurie. There were twelve babies in all. Tanta was helped into the seat next to Mr. Steinware. The men and young men all walked.

It was cold and the nightshirts weren't very warm. The babies had blankets, but they wouldn't be enough. Mr. Steinware pulled two blankets from under his seat. Laurie and Gennifer took off their coats and wrapped two of the young women in them. Mr. Steinware also gave his coat to one of the young women. Jarne gave Tanta his coat. Laamon tried to give it to Britla.

Britla shrugged it off. "Give it to one of the women inside, for the babies."

Eric took his coat off and gave it to Britla. She took his coat. "Be careful, there are a few things in the pockets."

"We need to get them inside somewhere fast," Eric said. "Who's the closest that would help?"

"Turner Gunsmith or Oscar von Reinhardt's house are the closest that have someone living in them," Mr. Steinware said.

"You go then," Eric began. "We'll catch up."

Mr. Steinware got the horses moving.

Eric picked Kurt up and carried him. Lorenz picked up one of the Farrell boys. Laamon told the other Farrell boy to sit into his arms. Leemon stomped forward in his bare feet his head held high, breathing in the cold night air, just happy to be free. They walked as quickly as possible to where the carriage stopped. It was Oscar von Reinhardt's house. Mrs. von Reinhardt welcomed them in with open arms and warm blankets. She ushered them toward the fire. Mr. von Reinhardt was putting another log on the fire. She ran into the kitchen and brought out cups of hot soup for everyone.

"We need to tell people about this," Eric mentioned. "Let everyone know what the doctor's have been doing. They can't get away with this."

A knock came to the door. Mr. von Reinhardt opened the door. Mr. Farrell stood there.

"I saw the carriage in the yard. I kept the doctors as long as I could." Mr. Farrell had a black eye and bloody nose. "Are they here?"

"Come in please," Mr. von Reinhardt said. "You'll want to see your boys."

"What?" he said walking past. "Oh, no!!!" he exclaimed and ran to his sons. He hugged them and began crying.

Kurt walked over and hugged Eric. "I didn't think you were coming."

"I came as soon as I heard."

"How's Karl?"

"He's fine. He and Olga are at the Farrell's farm."

"How is he?"

"Fine. We neutralized the poison in his system. He's still weak. But he's not sick any longer."

"Good. We knew you would help."

"Too bad father didn't have as much faith in me as you two do."

"I'm not going back to our father."

"You boys and Olga can stay with me for as long you want," Mr. Farrell told them.

"Then I'd like to come with you on some of your adventures," Kurt smiled. "I always loved reading your letters, when we got them before father that is."

"I'll give you the ladies address. You can always get in contact with me through them."

"Gentlemen," Gennifer called. "If Mr. Farrell is here, that means the doctor's were going home. They'll find their basement empty. If we don't do something soon, the doctor's will probably cut and run."

Britla walked over and gave Eric his coat back. "Thank you."

"You're welcome."

Mr. Farrell stood. "Let's go get them."

"I agree," Mr. Steinware said.

"The children and the dwarves will be fine here," Mr. von Reinhardt said. "Go do what you need to."

Laurie, Gennifer, the men and the dwarves all got their coats back and left the house. But what they found when they got outside was not to their liking.

There were people running and riding horses down the street with buckets in hand. There was a fire. The doctor's house was burning.

"We're too late." Mr. Farrell growled.

They stood there watching the flames shoot into the sky. Then Mr. Farrell ran toward the street.

“You!” he screamed. “Wagner!”

The mayor stopped in the street and looked at Mr. Farrell. When Mr. Farrell got to him he grabbed the mayor by the collar.

“You did this!” he exclaimed.

“You’re blaming this fire on me?” Mayor Wagner spat. “How dare you? You were the one fighting with Raphael. I’d say you did this.”

The others ran into the street as well. Mr. Steinware grabbed both men’s arms.

“Our children are not dead,” Mr. Steinware said.

“What are you talking about Steinware,” Mayor Wagner said.

“The doctors poisoned our children, made us believe they were dead and did things to them in their basement.” Mr. Steinware tightened the grip on the Mayor’s arm.

“What are you talking about?”

“He’s right,” Eric said. “The children are in Mr. von Reinhardt’s house, along with three dwarves. One doctor was testing out his new poison on the children, in the form of vitamins and medicines, the other was trying to cross humans and dwarves in the basement.”

“And I’d say you were in on it.” Mr. Farrell growled. “After all, your kids never got sick.”

“Mine weren’t the only kids not to get sick,” the mayor said.

“But the others couldn’t afford to go to the doctors,” Eric said.

“I didn’t know,” the mayor defended.

“I don’t believe you,” Mr. Steinware said.

“Neither do I,” Mr. Farrell said.

“I doubt anyone in town will either once the smoke clears,” Eric pointed to the doctor’s burning house, “in the light of day.”

“That is a Stonebreaker fortified basement,” Jarne declared proudly. “It *will* survive the fire. Guaranteed.”

Double Effects Companion

Post story NPC writeup

Tami Sammons aka Hadis Deadstalker

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Dr. Raphael Estevez and Mrs./Dr. Erika Estevez

Dr. Raphael Estevez

Male human Rogue/Court Poisoner (Cpo) (at least 6th level in Cpo)

Medium-sized humanoid (human) (6 ft. tall)

Skills & Feats: Anatomy, Bluff, Concentration, Craft (alchemy) 2 ranks, Craft (poisonmaking) 8 ranks, Diplomacy, Forgery, Iron Will, Knowledge (Nature), Profession (herbalist) 2 ranks, Slight of Hand 4 ranks, Spot, Skill Focus (Craft [Poisoning]), Weapon focus (dagger).

Class Features: Poison use, Poison Mastery, Altered Delivery, Delayed Onset, Enduring, Putrid Distillation, Undetectable, Saving Throw Bonus vs Poison (equal to class level), Insidious Application (obtained at 3rd level), Inventive Ingredients (obtained at 5th level).

Languages: Balok, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Lamordian.

Signature Possessions: +1 dagger, 3 hidden sheaths with 3 different poisons, Healer's kit, laboratory.

Mrs./Dr. Erika Estevez

Female human

Medium-size humanoid (human) (5 ft 8 in tall)

Skills & Feats: Alchemy, Bluff, Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Heal, Hide, Knowledge (Anatomy), Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (scientific engineering), Search, Sense Motive, Iron Will, Skill focus (heal), Skill focus (anatomy), Skill focus (scientific engineering), Knowledge (Magic), Weapon focus (scalpel).

Languages: Lamordian, Mordentish, Dwarven, Falkovnian.

Signature Possessions: Healer's kit, laboratory, thick belt with up to 10 hidden scalpels.

Dr. Raphael Estevez is a tall, thin, pale completed man past middle age with long black hair hanging wildly past his shoulder blades. He wears a white silk shirt with a silk cravat, tight black breeches, a black vest, a black knee-length coat with large folded back cuffs and gold embroidery and tight white leggings worn up to his knees, with black, heeled buckled shoes. His black eyes that show no emotion are wreathed with wrinkles that makes him look older than his years. He has long delicate, but not frail, hands. He wears a black three-corner hat. When he wears a weapon it's a dagger displayed on his belt. He has three hidden dagger sheaths in his clothes with three different poisons, one

to incapacitate, one to cripple and one to kill.

Mrs. Estevez is a lean, attractively built woman with wiry limbs came through the door. She had a well-defined chin and prominent cheekbones. Her complexion was ruddy as if from the cruel Lamordian winter winds. Her slate blue eyes were without emotion and her flaxen blonde hair was pinned up. She wore a plain, modest gray woolen dress with a high collar and long, tight sleeves and a tight white bonnet. She speaks without emotion. When she must bare arms, she has a specially designed thick belt with hidden scalpels hidden within, that can be easily removed.

Background: Dr. Raphael Estevez is a native of Borca. He favors fashions from Dementlieu in basic black. He is a skilled Court Poisoner from a former leading family in Borca. When the family was discovered dead from poisoning and Estevez nowhere to be found, this led some to believe he was the one who poisoned the family. He is a very patient man. Being able to wait years at a time to get what he wants, establishing himself as a good leading citizen. He has been know to test his new poisons on his neighbors. Particularly his neighbor's children.

Mrs. Estevez grew up in the shadow of Dr. Victor Mordenheim. While others in the area tolerate him, she idolized him. When she was young she happened upon the lifeless body one of his fallen creations. She hid the creature and studied it as best she could. Since then, she has been trying to follow in his footsteps. She did not agree with the idea of using dead bodies or body parts to create a being. She chose to

experiment on living people. Her goal is to create the perfect being. She has traveled the domains to try to discover new sciences to further her goal. Although, like all Lamordians, she still has a problem with magic, she has studied it.

They met while on their travels and discovered that both of their professions were very similar and could compliment each other.

Important NPC in Reikenburg

Mayor Wagner, his wife and twin daughters left town shortly after the doctors. Although he professed his ignorance as to the doctor's activities, the town felt his lack of action at the town's suspicions toward the doctors was enough to send him packing. They returned to Leidenheim.

Frans Wagner, the former mayor's son who runs the Land office next to the Muller house & furniture shop was allowed to remain. He lives in the land office/house with his wife, Daniela, of less than a year. She is the daughter to Jobl the veterinarian. They are both in their early twenties and currently have no children. Frans would be a low level fighter, with very little experience. He would be one of the first called upon by the constable if muscle is needed. His feats and skills would be minimal: leadership, scribe, weapon focus (throwing axe), and languages (Lamordian, Darkonese, Mordentish, Falkovnian). Daniela is a veterinarian like her father. She is a ranger or low level with good fighting skills. Her feats and skills are animal lore, animal handling, animal empathy, knowledge

(nature), wilderness lore, weapon proficiency (quarterstaff) and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Dwarven, Balok).

Hubert Jobl is the town veterinarian. He is a middle-aged widower with one grown daughter, Daniela, in her early 20s married to Frans Wagner. Hubert's wife, Daniela's mother died in childbirth. Hubert is a ranger of mid-level with good fighting skills. His feats and skills are animal lore, animal handling, animal empathy, knowledge (nature), wilderness lore, jaded, weapon focus (quarterstaff) and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Dwarven).

Albert Farrell was elected mayor before Mr. Wagner could even pack up his belongings. His wife recovered from her depression, however she is terribly overprotective of her sons to the point of paranoia. His daughter helps her mother around the house and helps her brothers take care of the infants. Mayor Farrell divides his time between his mayoral duties and his pig farm south of town. He is a man over middle age. He would be a low level ranger with average fighting skills. His feats and skills are knowledge (nature), animal handling, profession (farmer), iron will, leadership, open mind, weapon focus (rapier) and languages (Lamordian, Darkonese, Mordentish, Falkovnian).

The Farrell twins, John and Jacob were 13 when taken now 15. John begins to take an active role in the family farm, Jacob takes the active role of butcher with one of the Gebhart boys, Johannes. John would be a zero level ranger and his feats and skills are profession (farmer), endurance,

toughness, weapon focus (rapier). Jacob would be a zero level fighter and his feats and skills are profession (butcher), endurance, toughness, weapon focus (knife), and weapon expertise (hand axe). And both's languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Dwarven).

The former constable left town before the mayor did, either because he was knowledgeable of the doctor's activities or would be accused of it.

Allistair Garrett of Mordentshire was called in to help out the town as the new constable. Mayor Farrell asked the Gennifer and Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove for help and advice on law enforcement. The sisters wrote Owen Finhallen of the Lamplighters. He sent Allistair Garrett to assist. Constable Garrett conducted a full investigation. In the investigation, he discovered the children were all changed over to the *poison* vitamins just after they hit puberty. Also, all the twins the doctors took *died* between 6-10 months after hitting puberty. By the contents of the doctors fortified basement he believes this is not the doctors first attempts at trying to cross the human and dwarven races. He found notes with detailed diagrams of a human-dwarven hybrid called a Mule which apparently comes from a land outside of Ravenloft. These notes also had sketches and findings that could only be from previous experiments. He also believes these doctors would not let the events here deter them from trying this again. Constable Garrett would be a man in his later-30's to mid-40's and dresses in the Mordentish style. He is a mid-level fighter with good fighting skills. He would also be a Lamplighter (Lpl) as described in Ravenloft Gazetteer volume

III. Because he was asked to come here by his superiors he still has his Lamplighter status although he believes his stay here will not be permanent. He believes he has been called in to help the town and train new law enforcement personnel. Mayor Farrell hopes to persuade him to stay permanently. His feats and skills are gather information 4 ranks, knowledge (Mordentshire) 4 ranks, knowledge (Reikenburg) 1 rank, listen 4 ranks, search 4 ranks, sense motive 4 ranks, spot 4 ranks, alertness, courage, open mind, concentration, diplomacy, gather information, intimidate, knowledge (geography Mordentshire, Reikenburg), knowledge (history), knowledge (nobility), ride, swim, exotic weapon proficiency (firearms), weapon focus (pistol, rapier), and languages (Mordentish, Lamordian, Falkovnian, Balok). He has proficiency in all simple and martial weapons and light armor and proficient in an iron lantern as a weapon (1d4, crit x2, bludgeoning).

Mr. Hans Muller, former town elder remains in town, however he runs his business alone. He eventually marries his maid/cook Greta Heimlich. Greta's brother, Johan, runs the tavern. His son's Kurt and Karl shun him. Mr. Muller would have average fighting skills. His feats and skills are craft (wood working), profession (furniture making), jaded, weapon group (knives), and languages (Lamordian, Darkonese, Mordentish, Vaasi).

Kurt Muller, 14, and Olga Fassbinder, 15, get married and move into the house/shop across from the Jobl's house and start up a furniture business. Olga's father, Mr. Fassbinder, the sail maker lives in a hovel at

Fisherman's Point. He has been completely oblivious to everything going on in town for years. One night, his house's roof falls in, killing him. The boat builders ask her to take up her father's sail making business. She does but chooses to live in town and puts her father's land up for sale. Kurt would be a zero level fighter and his feats and skills are craft (wood working), profession (furniture making), endurance, iron will, open mind, toughness, weapon focus (pistol) and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Dwarven, Patterna). Olga would be a zero level rogue and her feats and skills craft (sail making), profession (scribe), open mind, and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish).

Karl Muller, 14, remains with in the Farrell house. He begins working with Mr. Edwards the Clockmaker. He builds the housings for the grandfather, grandmother and mantle clocks. He begins dating Tara Edwards, 15. When he turns 16, he wants to join his brother Eric on his adventures. Tara hates the town and wants to leave when Karl does. Kurt would be a zero level rogue and his feats, skills and languages are the same as Kurt's. Tara would be a zero level rogue and her feats and skills are appraise, craft (clock making), disable devise, knowledge (construct lore), open mind and languages (Lamordian, Darkonese, Falkovnian).

Peter Edwards, Clockmaker. He is a widower with two children, Tara 15 and Matthew 10. Mr. Edwards is middle aged and would be a mid-level rogue. His feats and skills are appraise, craft (clock making), disable devise, knowledge (construct lore), endurance, concentration, skill focus (clock

making), weapon focus (rapier) and languages (Lamordian, Darkonese, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Dwarven).

Johan Heimlich runs the tavern. He is in his late twenties and unmarried and took over when his and Greta's father died last year. His father was a town elder until he began speaking out against the doctors. Shortly after that he died. Their mother died twelve years ago. Johan would be a low level rogue and his feats and skills are appraise, decipher script, leadership, open mind, weapon focus (rapier) and languages (Lamordian, Darkonese, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Dwarven, Vaasi, Balok, Tempestani).

Rudolf Heimrich owns Heimrich's Rest and Heimrich's Kitchen. He is well over middle age and is a widower. Rudolf is a high level fighter, however an injury to his arm would prevent him from being an effective fighter. He is a reclusive man and prefers to keep to himself. He is rarely seen out of the inn, restaurant and his home area. He takes care of the bookwork for the inn.

Yann Heimrich, Rudolf's eldest son, is in his late 30's, and runs Heimrich Kitchen. His wife Gertrude is also in her late 30's and does most of the work in the restaurant along with his sister Inga. Yann also makes a home brew beer which he serves in the restaurant. Yann and Gertrude's two sons, Otto, 14, and Hugo, 13 were both victims by the doctors. Yann would be a mid-level rogue and his feats and skills are appraise, profession (brewer), toughness, weapon focus (hand axe) and languages (Lamordian, Darkonese, Mordentish, Vaasi). Yann has been elected as one of the new town elders.

Gertrude would have minimal fighting skills and her feats and skills are appraise, toughness and languages (Lamordian, Darkonese, Mordentish, Falkovnian)

Dieter Heimrich is in his mid-thirties and pretty much runs the inn. He is normally seen behind the front desk and knows *everything* that goes on within the walls of the inn and restaurant. He believes this is because he is good at his job and ease drops on the customers. However he is actually a sorcerer and doesn't realize it. All the spells he does cast can easily be mistaken as rogue skills. If confronted with this, he will emphatically deny it, but worry over the possibility from then on. Dieter is a low level fighter and his feats and skills are appraise, decipher script, profession (scribe), search, gather information, spellcraft, endurance, profession (innkeeper), exotic weapon proficiency (firearms), open mind, and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Dwarven, Gnome, Sithican).

Inga Heimrich-Gebhart, about 30, and Stephan Gebhart, in his mid-30s, have no children. Stephan is the eldest son of Peter Gebhart and the cook at Heimrich's Kitchen. Inga and Stephan both are low-level fighters with minimal fighting skills. Their feats and skills are appraise, cooking and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Falkovnian). Inga also has open mind and weapon focus (barstool, beer bottle). Stephan also has profession (herdsman) and weapon focus (knife, hand axe).

Alexus and Hildegard Schneider are the town's cobblers. They are both of middle age and have two children, Lucy and Lilly. They were devastated

when their daughters *died* of this mysterious disease. When they discovered their daughters alive, they were the first to demand the eviction of the mayor. They're both mid-level rogues with moderate fighting skills. Their feats and skills are appraise, craft (cobbling), endurance, jaded, weapon focus (hammer), and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Falkovnian).

Lucy Schneider (SC1), 12 when taken now 15, is obviously pregnant with Leemon's twins. She had three non-twin children, while imprisoned in the doctor's basement that were killed by the Mrs./Dr. Estevez, their bodies dumped in the earthen room. When the cold storage was investigated she demanded the burial of the infants bodies. Unfortunately, she was not given enough time to recover from the previous births and is extremely weak. This pregnancy is taking all her strength. Unless something is done it is believed she will not survive the birth.

Lilly Schneider (SC2), 12 when taken now 15, has two twin boys with Leemon. The twin boys are 1½ years old and look more dwarven than human with misshapen features. Lilly is stronger than Lucy, and it is believed she will have no problem with the birth.

Joachim and Elisabeth Steinware run the Livery stable. They are in their late 30s and have moderate fighting skills. Elisabeth is the sister to Frans and Oscar von Reinhardt and is also a skilled blacksmith. Joachim is a mid-level ranger and Elisabeth is a mid-level fighter. Their feats and skills are lore (animal), animal handling, endurance, ride, weapon focus (hammer) and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish,

Darkonese). Joachim's feats and skills are drive carriage, weapon focus (whip). Elisabeth's feats and skills are profession (blacksmithing) weapon focus (hammer).

Brigitte (ST1) & Brenda (ST2) Steinware, 11 when taken now 12, are still both weak after giving birth to twins. Brigitte has twin girls and Brenda has twin boys all under two months.

Elmer Stolts and his wife Maria run the general store. They have one daughter, 13, who was a victim of Dr. Estevez poisoning. They are in their late 30s and are rogues of moderate fighting skills. Their feats and skills are appraise, decipher script, profession (scribe), search, weapon proficiency (dagger).

Cristina Turner runs the gunsmith. She is a widow with 1 daughter, 14, who was a victim of Dr. Estevez poisoning. She is a fighter in her early-30s with moderate fighting skills. Her feats and skills are alchemy, appraise, craft (gunsmithing), disable device, exotic weapon proficiency (firearms), iron will, point-blank shot, skill focus (gunsmithing), weapon focus (musket) and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Halfling).

Conrad and Katia Mier run the vegetable farm and the Open Market Place. They have 7 children between the ages of 10 and 20. One son, 13, and one daughter, 15, were both victims of Dr. Estevez poisoning. They are both about 50 and have moderate fighting skills. Their feats and skills are appraise, knowledge (nature), profession (farmer), wilderness lore, endurance, weapon proficiency (knife, machete) and

languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Darkonese, Dwarven).

Conrad and Ursula Klaus run Klaus Leathersmith. They are in their mid-30s and have one son, 13, who was a victim of Dr. Estevez. They have moderate fighting skills. Conrad is a ranger and his feats and skills are craft (leatherworking), animal lore, animal handling, skinning, wilderness lore, exotic weapon proficiency (firearms), skill focus (leatherworking), track, weapon focus (knife). Ursula is a rogue and her feats and skills are appraise, decipher script, profession (scribe), search, weapon proficiency (dagger). Their languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Dwarven).

Juergen and Anna Klaus run Klaus Tanner. They are in their mid-30s and have one daughter, 9. Conrad and Juergen are identical twins and Ursula and Anna are also sisters. They have moderate fighting skills. Juergen is a ranger and his feats are animal lore, animal handling, skinning, profession (tanner), wilderness lore, exotic weapon proficiency (firearms), track, weapon focus (knife). Anna is a rogue and her feats and skills are appraise, decipher script, profession (scribe), search, weapon proficiency (dagger). Their languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Dwarven).

Frans & Oscar von Reinhardt run the blacksmith and weaponsmith. They are both in their late 20s and although they aren't they could pass for twins. Frans is unmarried and Oscar just recently married one of the Gebhart girls, Margaret. Oscar has been elected as a town elder. The brothers are both fighters of low level with moderate

fighting skills. Their feats and skills are craft (blacksmithing, weaponsmithing), knowledge (metalworking), endurance, great fortitude, iron will, skill focus (blacksmithing, weaponsmithing), weapon proficiency group (hammers) and languages (Lamordian, Falkovnian, Vaasi, Dwarven, Gnome). Oscar also has leadership.

Peter and Judith Gebhart own the poultry farm, they are in their older years and have 6 grown children ages 25 to 38. One daughter has been adventuring around the core. She hasn't been heard from in 4 years. One son, Stephan is married to Inga Heimrich. Another daughter Margaret just married Oscar von Reinhardt. One of their son's Johannes runs the butcher shop with Mayor Farrell. Peter was once considered a great fighter, but now old age has taken his fighting skill. Judith is a ranger but her skills have also dulled in her later years. Their children do most of the menial labor. They are considering passing the torch and building a nice retirement home. The children who run the farm and butcher shop, Johannes, Erika, Federica, and Ludwig are of low to moderate fighting skills and have the following feats and skills amongst them: knowledge (nature), animal handling, profession (farmer), weapon focus (hand axe, cleaver, knife) and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Dwarven, Balok).

Peter and Philip Wolf are carpenters and are both in their late-30s. Peter is unmarried and Philip is engaged to Agatha Grunwald (described below). The brothers live together in a small house near their business. The brothers own the most land in town. They

broadened their business by joining with Leemon and Tanta Stonebreaker, to make Wolf and Stonebreaker Construction Company. They are mid-level fighters with moderate fighting skills. Their feats and skills are appraise, craft (carpentry), knowledge (architecture, engineering, nature), profession (lumberjack), wilderness lore, endurance, great fortitude, iron will, skill focus (Peter: architecture, Philip: engineering), toughness, weapon proficiency group (axes) and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Dwarven, Balok).

Niklaus Richter is the town Locksmith, he is married with no children. Mr. Richter is in his early 40s and married late in life. His wife is in her early 30s and is not from Lamordia. The town knows little about her, although most believe her to be of Vistani blood. She stays mostly in the house. Mr. Richter is a rogue of high level, and although he is from Reikenburg he has travel the core extensively. Not much is known about his travels, though. Mr. Richter is in fact a Moon Bane (Mb) as described in the Champions of Darkness. He had traveled the core in his early years as a thief for hire but after contracting Lycanthropy dedicated his life to hunting down and killing any evil lycanthrope he could find starting with the one that afflicted him. In one of his last travels he came to the aid of a small group of Vistani Canjar who were being hunted by a Lycanthrope. For his assistance in ridding the group of the menace, they crafted him a Moon Silver ring, which he still wears to this day. He traveled for a while with the Vistani and fell in love with one of the women, Mariska. She was actually a half-

Vistani, not that he could tell the difference. When he decided he has paid enough for his deeds he married Mariska and returned to Reikenburg to hopefully spend his last years in peace. His feats and skills are wilderness lore 6 ranks, alertness, great fortitude, target vulnerable spot, animal empathy, balance, handle animal, hide, intuit direction, knowledge (Lycanthrope Lore), profession (locksmith), sense motive, and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Balok, Dwarven, Sithican, Patterna, Gnome, Halfling, Elven, Tempestani).

Tomas and Romona Grunwald own the Rye farm & bakery. They are of middle age and have 4 unmarried children, Agatha is 22, Amelia is 20, Agnes is 19, and Albert is 17. Agatha is engaged to Philip Wolf. All the children work in some aspect of the family business. Tomas and Romona are mid-level and have moderate fighting skills, the children are low level and have good fighting skills, the farmers are rangers, the bakers are rogues. Agatha's, Albert's and Tomas' feats and skills are knowledge (nature), profession (farmer), weapon focus (scythe, machete); Amelia's, Agnes' and Romona's are herbalism, craft (cooking), weapon proficiency group (clubs); all have endurance, and languages (Lamordian, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Dwarven, Balok).

Leemon Stonebreaker, having a vested interest in the town, namely 6 children and more on the way, decided to remain. He was elected as one of the town elders and becomes partners with the Wolf brothers. His dwarven wife comes to town from Darkon to be with him. However feeling uncomfortable

with the thought of her husband's half-human children and his desire and responsibility to help in their rearing, does not remain. She does not return again. His son Laamon visits frequently as does his bother Jarne. His other children, all grown, do not come to town even to visit leading most of the townsfolk to believe they have shunned him. Leemon is a middle-aged dwarf. Once cleaned up, he has dark brown hair reaching his belt that is turning silver with age. His beard and full mustache is more gray than brown and is kept neatly braided into six braids, for his six hybrid children. When the Schneider girls give birth, he will add more braids to his beard. His eyes are dark brown and show nothing but compassion for his hybrid children and their mothers. His face is lined with wrinkles. He is a mid-level fighter. Before being imprisoned in the Estevez' basement he had excellent fighting skills, but is a bit rusty. His feats and skills are craft (stonemasonry), diplomacy, knowledge (construct lore, engineering, undead lore), profession (miner), skill focus (stonemasonry), blind-fight, weapon group (axes and hammers), weapon focus (maul) and languages (Dwarven, Darkonese, Gnome, Halfling, Falkovnian, Lamordian, Mordentish, Vaasi).

Tanta Stonebreaker, who is obviously pregnant by one of the Farrell boys, remains in town. She is not married so this does not pose a problem. She joins in the newly formed Wolf and Stonebreaker construction company. Tanta is much younger than her brothers Leemon and Jarne and sister Britla, she is in fact the youngest of 12 children, Britla being the eldest. She is not nearly as somber as her other siblings, often

chanting a family ballad while she works. She takes an active role in the rearing of her three, and one on the way, hybrid children with the two Farrell boys. She looks very much like her brothers Leemon and Jarne, except much younger. She and Laamon could pass for brother and sister. Once a member of the town, she decides to shave her beard off. It gets a better reaction from the townsfolk. Despite Tanta's sturdy dwarven frame, she is actually much weaker than she appears. She goes to great lengths to appear healthy. In fact, she is in as much danger as Lucy Schneider to not survive the birth of her child. Since Britla did not produce to Mrs./Dr. Estevez' expectations, probably due to her age, she rushed Tanta's pregnancies. She had three children with the Farrell boys and is midway through pregnancy with the fourth all in the two and a half years the Farrell boys were held. However, when her comes to the end of her pregnancy, she will no longer be able to hide her weakened condition. She is a low level fighter with good fighting skills, although her advancing pregnancy will hamper any fighting she may need to do. While pregnant she will avoid any circumstance that could potentially become violent. Her feats and skills are craft (stonemasonry), knowledge (construct lore, engineering), perform (chant), profession (miner), back to the wall, weapon proficiency (pick-axe, hammer, gunpowder), weapon focus (war hammer) and languages (Dwarven, Darkonese, Gnome, Falkovnian, Lamordian, Mordentish).

Britla Stonebreaker, despite having a child by one of the Farrell boys, chooses to return to Darkon and her husband and other children. She returns

several months later after discovering she is pregnant with Kurt's child. After the birth, she leaves the child with Kurt and Olga and returns to Darkon.

* * * * *

Frequent Visitors to Town

Jarne Stonebreaker is actually older than his brother Leemon, but you couldn't tell to look at them. They chalk it up to Leemon's captivity. They also look very much alike, only Jarne has less gray hair and only braids his beard in two strands, having no significance. Jarne is a mid-level fighter/rogue with excellent fighting skills. He is the one in the family to take care of the traps their fortified structures contain. Jarne has two very prominent pieces of equipment he is rarely without, his altered version of gnomish workman's armor (as described in the Arms and Equipment Guide) and his huge battle axe. His feats and skills are alchemy, craft (stonemasonry), diplomacy, gather information, knowledge (construct lore), profession (miner), courage, iron will, open locks, find and remove traps, detect noise, read languages, weapon group proficiency (axes and hammers) and languages (Dwarven, Darkonese, Gnome, Halfling, Falkovnian, Lamordian, Mordentish, Vaasi).

Laamon Stonebreaker is one of Leemon's son and is about as old as Tanta and is unmarried. Laamon looks like a younger, heavier version of Leemon. Although he is very glad his father has been found, years of following Jarne on his wild goose chases have made him bitter. Laamon has also grown lazy and more than a bit overweight because of these travels. He has also become very fond of human

romance novels favored by bored housewives. He will purchase them whenever he finds them, and usually carries at least a dozen of his favorites in various languages with him at any one time. He also likes exotic chocolate candies, which is why he is now overweight. He understands why his father has chosen to remain in Reikenburg, and returns from time to time, not necessarily with his uncle Jarne. Laamon is a low-level fighter of moderate fighting skills. His feats and skills are craft (stonemasonry), knowledge (construct lore, engineering), profession (minor), and languages (Dwarven, Darkonese, Gnome, Halfling, Falkovnian, Lamordian, Mordentish, Vaasi, Sithican, Elven, Tempestani).

Eric Muller is much closer to his brothers since these events and even more distant from his father. He has traveled the core extensively. He has contacts about the core, besides the Weathermay-Foxgrove ladies. He along with the ladies have written several friends and acquaintances to find a doctor, alchemist or apothecary to come and help with Lucy Schneider and Tanta when they discover her weakened condition, even if they only come for the births. They can try to find a permanent addition to the town later. Eric is a rogue/crypt raider (Cry) of fifth level, as described in Van Richten's Arsenal volume I. His feats and skills are alchemy, appraise, balance, climb, concentration, decipher script, disable device, escape artist, gather information, intuit direction, jump, knowledge (arcane, architecture, engineering, history, religion, undead lore), listen, search, move silently, open lock, spellcraft, spot, swim, tumble, use magic device, use rope, indomitable, smitten

(Gennifer Weathermay-Foxgrove), reincarnated, exotic weapon focus (firearms), weapon focus (whip), and languages (Lamordian, Darkonese, Dwarven, Patterna, Falkovnian, Mordentish).

Signature possessions: Eric wears a mid-calf length brown leather duster with 2 outside hip pockets, 2 outside breast pockets, 2 inside breast pockets offset from the outside ones, 2 inside hip pockets offset from the outside ones, and 6 other inside pockets about the coat. The 4 breast pockets and 3 of the other inside pockets can carry as much as a small belt pouch, the 4 hip pockets and the remaining 3 pockets can carry as much as a large belt pouch. In the removable caplet of the duster are 8 - 1/2" wide pockets the length of the caplet which he tends to put long metal rods of various materials, at least 2 are silver. There are flaps to keep the rods in, but can be easily opened to remove the rods. He also has high hard boots specially made to put a 1 wide 1-1/2" thick 6" long leather case in with various tools in each of the boots. The heels of his boots have a hidden compartment. He also has two 1" wide, 1/2 - 1/2" thick, 6" long leather cases. These cases are made of stiff brown leather and can be mistaken for cigar cases. These cases are 1/2" thick when empty and 1 1/2" thick when full. These cases have various tools. These fit into his boots. He also has two 5" wide, 1/2 - 1 1/2" thick, 6" long leather cases. These cases are 1/2" thick when empty and 1 1/2" thick when full. These cases are similar to the tool cases but these cases hold 4 1/2" long glass vials with cork stoppers that he fills with

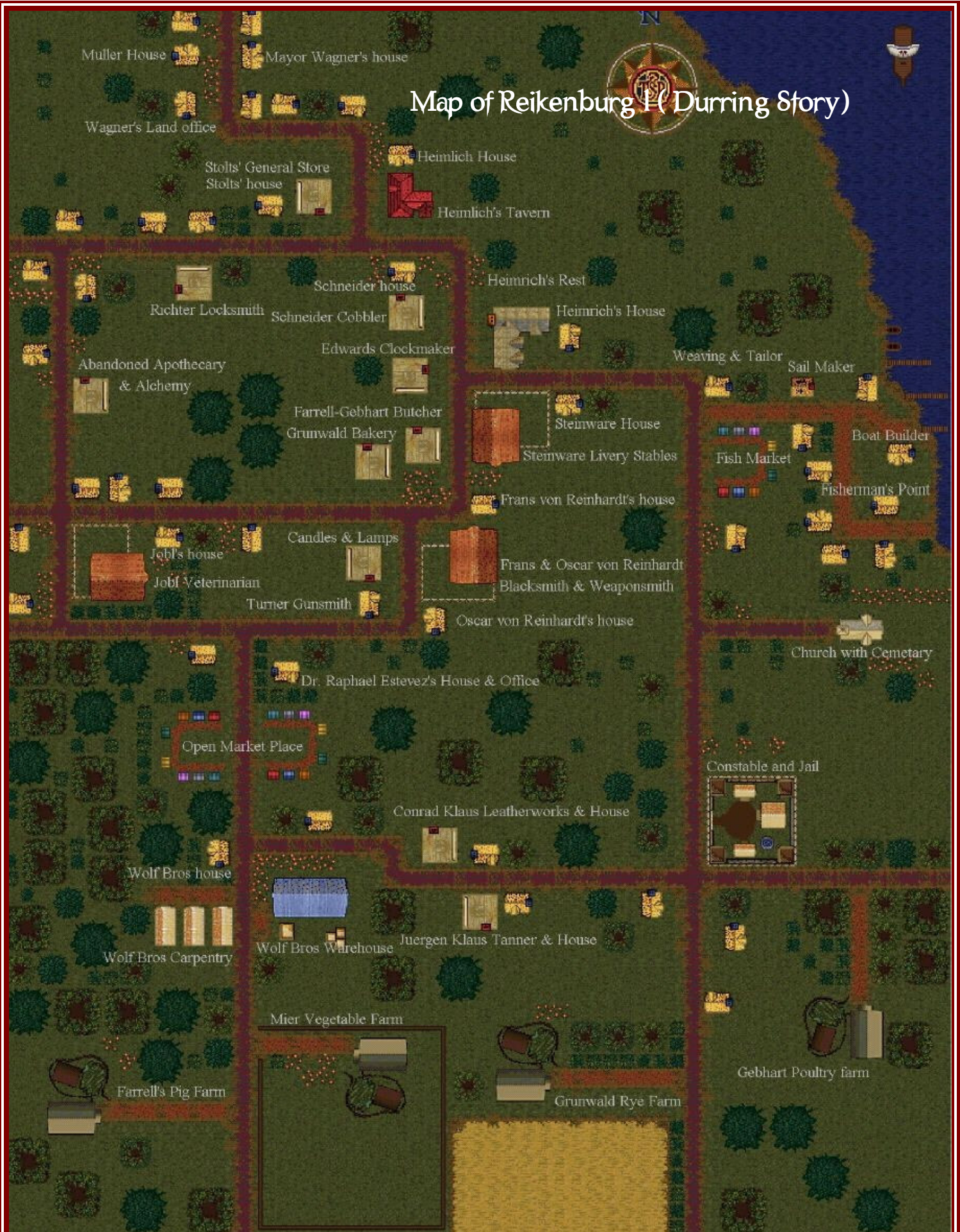
gunpowder. Each case holds 4 vials. There is also a thin metal needle stuck into the cases that he has on occasion used to poke a hole in the cork to put a fuse into gunpowder. He carries two masterwork pistols and one masterwork musket, 1 high quality whip, 1 hand axe, 1 large shoulder bandoleer with spikes, mostly for climbing, a hammer and leather gloves, 1 - 5" wide, 1 1/2" thick, 6" long leather cases which holds 4 cigars. He has three worn, brown, soft leather bags with both a shoulder strap and a handle and one alchemy kit in a specially made stiff leather case, similar to a doctor's bag, with individual compartments inside to cushion glass vials and bottles. There is a 4" space on top of the compartments to place larger objects on top that don't need to be cushioned. Eric also has a small diamond with gold veins. Although he does not know what this is, he does know he cannot seem to part with it, and the one time it was stolen from him, it found its way back to him. This diamond is actually the *Diamond of the Sun*, a piece of an ancient artifact called the *Bloodknife*, as described in Van Richten's Arsenal volume I.

* * * * *

The former town elders who have been asked to leave: The Weaving & Tailor, and Candles & Lamps.

The town is looking for a doctor, alchemist, or apothecary, to at least help with the births of Lucy Schneider and Tanta Stonebreaker babies. But Mayor Farrell will attempt to persuade anyone who comes to stay especially if they are recommended by Gennifer, Laurie, or Eric.

Map of Rekenburg I (Durring Story)



Map of Reikenburg 2 (After the story)

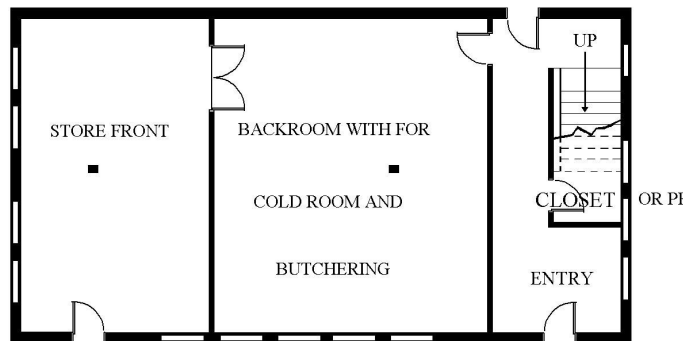


Important Reikenburg locations

FARRELL-GEBHART BUTCHER



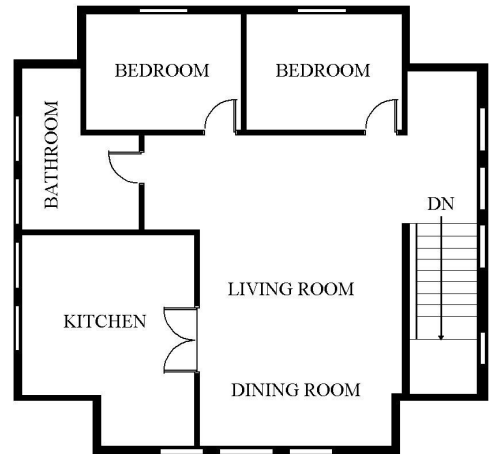
SECOND FLOOR



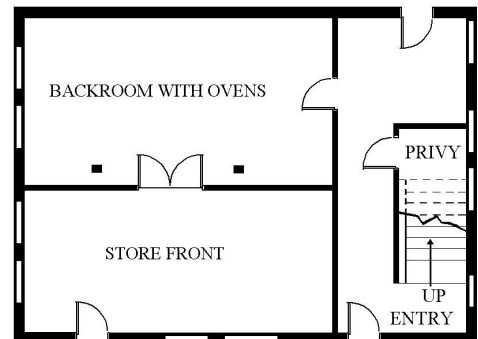
COVERED PORCH

FIRST FLOOR

GRUNWALD BAKERY



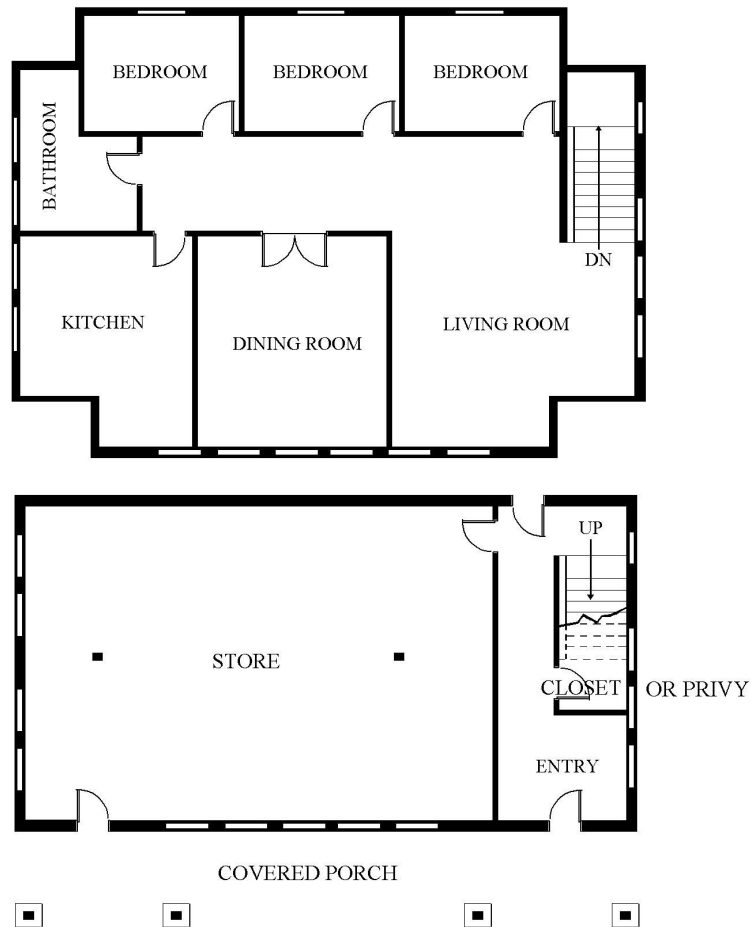
SECOND FLOOR



COVERED PORCH

FIRST FLOOR

LARGE STORE WITH APARTMENT ABOVE



FIRST FLOOR

Perilous Pursuits

The Nightlord

By Uri "Shadowking" Barak

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Nightlords are vile warriors sworn to the service of a being of absolute evil, one of Ravenloft's nefarious darklords. A Nightlord is a wicked and ruthless man or woman, well-versed in the Lore of the Mists. These wicked beings seek out a darklord and binds their own soul to the lords cursed fate. In this abominable act, the Nightlord gains many strange and evil powers, like the horrific ability to slough off their own faces and wear the visages of the slain like masks. Through their link with their Darklord master, Nightlords subject themselves to the Dark Powers' corruption in a controlled manner, reaping much power from that state. A darklord may have a single Nightlord for each 5 hit dice he or she possesses.

The Nightlord

Most Nightlords belong to the Blackguard core class (see the upcoming "Mist and Shadow" netbook for details), the exact type depending on the Darklord they serve. However, evil-aligned clerics also make effective Nightlords.

Nightlords typically lead the armies of their darklord masters, or alternately, serve as their sleeper agents in society. While Nightlords are capable warriors, they also possess the skills to act in other roles, such as corruptors for less-blunt Darklords. A Nightlord is his Darklord's ambassador outside his domain and his eyes and ears inside it.

Hit Dice: d10

Requirements:

To qualify to become a Nightlord (NLd) a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any evil

Base Attack Bonus: +6

Skills: Knowledge (Ravenloft) +5, Bluff +5 or Intimidate +5, Ride +2

Feats: Evil Brand, Exalted of the Dark Gods, Martial Weapon Proficiency

Special: Must perform an hour-long ritual of binding in the presence of the Darklord of the domain, resulting in the permanent loss of 2 points of Charisma. Must be able to cast 1st level divine spells.

Class Skills:

The Nightlord's class skills (and the key ability for each) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (Ravenloft) (Int), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Reign Undead (Int) and Ride (Dex).

See Chapter 4 of the Player's Handbook for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level:
4 + Int modifier

Class Features

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

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: A Nightlord is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, with all armor types and with shields.

Spells: At every even level a Nightlord may choose to increase his spellcasting ability or his ability to Rebuke or Command ability as if he gained a level in his base class (but not both).

Rebuke/Command Undead: At every even level a Nightlord may choose to increase his spellcasting ability or his ability to Rebuke or Command ability as if he gained a level in his base class (but not both).

Bonus Feats: At level 1, 4 and 7 a Nightlord gains a bonus feat from the following list: *Corrupt Spell*, *Courage*, *Deformity (Clawed Hands)*, *Deformity (Eyes)*, *Deformity (Face)*, *Deformity (Gaunt)*, *Deformity (Obese)*, *Jaded*, *Malign Spell Focus*, *Open Mind*, *Sacrificial Mastery*, *Violate Spell*, *Voice of Wrath*.

Darklord's Boon (Sp/Su): At 1st level the Nightlord receives a supernatural gift from his Darklord, providing him with some benefit similar to a feat or a domain power, varying according to the specific Darklord. The following is an overview of the boons provided by the Darklords of the Core:

- ❖ *Adam:* Character gains 2 Slam attacks, dealing 1d4 + Str modifier points of damage.
- ❖ *Alfred Timothy:* The character may rage as a barbarian of level equal to his level as a Nightlord.
- ❖ *Azalin Rex:* Character gains Lich-loved as a Bonus feat.

- ❖ *Death:* Character can cast Inflict Light Wounds three times per day as a 12th level Cleric.
- ❖ *Dominic D'honaire:* Character gains a +2 bonus to their Charisma score.
- ❖ *Gabrielle Aderre:* The character may cast charm person three times per day as a 12th level sorcerer.
- ❖ *Gwydion:* The character automatically succeeds at any Madness check.
- ❖ *Harkon Lukas:* Mundane Wolves and Dire Wolves treat the character as one of their own, and will not attack him as long as he doesn't attack them. Wargs and Wolfweres must pass a Will save DC 10 + Nightlord levels + Cha modifier to successfully attack the character.
- ❖ *Hazlik:* Character gains Scry as a class skill. It can use any fire of at least Medium-size as the focus for Scry attempts instead of a Crystal Ball.
- ❖ *Inza Kulchevich:* Character can cast Awaken Guilt* once per day as a 12th level Paladin. *See Van Richten's Arsenal, pg 26.
- ❖ *Ivana Boristi:* Character gets +4 Profane bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy and Sense Motive checks when dealing with humanoids of the opposite sex.
- ❖ *Ivan Dislinya:* The character gets a +2 profane bonus to all Fortitude saves.
- ❖ *Jacqueline Renier:* Once each day the character can see through the eyes of any single rodent in the domain for up to 12 rounds when maintaining concentration.
- ❖ *Malken:* The character gets a +2 profane bonus to Disguise, Intimidate, and Move Silently checks.

- ❖ *Strahd Von Zarovich*: Character can cast Ground Fog or Whispering Wind three times per day as a 12th level sorcerer.
- ❖ *The Three Hags*: The character may cast Warp Wood three times per day as a 12th level druid.
- ❖ *Tristen ApBlanc*: The character becomes immune to all plant and animal poisons.
- ❖ *Tristessa*: Character gains Perform as a class skill. If the character has 3 or more Perform ranks, he can sing a special ballad over 3 rounds. All living creatures within 60 feet who hear it must make a Will save with a DC equal to the Perform check results or be affected by Sorrow, as the spell, cast by a sorcerer of the Nightlord's level.
- ❖ *Urik Von Kharkov*: Character gets +4 Profane bonus to Animal Empathy and Handle Animal checks when dealing with felines.
- ❖ *Vlad Drakov*: Once per day, the character can imbue any single melee weapon he's currently wielding with the Bloodfeeding property (see Book of Vile Darkness for details) for a number of rounds equal to his Charisma modifier.
- ❖ *Wilfred Godefroy*: Once per day the character can imbue one of its natural attacks or a single weapon he is currently wielding with the Ghost Touch property for a number of rounds equal to his Cha modifier.

Sense Sinkhole of Evil (Su): When passing within 100 feet per rank of a nearby Sinkhole of Evil the Nightlord automatically senses its presence and recognizes it for what it truly is by passing a Knowledge (Ravenloft) check at DC 10. This is a constant supernatural ability.

Slave to Darkness (Ex): The Nightlord is inevitably bound to his darklord master. When attempting to resist spells and spell-like abilities used by his Darklord on him, the Nightlord ignores his Nightlord levels and their associated bonuses and cannot use Dark Blessing and similar class abilities.

By succeeding at a Concentration check of DC 20 the Darklord can see through his Nightlord's eyes. As long as the Nightlord is found within the domain he and the Darklord can communicate telepathically with each other. When the Darklord and the Nightlord are within 100 feet half of all damage suffered by the Darklord is suffered by the Nightlord instead. Also, should a Darklord feel the need to punish his Nightlord he can target him as a standard action with the Wrack spell as if cast by a 12th level Sorcerer (or the Darklord's HD, whichever is higher). Once per day the Darklord can target his Nightlord with a Finger of Death spell instead, or strip him of his supernatural and spell-like Nightlord abilities (with no save allowed for the latter use). Once per week, the Darklord can attempt to summon the Nightlord to his current location by performing a 6-round ritual which requires a successful Concentration check at DC 17. The Nightlord may resist the summoning by making a Will save (DC 30). The latter powers of a darklord over the Nightlord (except the removal of class abilities) only work when the Nightlord is found within the Darklord's domain.

Aura of Evil (Su): Starting at 2nd level, a Nightlord is continuously surrounded by a powerful aura of damnation and evil. The Nightlord himself and any evil allies within 10 feet

of him receive a +1 Profane bonus to armor class and to all saving throws against attacks, special attacks and spells used by good creatures (or which carry the Good descriptor). This is a supernatural ability, and its effects stack with those granted by the Protection from Good spell but not with those granted by the Blackguard's class feature of the same name.

Forbidden Lore (Ex): A 2nd level Nightlord may use his Knowledge (Ravenloft) skill instead of Knowledge (Religion) for making sacrifices and the Sacrificial Mastery feat applies to these checks as well.

Minion (Su): At 2nd level the Nightlord receives a +2 circumstance bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate and Sense Motive checks against the Darklord's other minions, and is treated as being 2 levels higher for the purpose of rebuking Undead loyal to or created by the Darklord. This ability stacks with the Evil Brand feat.

Phooka Mount (Su): A 4th level Nightlord gains the service of a Phooka mount, which he summons from the one of the Seas by drowning a sentient living being. It is treated in all aspects as a Blackguard of Darkness' mount. For Phooka stats refer to my article "Terrors from the Deep".

Favored (Su): At 5th level all bonuses granted by the Nightlord's Minion ability are increased to +4.

Greater Darklord's Boon (Sp/Su)- At 5th level the Nightlord receives an even greater reward from his Darklord for his service. Sample Greater Darklord's Boons include:

- ❖ *Adam:* The character gains a Stitching special attack (see Van Richten's Guide to the Walking Dead), thereby allowing him to graft dead flesh into his body in order to heal injuries. Every time he uses this ability the character gains +2 Outcast Rating as his appearance becomes more like that of an actual Flesh Golem.
- ❖ *Alfred Timothy:* Character can transform into a Wolf three times per day, as the Polymorph Self spell cast by a 12th level Sorcerer.
- ❖ *Azalin Rex:* Character can cast Animate Dead once per day as a 12th level Sorcerer.
- ❖ *Death:* Character gains Negative Energy Resistance 10.
- ❖ *Dominic D'honaire:* Character can communicate telepathically with all creatures within 100 feet of himself that have a language.
- ❖ *Gabrielle Aderre:* The character may cast Eyebite once per day as a 12th level sorcerer.
- ❖ *Gwydion:* The character may cast Feeblemind once per day as a 12th level sorcerer.
- ❖ *Harkon Lukas:* Once per day, the character can perform a special whistle and summon 2d6 Wolves or 1d4 Dire Wolves to serve him for half an hour. The creatures take 2d6 rounds to arrive. This ability can only be used within at least 300 feet from a forest known to contain wolves, or alternately within 300 feet from the Misty Border (in which case the Wolves are Magical Beasts with the Mists subtype, being created from the Mists themselves).

- ❖ *Hazlik*: Character can cast Wall of Fire once per day as 12th level Sorcerer.
- ❖ *Inza Kulchevich*: Character can use a touch attack which deals 6d6 points of Acid damage + Nightlord levels to an Innocent character. Every Powers Check failed by the target reduces the damage dealt by 1d6 point, and a successful Reflex save DC 10 + Nightlord levels + Cha modifier halves the damage done. Darklords and creatures with the Evil subtype are immune to the Nightlord's touch attack.
- ❖ *Ivana Boristi*: Character gets to apply his Charisma modifier to Fortitude saves made against Poison. The effects of Ivana's Darklord's Boon stack with those of the Dark Blessing class ability (doubling the bonus provided).
- ❖ *Ivan Dislinya*: Character can cast *Poison* once each day as a 12th level Sorcerer, but only on food or drink. This toxin is an injected poison, with damage and difficulty class determined by the spell *Poison*.
- ❖ *Jacqueline Renier*: The character can assume Gaseous Form once per day as a standard action, as the spell cast by a 12th level Sorcerer. Any living creature that begins its turn in the same space as the Gaseous cloud must succeed on a Reflex save against a DC of 10 + 1/2 Nightlord level + Cha modifier or be affected as though by a Stinking Cloud spell.
- ❖ *Malken*: Once per day, the character can cast *Morality Undone* as a 12th level Cleric.
- ❖ *Strahd Von Zarovich*: The character gains Fast Healing 2 for

as long as he is in contact with Barovian soil.

- ❖ *The Three Hags*: The character may cast Blight once per day as a 12th level sorcerer.
- ❖ *Tristen ApBlanc*: The character can cast Haste and Slow once each per day as a 12th level Sorcerer.
- ❖ *Tristessa*: The character may keen once per day. All living creatures within 60 feet are affected as with a symbol of pain.
- ❖ *Urik Von Kharkov*: The character gains Fast Healing 1 for as long as he is in contact with moonlight.
- ❖ *Vlad Drakov*: The character gains Spell Resistance equal to his Nightlord level + Cha modifier.
- ❖ *Wilfred Godefroy*: The character's ability to Rebuke Undead is now equal to a Cleric of his HD, but only when rebuking incorporeal undead.

Frightening (Su): The Nightlord's very presence is unsettling to other living beings. Upon entering the radius of the Nightlord's Aura, living creatures must make a Fear check DC 10 + 1/2 Nightlord levels + Charisma modifier. Beings that save successfully are immune to this ability for 10 days, and beings who fail their saves cannot be affected by the ability more than once per day. The minions of the Nightlord's patron are immune to the Frightening ability.

Exalted (Su): At 8th level all bonuses granted by the Nightlord's Favored ability are increased to +6.

Create Sinkhole of Evil (Sp): Once every week, by initiating a ritual of obscene evil, the Nightlord can create a permanent Sinkhole of Evil. Creating a

100-foot wide 1st rank Sinkhole of Evil takes 1 round of Concentration and requires 1000 Gold pieces worth of materials and the loss of 100 XP. Increasing the Sinkhole's size by an additional 10 feet requires 100 Gold and 10 XP. Increasing its rank by 1 requires materials worth 1000 gold multiplied by the new rank and 100 XP multiplied by the new rank. A Nightlord cannot create 5th rank Sinkholes of Evil or Sinkholes which extend over a mile through use of this ability. Nightlords often use Dark Craft points granted through ritual sacrifice to the Mists to fuel this horrific ability. Creating a Sinkhole is an Act of Ultimate Darkness. (Editorial note: Does this really apply to Nightlords, with their close ties to darklords, and, by extension, the Dark Powers?)

Faceless (Sp): At 10th level the character had learned to remove his own face in a fell ritual and don the faces of the slain like masks. Removing a face can only be done with a magical slashing weapon and takes 2 rounds. Replacing the Blackguard's own face with it requires another 2 rounds. Upon donning the face, the Nightlord is affected by a Polymorph Self spell but can only adopt the shape of the one whose face he is wearing. The duration lasts infinitely until the Nightlord wears another face. The Nightlord can only don the faces of other Humanoids and his own face does not rot, even while it is removed. Viewing the Nightlord while he initiates this vile ritual requires a Horror check DC 20. The Nightlord can use the Faceless ability a number of times each day equal to his Charisma modifier.

Misery's Companion (Su): At 10th level the Nightlord is second only

to the Darklord himself in sheer malice. He ignores all Powers Checks with a failure percentage of 10% or less. However, he feels weak and lethargic when outside his Darklord's domain, suffering a -4 profane penalty to attack and damage rolls, AC and saves. Furthermore, his natural healing is only half as effective. Finally, the Nightlord develops a supernatural weakness related to the curse of his Darklord master. Sample weaknesses include:

- ❖ The character suffers double damage from cold iron (or another choice material) weapons and is unable to cross an unbroken line of cold iron shards.
- ❖ The character has a secret True Name, and anyone who knows it can ask him to perform up to 3 favors. The Nightlord is obliged to obey as though he was affected by a Suggestion spell.
- ❖ The character is deathly afraid of beetles (Or some other type of animal or vermin) and must make a Fear check DC 25 upon seeing or hearing one.
- ❖ The character is burnt by the moon or star-light, suffering 1d6 damage for each round of exposure.
- ❖ The character's reflection is that of a ferocious wolf, and animals and other creatures with Scent detect him as one (influencing their reaction towards him).
- ❖ The character's face becomes a horrid visage of nightmare, granting him +5 Outcast rating for as long as his face is visible.
- ❖ The character is forever haunted by the memories of those he slew, and after every night must make a Horror check DC 15 upon awakening.

New Feat

Exalted of the Dark Gods (Vile)

Forces of evil protect you from the Dark Powers' wrath.

Requirements: Any evil alignment, must have failed a Powers check

Benefits: You don't need to roll Powers Checks for evil acts with a failure percentage of 5% or less.



The Night Lord

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Reflex Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day/Spells Known	Rebuke/ Command Undead
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Bonus Feat, Darklord's Boon, Sense Sinkhole of Evil, Slave to Darkness		
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Aura of Evil, Forbidden Lore, Minion	+1 level of existing class	+1 level of existing class
3	+3	+3	+1	+1			
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Bonus Feat, Phooka Mount	+1 level of existing class	+1 level of existing class
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Favored, Greater Darklord's Boon		
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	Frightening	+1 level of existing class	+1 level of existing class
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Bonus Feat		
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	Exalted	+1 level of existing class	+1 level of existing class
9	+9	+6	+3	+3			
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Create Sinkhole of Evil 1/week , Faceless, Misery's Companion	+1 level of existing class	+1 level of existing class

The Complete Misty Warrior

Adaptions of the Complete Warrior

By Mark Graydon

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Last year the book “Complete Warrior” was published, bringing a new idea to the game of D&D. Instead of molding a book around a class or three, the book was designed to cater to all classes based on a warrior theme. This article attempts to convert and “mistify” that book so that it is appropriate for a Ravenloft campaign setting.

Classes

Hexblade

Hexblade’s Curse: The Hexblade’s Curse is equal in severity to a Frustrating curse. However, like all curses, these hexes are inherently evil acts. Any use of the Hexblade’s curse ability incurs a 2% Powers Check.

Familiar: The Hexblade’s familiar is a Dread Companion. See Classes in Chapter Two of the Ravenloft Player’s Handbook.

Spells: Some Hexblade spells function differently in Ravenloft; see Altered Magic in Chapter Three of the Ravenloft Player’s Handbook.

Greater Hexblade’s Curse: This more potent curse is cause for 4% Powers Check for the increased severity.

Dire Hexblade’s Curse: The most potent curse ability of the Hexblade is cause for an 8% Powers Check.

Prestige Classes

Bear Warrior

In the Frozen Reaches the Bear Warriors are not uncommon. Life in these lands is harsh and many lone warriors see the ferocity and endurance of the bear as a means of survival. Both Sanguinia and Vorostokov have Bear Warriors; indeed they are slightly more common in Vorostokov. Many believe the Bear Warriors to be lycanthropic Werebears.

Bear Warriors are also found in G’Henna and Valachan. In G’Henna it is not unheard of for Bear Warriors to lair out in the wilds. There are stories of a mad hermit Bear Warrior who believed that when he changed form he was channeling the spirit of Zhakata, in the Devourer aspect.

In Valachan Bear Warriors are loners who have been influenced by stories of nearby Verbrek and the hunting prowess that the Bear holds. These two aspects combine and are very appealing to the more savage Valachani.

Kobach, Male Vorostokovan Human Barbarian7/Bear Warrior1: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 8d12+16 (73 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 19; BA/G +8/+11; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Greatsword +13 melee (2d6+5, 19-20 x2) or Shortbow +11 ranged (1d6+3, x3); FA Greatsword +13/+8 melee

(2d6+5, 19-20 x2) or Shortbow +11/+6 ranged (1d6+3, x3); SQ Bear form (Black), DR 1/--, Improved Uncanny Dodge, Rage 2/day, Trap Sense +2; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Climb +11, Jump +11, Listen +12, Profession (Tanner) +11, Survival +12; Endurance, Power Attack, Track, Weapon Focus (Greatsword)

Possessions: Breastplate +1, Greatsword +1, MW Composite Shortbow (Str +3), MW Arrows (x20), Potions (Cure Serious Wounds x2, Lesser Restoration x2, Neutralize Poison x2), Amulet of Natural Armor +1, Climber's Kit, Silver Dagger, Alchemist's Fire (x3)

Bladesinger

The elite elven warriors known as Bladesingers are found primarily in the Southern Core, mostly in the domains of Sithicus and Verbrek. In Sithicus, the Bladesingers are a very small house and serve as elite guards and hunters in the land. While beautiful to behold, they are a grim lot betraying a deep sadness in their graceful movements. The Bladesingers of Verbrek are in mostly Half-Elves and are a bit more cheerful in their endeavors, while still being very careful of the native wolves. Bladesingers are also found to a lesser degree in the land of Kartakass, often with Bardic training. These Bladesingers are the most musical of the brands, and take great care to invoke art and music in their movements.

Valanthe, Female Sithican Elf Fighter3/Wizard1/Bladesinger3: CR 7; Medium Humanoid (Elf); HD 3d10+1d4+3d8 (37 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 18 (19 vs. one

opponent), touch 13, flat-footed 15; BA/G +6/+8; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Longsword +10 melee (1d8+2, 19-20 x2) or Longbow +8 (+9 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8+2, x3); FA Longsword +10/+5 melee (1d8+2, 19-20 x2) or Longbow +8/+3 (+9/+4 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8+2, x3); SA Spells; SQ Bladesong Style, Elf Traits, Lesser Spell song; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills & Feats: Balance +5, Concentration +7, Knowledge (Local) +4, Perform (Dance) +1, Perform (Sing) +1, Spellcraft +7, Tumble +6; Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (Longsword)

Possessions: Chain Shirt +1, MW Longsword, MW Composite Longbow (Str +2), Arrows (x20), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cat's Grace, Cure Moderate Wounds), Cloak of Resistance +1, Scrolls (Dispel Magic, Fly, Summon Monster I x2), Dagger

Spells: (Casts as Wiz3; 4/3/2; 20% chance of Arcane Spell Failure; save DC 12 + spell level): Daze, Disrupt Undead, Flare, Resistance; Magic Missile, Magic Weapon, True Strike; Mirror Image, See Invisibility

Cavalier

Cavaliers are most commonly found in Nova Vassa, though they may also be found in Hazlan or Pharazia.

Warnaar, Male Nova Vassan Human Fighter8/Cavalier1: CR 9; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 9d10+18 (72 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18; BA/G +9/+12; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Lance +13 melee (1d8+5, x3) or

Composite Longbow +11 ranged (1d8+1, x3); FA Lance +13/+8 melee (1d8+5, x3) or Composite Longbow +11/+6 ranged (1d8+1, x3); AL LN; SV Fort +15, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Handle Animal +14, Knowledge (Nobility & Royalty) +7, Ride +19; Animal Affinity, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Ride-By-Attack, Skill Focus (Ride), Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (Lance)

Possessions: Half-Plate +1, Lance +1, Composite Longbow +1, Arrows +1 (x25), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cure Moderate Wounds), Cloak of Resistance +1

Dark Hunter

The Dark Hunters are those who recognize that evil often lurks underground, whether it be ghouls in a warren beneath a cemetery of an even older form of evil lurking in the depths of a forgotten mountain. Such souls take it upon themselves to hunt these creatures, whether in hopes of eliminating them or seeking the treasures such creatures horde.

Dark Hunters are most common in Barovia, the Shadow Rift, Sebuia, Sithicus, Valachan, and Verbrek. In most lands they simply hunt whatever they can find. In Sithicus, Dark Hunters haunt the Vedrava Salt Mines and stalk the abysmal shadows that lair there. In the Shadow Rift these hunters are Arak, most often of the Brag, Muryan, or Teg breeds, hunting the undead in the Stonedowns. Dark Hunters may also be found in Falkovnia, Forlorn, Lamordia, Paridon, Tepest, and Vorostokov.

Blerta, Female Thaani Barovian Human Ranger5/Dark Hunter3: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 8d8+8 (47 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (18 vs. one opponent), touch 13, flat-footed 14; BA/G +8/+10; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Longsword +11 melee (1d8+3, 19-20 x2) or Shortbow +13 ranged (1d6+1, x3); FA Longsword +11/+6 melee (1d8+3, 19-20 x2) or Shortbow +13/+8 ranged (1d6+1, x3); SA Favored Enemy (Aberrations +4, Undead +2), Sneak Attack +1d6, Spells; SQ Darkvision 30 ft., Stonecunning, Wild Empathy; AL LN; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Climb +12, Craft (Trapmaking) +11, Handle Animal +9, Hide +18, Knowledge (Dungeoneering) +10, Move Silently +13, Survival +11; Blind-Fight, Dodge, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Rapid Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (Shortbow)

Possessions: Studded Leather +1, Longsword +1, Shortbow +1, Arrows (x20), Potions (Cure Light Wounds x3), Eyes of the Eagle, Cloak of Elvenkind

Spells: (1; save DC 11 + spell level) Calm Animals

Darkwood Stalker

As the elves of Ravenloft do not have the long-term enmity with Orcs that elves of other worlds have, this prestige class is unknown in the Demiplane.

Dervish

The Dervishes of Ravenloft originated in the nomads of Pharazia, but strangely there are few of them in existence among those people. Instead, the lifestyle has lent itself more strongly to other domains and cultures, and

Dervishes have in a few cases sprung up independently of any outside influences.

Dervishes are most common strangely enough, in Odiare. There a scattering of youths has taken to their dance performances and their daggers with a strange ferocity, fighting back against the dark creations of Guiseppe and Maligno.

Other Dervishes may be found in Barovia, Borca, Forlorn, the Nocturnal Sea, the Sea of Sorrows, Sebuia, the Shadow Rift, Sithicus, Sri Raji, and Vechor. In the tiny land of Forlorn Dervishes are militant druids and have shown the most variation in the weapons they wield such as Battleaxes, Daggers, Handaxes, and Longswords. Barovian Dervishes often wield Battleaxes, Longswords, or Scimitars. Sithican Dervishes often stalk the land with Daggers, Handaxes, or Longswords. Borcan Dervishes, while rare, almost always use Daggers as their weapon. The primitive Sebuian Dervishes (who learned their abilities from aping Pharazian Nomads traveling through the land) use Handaxes, and the Dervishes found in Vechor use exotic Kukris. Finally, those Dervishes in the Shadow Rift and Sri Raji both are fond of the use of Scimitars, but that is where the similarity ends. The Dervishes in the Shadow Rift are almost universally Muryan Arak, as they see this as a way to pursue their natural abilities.

Dervishes are also found in the Nocturnal Sea and the Sea of Sorrows, but they show no predilection towards any one type of weapon.

Zita, Female Odieran Human Fighter5/Dervish3: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 8d10 (59 hp); Init +2; Spd 35 ft. (7 squares); AC 13 (14 vs. one opponent), touch 13, flat-

footed 11; BA/G +8/+11; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Dagger +13 melee (1d4+6, 19-20 x2) or Longbow +12 ranged (1d8+1, x3); FA Dagger +13/+8 melee (1d4+6, 19-20 x2) or Longbow +12/+7 ranged (1d8+1, x3); SQ Dervish Dance 2/day; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Craft (Leatherworking) +12, Heal +6, Perform (Dance) +9, Tumble +13; Combat Expertise, Courage, Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (Dagger), Weapon Specialization (Dagger)

Possessions: Dagger +1, MW Composite Longbow, Arrows +1 (x25), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cure Moderate Wounds), Cloak of Resistance +1

Drunken Master

These exotic masters of martial arts are found most commonly in only a select few lands, namely Paridon, Rokushima Taiyoo, Sithicus, and Sri Raji. It is thought that the traditions originated in either the lands of Sri Raji or Rokushima Taiyoo, where the monastic arts are often taught. However, Paridon has a select few members of this group, although there is suspicion as to whether they learned their skills from foreigners from Rokushima Taiyoo or Sri Raji, or if they instead learned from secret alchemy-based gentlemen's clubs.

In Sithicus there are few monks, but those who do practice the arts find that they often have the skills necessary to excel as Drunken Masters. Add to this the fact that many of the Sithican elves are struck with crushing depression, and it's not unheard of for them to resort to alcohol and spirits to take away their pain for a time.

Laucian, Male Sithican Elf
Monk5/Drunken Master3: CR 8;
Medium Humanoid (Elf); HD 8d8 (39
hp); Init +3; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC
20 (23 vs. one opponent), touch 17, flat-
footed 17; BA/G +5/+7; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.;
Atk Handaxe +9 melee (1d6+3, x3) or
Unarmed +7 melee (1d8+2) or Longbow
+9 ranged (1d8, x3); FA Handaxe +9
melee (1d6+3, x3) or Unarmed +7 melee
(1d8+2), or Longbow +9 ranged (1d8,
x3); SA Flurry of Blows, Ki Strike
(Magic); SQ Drink like a Demon, Elf
Traits, Evasion, Purity of Body, Still
Mind; AL LN; SV Fort +10, Ref +11,
Will +9; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10,
Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Hide +14, Jump
+13, Sense Motive +12, Tumble +14;
Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great
Fortitude, Improved Grapple, Improved
Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus
(Handaxe)

Possessions: Handaxe +1, MW
Longbow, Arrows (x10), Potions (Cure
Moderate Wounds, Heroism), Bracers of
Armor +1, Cloak of Resistance +1, Ring
of Protection +1, Amulet of Natural
Armor +1

Exotic Weapon Master

The Exotic Weapon Master is a
rather common prestige class in
Ravenloft; many of its adherents apply
themselves to firearms. By and far the
most members of this class come from
the domain of Richemulot where its
members specialize in the use of the
Hand Crossbow or the Musket. After
that land, those in Borca, Darkon, and
Lamordia favor all types of firearms.
Exotic Weapon Masters from Mordent
& Paridon both favor the small and
elegant Pistol. Those hailing from
Invidia favor the Musket, and there are

many Weapon Masters from the land of
Falkovnia who employ the use of the
Bastard Sword.

Tricks: The following tricks can
be used with firearms as presented:
Close-Quarters Ranged Combat, Ranged
Disarm, Show Off, and Twin Exotic
Weapon Fighting.

Gauderic, Male Richemuloise
Half-Vistani (Kamii)
Fighter3/Rogue4/Exotic Weapon
Master1: CR 8; Medium Humanoid
(Human); HD 4d10+4d6+8 (48 hp); Init
+2; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 16, touch
12, flat-footed 16; BA/G +7/+10; S/R 5
ft./5 ft.; Atk Rapier +11 melee (1d6+4,
18-20 x2) or Hand Crossbow +11 (+12
within 30 ft.) ranged (1d4+1, 19-20 x2);
FA Rapier +11/+6 melee (1d6+4, 18-20
x2) or Hand Crossbow +11/+6 (+12/+7
within 30 ft.) ranged (1d4+1, 19-20 x2);
SA Sneak Attack +2d6; SQ Close-
Quarters Ranged Combat, Evasion,
Moon Madness, Trapfinding, Trap Sense
+1, Uncanny Dodge; AL CN; SV Fort
+7, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 15, Con
13, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and feats: Appraise +10,
Craft (Weaponsmithing) +14, Hide +8,
Intimidate +8, Listen +9, Move Silently
+8, Spot +9; Alertness, Iron Will, Point
Blank Shot, Track, Weapon Focus
(Hand Crossbow)

Possessions: Studded Leather +1,
Rapier +1, MW Hand Crossbow, Bolts
+1 (x25), Potions (Bear's Endurance,
Cure Light Wounds x4, Cure Moderate
Wounds, Darkvision, Neutralize Poison),
Cloak of Resistance +1, Silk Rope (x
50'), MW Thieves' Tools

Eye of Groomsh

Due to this prestige class's
dependence upon Orcs and the deity
Groomsh, neither of which are present in

the Demiplane, this class does not exist natively.

Ritual Scarring (Ex): For every point of AC this ability grants, the character's Outcast Rating increases by +1.

Frenzied Berserker

These berserkers are most often found in the Frozen Reaches cluster, in the lands of Sanguinia and Vorostokov. The rage these warriors find within themselves allows them to survive longer in their harsh lands. As well, some Frenzied Berserkers live out solitary lives in the land of Nidala. These hermits are seized by their fury and lash out at any who come near them.

Frenzy (Ex): While in a Frenzy, the Berserker gains a +4 circumstance bonus on any Fear, Horror, or Madness saves. This does not stack with the +4 bonus gained for entering a Barbarian rage.

Sinya, Female Sanguinian Human Barbarian4/Fighter2/Frenzied Berserker2: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 6d12+2d10+8 (71 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 20; BA/G +8/+11; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Battleaxe +13 melee (1d8+3, x3) or Composite Shortbow +11 ranged (1d6+3, x3); FA Battleaxe +13/+8 melee (1d8+3, x3) or Composite Shortbow +11/+6 ranged (1d6+3, x3); SA Frenzy 1/day, Rage 2/day, Supreme Cleave; SQ Trap Sense +1, Uncanny Dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +12, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Balance +2, Climb +8, Jump +8, Survival +8, Use Rope +7; Cleave, Destructive Rage, Diehard, Great Cleave, Intimidating Rage, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (Battleaxe)

Possessions: Breastplate +1, Heavy Steel Shield, MW Battleaxe, MW Composite Shortbow (Str +3), MW Arrows (x20), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cure Moderate Wounds, Cure Serious Wounds x2, Lesser Restoration x2, Neutralize Poison x2), Climber's Kit, Silver Dagger, Alchemist's Fire (x3)

Gnome Giant-Slayer

There are no lands in Ravenloft where the Gnome Giant-Slayers are common. Although there are still those who follow this class, though no one land has them in any appreciable amount.

Skoreowalun, Male Valachani Gnome Ranger6/Gnome Giant Slayer2: CR 8; Small Humanoid (Gnome); HD 6d8+2d10+16 (57 hp); Init +3; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 18 (19 vs. one opponent), touch 14, flat-footed 15; BA/G +8/+6; S/R 5 ft. /5 ft.; Atk Longsword +11 melee (1d6+2, 19-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +13 ranged (1d6+1, x3); FA Longsword +11/+6 melee (1d6+2, 19-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +13/+8 ranged (1d6+1, x3); SA Favored Enemies (Vermin +4, Animals +2, Giants +2), Spells; SQ Crafty Fighter, Wild Empathy; AL LN; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Escape Artist +8, Hide +20, Move Silently +13, Speak Language (Giant), Spot +15, Survival +10, Tumble +8; Dodge, Endurance, Manyshot, Mobility, Rapid Shot, Spring Attack, Track

Possessions: Studded Leather +1, Longsword +1, Composite Longbow +1, Arrows (x20), Potions (Cure Light Wounds x3), Eyes of the Eagle, Cloak of Elvenkind

Spells: (2; save DC 11 + spell level): Delay Poison, Entangle

Halfling Outrider

Halfling Outriders are most commonly found in the lands of Hazlan and Nova Vassa, with some also being seen in Richemulot. Segregation of the Halfling communities in the first two domains allows the Outriders to fulfill their purpose. Outriders in Hazlan and Nova Vassa often ride warponies as mounts.

In the land of Richemulot the art of information gathering is more highly prized. Often however, the Halfling Outriders will only warn their own kind of trouble coming, rather than share the information. Wise humans have learned to keep an eye on the activities of the Halfling communities in their area; if they pack up and leave, it's a sure sign trouble is on the way. Outriders from Richemulot often use riding dogs as mounts, due to the denser terrain.

Anlaf, Male Nova Vassan Halfling Fighter3/Rogue3/Halfling Outrider 2: CR 8; Small Humanoid (Halfling); HD 3d10+3d6+2d8+8 (48 hp); Init +4; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 21 (22 vs. one opponent), touch 15, flat-footed 17; BA/G +8/+6; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Lance +12 melee (1d6+2, x3) or Composite Longbow +13 ranged (1d6+1, x3); FA Lance +12/+7 melee (1d6+2, x3) or Composite Longbow +13/+8 ranged (1d6+1, x3); SA Sneak Attack +2d6; SQ Defensive Riding, Evasion, Trapfinding, Trap Sense +1; AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +12, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +3, Listen +13, Ride +19, Spot +13; Alertness, Animal Affinity,

Dodge, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Weapon Focus (Lance)

Possessions: Studded Leather +1, Buckler +1, Lance +1, MW Composite Longbow, Arrows +1 (x25), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cure Light Wounds x6, Cure Moderate Wounds, Darkvision, Neutralize Poison x2), Cloak of Resistance +1

Hulking Hurler

This prestige class can be found in any domain that has large sized creatures present. The Dread Trolls and Ogres that lair in Hazlan and Kartakass and the Dread Treants of Forlorn are but a few examples of such creatures.

Hunter of the Dead

Hunters of the Dead may be found in the lands of Darkon, G'Henna, Har'Akir, Hazlan, Mordent, Nidala, Nova Vassa, Sri Raji, and Tepest. In the lands of Darkon the Hunters come from the ranks of Ezra's faithful and the Church of the Overseer. Ironically, there are no Hunters who follow the Eternal Order. The Order's predilection towards evil prevents any Hunters from being formed.

In G'Henna, the Hunters are those less evil (Chaotic Neutral) followers of Zhakata; the followers of the heretical Provider aspect of Zhakata. In Har'Akir the Hunters come from all three major deities of the Akiri pantheon; Osiris, Ra, and Set. Indeed, many Hunters have come together and formed a secret society known as the Green Hand, all following the teachings of Osiris. Even Set has a few Hunters of the Dead; those who are less evil (Lawful Neutral) than their brethren.

In Hazlan, the Hunters come from the worship of Hala and the Lawgiver.

Of course, the followers of the Lawgiver do not conform to the norm for their clergy. The land of Mordent has created many Hunters, mostly drawn from the ranks of Ezra, but some have also come from Hala. The prevalence of the spirit world in Mordent has caused many to come forward to fight the specters. However, they are often loners, as Mordent's people often believe that to visit evil is to invite it back home.

Nidala has its share of Hunters, those drawn from the followers of Belenus. Nova Vassan Hunters of the Dead come exclusively from the Lawgiver, and conform to the standards for Hazlani Hunters described above. In the lush tropical lands of Sri Raji, the Hunters come from the followers of Kali and Tvashtri. Kali followers are by necessity less evil than their fellows (Chaotic Neutral) and are rare. Finally, the lands of Tepest have a few Hunters of the Dead, mostly concerned with spectral entities. They are drawn almost completely from the ranks of Belenus, but there are a few from the followers of Ezra and the Lawgiver.

Spells: Some spells function differently in Ravenloft. See *Altered Magic* in Chapter Three of the *Ravenloft Player's Handbook*.

Detect Undead (Sp): This ability is affected as the spell of the same name as described in *Altered Magic* in chapter three of the *Ravenloft Player's Handbook*.

True Death (Su): This ability cannot affect Darklords.

Tale, Female Akiri Human Cleric4/Fighter2/Hunter of the Dead2: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 4d8+2d10+2d8+16 (57 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 16, touch 9, flat-

footed 16; BA/G +7/+9; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Flail +11 melee (1d8+3) or Composite Shortbow +7 ranged (1d6+3, x3); FA Flail +11/+6 melee (1d8+3) or Composite Shortbow +7/+2 ranged (1d6+3, x3); SA Smite Undead 1/day, Spells, Turn Undead; SQ Aura of Good, Detect Undead; AL NG; SV Fort +13, Ref +1, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and feats: Handle Animal +4, Knowledge (Arcana) +7, Knowledge (Religion) +10, Ride +5, Survival +6; Endurance, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Necromancy), Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (Flail)

Possessions: Studded Leather +1, Heavy Wooden Shield +1, Flail +1, MW Composite Shortbow (Str +2), Arrows +1 (x25), Scrolls (Bear's Endurance, Cure Light Wounds x5, Cure Moderate Wounds, Silence), Potions (Blur, Fly, Levitate), Cloak of Resistance +1

Deity: Osiris; **Domains:** Good (Cast *Good* spells as Clr5), Repose (Grant Final Rest)

Cleric Spells: (5/5/4; save DC 13 + spell level; 14 + spell level for Necromancy): Create Water, Detect Poison, Guidance, Light, Resistance, Bless, Bless Water, Hide from Undead, *Protection from Evil*, Shield of Faith; *Aid*, Consecrate, Remove Paralysis, Sound Burst

Hunter of the Dead Spells: (2; save DC 13 + spell level; 14 + spell level for Necromancy): Magic Weapon, Remove Fear

Invisible Blade

Invisible Blades in Ravenloft most commonly use the Dagger as their weapon of choice. The most common domains that they hail from are Richemulot and Verbrek. In Richemulot the Invisible Blades are deadly warriors

who prefer to appear as though they are unarmed so as to surprise attackers. In Verbrek, Blades take a certain glee in killing the wolves of the land with a weapon so similar to the beast's own claws and teeth.

Invisible Blades can also be found in Borca, Forlorn, Hazlan, Invidia, and Sithicus. Most pursue the class for the same reason as those in Richemulot, although many Rashemani Blades train with small weapons until they become good enough to free themselves from their Mulan masters.

Teryn, Male Verbreker Caliban
Rogue6/Invisible Blade2: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Caliban); HD 8d6+8 (38 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 17; BA/G +6/+8; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Dagger +10 melee (1d4+2, 19-20 x2) or Composite Shortbow +10 (+11 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d6 x3); FA Dagger +10/+5 melee (1d4+2, 19-20 x2) or Composite Shortbow +10/+5 (+11/+6 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d6 x3); SA Bleeding Wound, Dagger Sneak Attack +4d6, Sneak Attack +3d6; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Evasion, Trapfinding, Trap Sense +2, Uncanny Dodge, Unfettered Defense; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +12, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and feats: Bluff +7, Climb +11, Hide +12, Jump +11, Listen +9, Move Silently +12, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9, Swim +11; Far Shot, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (Dagger)

Possessions: Studded Leather +1, MW Silvered Dagger, MW Composite Shortbow, MW Arrows (x20), Potions (Cure Serious Wounds, Darkvision, Haste, Neutralize Poison x2), Cloak of Resistance +1, Bag of Holding I, Silk Rope (x50')

Justicar

The Justicars of Ravenloft are found most commonly in the lands of Lamordia, Necropolis, and Sithicus. In the latter domain, they usually come from the city of Har-Thelen, while Lamordia births Justicars from both its major cities. Necropolis possesses undead Justicars in the service of Death, hunting down traitors within the city.

Justicars may be found in Barovia, Forlorn, Invidia, Kartakass, Mordent, Nova Vassa, Richemulot, Sebu, Tepest, Valachan, and Verbrek. Justicars are well respected in Mordent, and sometimes work with the Lamp-Lighters. In Tepest the Justicars often work closely with the Inquisition.

Intuition (Su): The Intuition ability of the Justicar is not limited by domain borders.

Stefan, Male Lamordian Human
Ranger7/Justicar1: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 7d8+1d10+8 (48 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; BA/G +8/+10; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Rapier +11 melee (1d6+3, 18-20 x2) or Musket +12 (+13 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d12+1, x3); FA Rapier +11/+6 melee (1d6+3, 18-20 x2) or Musket +12/+7 (+13/+8 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d12+1, x3); SA Favored Enemies (Animals +4, Constructs +2), Nonlethal Strike +1d6, Spells; SQ Bring 'em Back Alive, Woodland Stride; AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Appraise +5, Craft (Blacksmithing) +10, Disable Device +5, Gather Information +10, Knowledge (Nature) +10, Search +11, Survival +12; Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Manyshot, Point Blank Shot,

Rapid Reload (Musket), Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Gather Information), Track

Possessions: Studded Leather +1, Rapier +1, Musket +1, Bullets (x20), Potions (Cure Light Wounds x3), Eyes of the Eagle, Cloak of Elvenkind

Spells: (2; save DC 11 + spell level): Calm Animals, Entangle

Kensai

The warriors known as Kensai originate in the lands of Rokushima Taiyoo, where there are still a good number of them present, serving the warlords of that domain. However Kensai are also found in Hazlan and Pharazia. In the former land they swear their oaths to the Red Wizard and learn from spellcasters, forging arcane connections with their chosen weapons. In Pharazia the Kensai almost universally serve Diamabel as religious enforcers and are known for their use of Scimitars. Kensai may also be found in Mordent, where they serve the Weathermays, or in Sri Raji.

Sayad, Male Pharazian Human Fighter7/Kensai1: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 8d10+16 (64 hp); Init +0; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17; BA/G +7/+10; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Scimitar +12 melee (1d6+6, 18-20 x2) or Composite Shortbow +8 ranged (1d6+4, x3); FA Scimitar +12/+7 melee (1d6+6, 18-20 x2) or Scimitar +8/+3 melee (1d6+6, 18-20 x2) and Scimitar +8 melee (1d6+4, 18-20 x2) or Composite Shortbow +8/+3 ranged (1d6+4, x3); AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Concentration +9, Diplomacy +5, Ride +11, Sense Motive +8; Combat Expertise, Endurance, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip,

Mounted Combat, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (Scimitar), Weapon Specialization (Scimitar)

Possessions: Banded Mail +1, Scimitar +1 (x2), MW Composite Shortbow (Str +3), Arrows +1 (x25), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cure Moderate Wounds), Cloak of Resistance +1

Knight of the Chalice

Knights of the Chalice arise in four domains in Ravenloft: Har'Akir, Mordent, Nidala, and Tepest. In the desert domain of Har'Akir they are followers of either Osiris or Ra, and hunt evil across the burning sands. In Mordent the Knights are in the service of Ezra and often hunt spirits as much as demons. In Nidala and Tepest, Knights are followers of Belenus.

Spells: Some spells function differently in Ravenloft; see *Altered Magic* in Chapter Three of the *Ravenloft Player's Handbook*.

Censure Demons (Su): Those demons that would be affected by the Dismissal effect of this power are affected as if by the spell of the same name. See *Altered Magic* in chapter three of the *Ravenloft Players Handbook*.

Courage of Heaven (Su): The Knight is immune to magical fear effects from evil outsiders, but not from natural fear effects. She does however gain a +4 bonus to any Fear saves generated from such sources.

Eryn, Female Nidalan Human Cleric7/Ranger3/Knight of the Chalice1: CR 11; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 10d8+1d10+11 (65 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16; BA/G +9/+10; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.;

Atk Longsword +12 melee (1d8+2, 19-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +12 ranged (1d8+1, x3); FA Longsword +12/+7 melee (1d8+2, 19-20 x2) or Longsword +8/+3 melee (1d8+2, 19-20 x2) and Longsword +8 melee (1d8+1, 19-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +12/+7 ranged (1d8+1, x3); SA Favored Enemy (Evil Outsiders +2), Fiendslaying +1/+1d6, Spells, Turn Undead; SQ Aura of Good & Law, Wild Empathy; AL LG; SV Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +10; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Gather Information +3, Knowledge (The Planes) +7, Knowledge (Religion) +17, Sense Motive +10; Cleave, Endurance, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Knowledge: Religion), Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (Longsword)

Possessions: Chain Shirt +2, Longsword +1 (x2), Composite Longbow +1, Arrows (x20), Divine Scroll of Raise Dead, Potions (Cure Light Wounds x3, Fly, Spider Climb), Cloak of Resistance +1, Eyes of the Eagle, Wand of Cure Light Wounds (15 charges)

Deity: Belenus; Domains: Good (Cast *Good* spells as Clr8), Sun (Greater Turning 1/day)

Cleric Spells: (6/6/5/4/2; save DC 13 + spell level): Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Guidance (x2), Light, Resistance; Bless Water, Divine Favor, Doom, *Protection from Evil*, Remove Fear, Shield of Faith; *Aid*, Align Weapon, Resist Energy, Silence, Sound Burst; Dispel Magic, Prayer, Protection from Energy, Searing Light; Dimensional Anchor, *Holy Smite*

Knight of the Chalice Spells: (2; save DC 13 + spell level): Bless Weapon, Endure Elements

Knight Protector

The most common domains to produce Knight Protectors are Hazlan, Nova Vassa, and Pharazia. In the former two lands they are often state-sanctioned and are usually either Clerics of the Lawgiver or Fighters. Sir Tristen Hiregaard has a small contingent of these warriors serving under him. In Pharazia, they are enforcers of Diamabel's law. Otherwise, Knight Protectors may be found in other lands, but usually as solitary warriors. Borca, Dementlieu, Har'Akir, Mordent, Richemulot, Rokushima Taiyoo, and Sri Raji all have the possibility of generating Knight Protectors.

Konraad, Male Nova Vassan Human Cleric3/Fighter3/Knight Protector2: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 3d8+5d10+16 (60 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18; BA/G +7/+10; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Heavy Flail +12 melee (1d10+5, 19-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +9 ranged (1d8+1, x3); FA Heavy Flail +12/+7 melee (1d10+5, 19-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +9/+4 ranged (1d8+1, x3); SA Rebuke Undead, Spells; SQ Aura of Law, Defensive Stance +2, Shining Beacon; AL LN; SV Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +12; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Diplomacy +7; Knowledge (Nobility & Royalty) +6, Ride +12; Cleave, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (Heavy Flail)

Possessions: Half-Plate +1, Heavy Flail +1, MW Composite Longbow, Arrows +1 (x25), Divine Scrolls (Cure Light Wounds x3), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Blur, Cure Moderate

Wounds, Levitate), Cloak of Resistance +1

Deity: The Lawgiver; Domains: Law (Cast *Law* spells as Clr4), War

Spells: (4/4/3; save DC 12 + spell level): Guidance (x2), Light, Resistance; Command, Doom, *Protection from Chaos*, Shield of Faith; Hold Person, Silence, Spiritual Weapon

Master Thrower

The Master Throwers of Ravenloft come mostly from the lands of Lamordia and Verbrek. In Lamordia, Master Throwers focus on the throwing axe as a weapon, while Verbrek Masters show more diversity; using daggers, shortspears, and throwing axes. In Lamordia there are even annual competitions to see who can throw the axes the best.

Otherwise, Master Throwers may be found in Richemulot, Sithicus, and Valachan. In Richemulot they are found of daggers, which combines nicely with easily concealed weapons. In Sithicus they can be seen using elegant daggers or fluted Shortspears.

Katia, Female Lamordian Half-Vistani (Kamii) Fighter2/Rogue4/Master Thrower2: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 2d10+4d6+2d8+8 (46 hp); Init +3; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 19; BA/G +7/+9; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Throwing Axe +11 melee (1d6+3) or Throwing Axe +12 ranged (1d6+2); FA Throwing Axe +11/+6 melee (1d6+3) or Throwing Axe +12/+7 ranged (1d6+2); SA Sneak Attack +2d6, Sneaky Shot; SQ Improved Evasion, Moon Madness, Trapfinding, Trap Sense +1, Uncanny Dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +11, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and feats: Appraise +10, Craft (Blacksmithing) +14, Decipher Script +10, Disable Device +10, Hypnosis +2, Sleight of Hand +14; Combat Expertise, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Track, Weapon Focus (Throwing Axe)

Possessions: Studded Leather +1, Buckler +1, Throwing Axe +1, MW Throwing Axes (x9), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cure Moderate Wounds, Cure Serious Wounds, Darkvision, Haste, Neutralize Poison x2), Cloak of Resistance +1

Master of the Unseen Hand

Masters of the Unseen Hand come from Hazlan and as often wizards as sorcerers. They are a small cabal within the hierarchy of Hazlik's court, notable only for the uniqueness of their chosen field. They often hire themselves out as mercenaries in order to earn more coin for their group.

Maeret, Male Hazlani Halfling Wiz9/Master of the Unseen Hand1: CR 10; Small Humanoid (Halfling); HD 10d4+13 (39 hp); Init +3; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 14; BA/G +5/+0; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Quarterstaff +5 melee (1d4-1) or Light Crossbow +10 ranged (1d6, 19-20 x2); FA Quarterstaff +5 melee (1d4-1) or Light Crossbow +10 ranged (1d6, 19-20 x2); SA Spells; SQ Halfling Traits, Improved Caster Level, Versatile Telekinesis; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +13; Str 8, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Concentration +14, Craft (Alchemy) +16, Knowledge (Arcana) +16, Knowledge (Local) +15, Spellcraft +19; Combat Casting, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus

(Spellcraft), Spell Focus
(Transmutation), Toughness

Possessions: Quarterstaff, MW Light Crossbow, MW Bolts (x10), Arcane Scrolls (10th-level Fireball, Flesh to Stone, Teleport), Potion of Haste, Cloak of Resistance +1, Ring of Protection +1, Bracers of Armor +2, Wand of Lightning Bolt (8 charges)

Spells: (4/5/5/4/2/1; save DC 13 + spell level; 14 + spell level for *Transmutation*): Acid Splash, Detect Magic, *Mage Hand*, *Open/Close*; *Animate Rope*, Magic Missile, *Magic Weapon*, Summon Monster I, True Strike; *Fox's Cunning*, *Levitate*, Melf's Acid Arrow, Scorching Ray, See Invisibility; Fireball, *Slow*, Stinking Cloud, Tongues; Ice Storm, *Rary's Mnemonic Enhancer*; *Telekinesis*

Mindspy

As with Masters of the Unseen Hand, Mindspies come almost exclusively from Hazlan. Mindspies are much rarer, and work alone.

Detect Thoughts: Ravenloft affects the Mindspy as much as anyone else. The Mindspy's Detect Thoughts is altered as described in Altered Magic in Chapter Three of the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Trine, Female Mulan Hazlani Human Sor6/Mindspy2: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 6d4+2d8+11 (36 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12; BA/G +5/+4; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Quarterstaff +5 melee (1d6-1) or Light Crossbow +8 ranged (1d8, 19-20 x2); FA Quarterstaff +5 melee (1d6-1) or Light Crossbow +8 ranged (1d8, 19-20 x2); SA Spells; SQ Anticipate, Combat Telepathy, Faster Mindscan, Spherical Detect Thoughts;

AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +10; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 17.

Skills and feats: Bluff +7, Concentration +12, Knowledge (Arcana) +9, Spellcraft +9; Combat Casting, Spell Focus (Divination), Toughness, Weapon Focus (Quarterstaff)

Possessions: Quarterstaff, MW Light Crossbow, MW Bolts (x10), Potion of Cure Serious Wounds, Arcane Scroll of Charm Monster, Bracers of Armor +1, Cloak of Resistance +1, Ring of Protection +1, Wand of Magic Missile (9th-level; 39 charges), Dagger

Spells: (6/7/6/4; save DC 13 + spell level; 14 + spell level for *Divination*): Acid Splash, *Detect Magic*, *Detect Poison*, Flare, *Mage Hand*, Ray of Frost, *Read Magic*; *Identify*, Magic Missile, Magic Weapon, *True Strike*; *Detect Thoughts*, Eagle's Splendor; Lightning Bolt

Nature's Warrior

Nature's Warriors originate from Forlorn, Sebu, Sithicus, Valachan, and Verbrek. The southern lands of the Core are very wild support many Druids, allowing for these militant holy men to arise. The untouched wastes of Sebu have druids among the wild children, some of whom have become Nature's Warriors to protect their companions from the dangers of the stinging sands. Nature's Warriors are also found less commonly in the Shadow Rift, Souragne, and Vechor.

The powers that Nature's Warriors choose are often influenced by the domain from which they come. Here are the most commonly chosen abilities divided up by domain:

Forlorn & Valachan: Claws of the Grizzly, Nature's Weapon, Serpent's Coils, or Wild Growth.

Sebua: Armor of the Crocodile, Blaze of Power, Earth's Resilience, Nature's Weapon, or Serpent's Coils.

Sithicus: Blaze of Power, Nature's Weapon, Robe of Clouds, Serpent's Coils, Wild Growth, or Wings of the Hurricane.

Verbrek: Nature's Weapon, Serpent's Coils, or Wild Growth.

Vechor: Blaze of Power, Earth's Resilience, Nature's Weapon, Robe of Clouds, Water's Flow, Wild Growth, or Wings of the Hurricane.

Souragne: Armor of the Crocodile, Nature's Weapon, Serpent's Coils, Water's Flow, or Wild Growth.

The Shadow Rift: Claws of the Grizzly, Earth's Resilience, Nature's Weapon, Robe of Clouds, Serpent's Coils, Water's Flow, Wild Growth, or Wings of the Hurricane.

Bonnie, Female Forfarian Human Druid6/Nature's Warrior2: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 6d8+2d10+8 (49 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 18 (19 vs. one opponent), touch 13, flat-footed 16; BA/G +6/+6; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Shortspear +8 melee (1d6) or Sling +9 ranged (1d4); FA Shortspear +8/+3 melee (1d6) or Sling +9/+4 ranged (1d4); SA Spells; SQ Resist Nature's Lure, Trackless Step, Wild Empathy, Wild Growth, Wild Shape (large) 3/day, Woodland Stride; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Handle Animal +10, Knowledge (History) +5, Knowledge (Nature) +14, Knowledge (The Planes) +5, Sense Motive +8, Survival +16; Dodge, Redhead (Detect Magic 2/day), Track, Weapon Focus (Shortspear)

Possessions: Leather Armor +1, Heavy Wooden Shield, MW Shortspear, Sling, MW Bullets (x10), Divine Scrolls (Flamestrike x2, Reincarnate x2, Sleet Storm x2), Quaal's Feather Token – Tree x2, Phylactery of Faithfulness, Bag of Tricks – Gray, Potion of Darkvision x2, Ring of Protection +1

Spells: (6/5/4/3/1; save DC 13 + spell level): Cure Minor Wounds x2, Flare, Guidance, Light, Resistance; Cure Light Wounds, Entangle, Longstrider, Magic Stone, Produce Flame; Barkskin, Flame Blade, Flaming Sphere, Owl's Wisdom; Call Lightning, Cure Moderate Wounds, Poison; Cure Serious Wounds

Occult Slayer

Occult Slayers are most common in the most magical domains of Ravenloft, specifically Hazlan and Vechor. Hazlan boasts two types of Occult Slayers. The first and most common are Rashemani who have escaped their Mulan masters and seek to overthrow them. The second are those employed by the wizards of Hazlan, often as elite guards, and sometimes assassins. Hazlani Occult Slayers use Daggers, Falchions, Quarterstaves, or Whips.

In Vechor, Occult Slayers are simply individuals who hate magic. Even these Slayers are not foolish enough to confront the wizard-deity Easan. The Vechorite Slayers often use Kukris. Occult Slayers may also be found in Har'Akir, Invidia, Sithicus, the Shadow Rift, Sri Raji, and Souragne.

Blank Thoughts (Ex): Though this ability can be used to protect against magical fear effects, it cannot protect against natural Fear or Horror checks.

Hypatia, Female Vechorite Human Fighter5/Sorcerer1/Occult Slayer2: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 5d10+1d4+2d8+8 (51 hp); Init +6; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 12 (13 vs. one opponent), touch 12, flat-footed 10; BA/G +7/+10; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Kukri +12 melee (1d4+4, 18-20 x2) or Sling +10 ranged (1d4+4); FA Kukri +12/+7 melee (1d4+4, 18-20 x2) or Sling +10/+5 ranged (1d4+4); SA Spells, Vicious Strike, Weapon Bond (Kukri); SQ Magical Defense +1, Mind Over Magic 1/day; AL CG; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +10; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills and feats: Craft (Stonemason) +1, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (Arcana) +7, Spellcraft +7, Swim +11; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (Kukri)

Possessions: Kukri +1, MW Sling, Bullets +1 (x10), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Blur, Cure Moderate Wounds, Invisibility), Arcane Scrolls (Magic Missile x2, Shield, Sleep), Thunderstone, Dagger, Cloak of Resistance +1

Spells: (5/4; save DC 12 + spell level): Detect Magic, Ray of Frost, Read Magic, Open/Close; Enlarge Person, Magic Missile

Order of the Bow Initiate

Order of the Bow Initiates are most commonly found in the lands of Valachan and Verbrek, where they are often hunters in the deep woods. The more civilized folk of Valachan favor Composite Longbows, while those of Verbrek often use simple Longbows. Other domains likely to have Initiates are Lamordia, Sithicus, and Sri Raji.

Erik, Male Valachani Human Ftr5/Order of the Bow Initiate3: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 5d10+3d8+16 (61 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20; BA/G +8/+11; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Longsword +12 melee (1d8+4, 19-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +11 (+12 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8+1, x3); FA Longsword +12/+7 melee (1d8+4, 19-20 x2) or +11/+6 (+12/+7 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8+1, x3); SA Ranged Precision +2d8; SQ Close Combat Shot; AL LN; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Craft (Bowmaking) +11, Knowledge (Religion) +10, Survival +4; Courage, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Track, Warding Gesture (Fey), Weapon Focus (Composite Longbow)

Possessions: Half-Plate +1, Buckler +1, Longsword +1, MW Composite Longbow, Arrows +1 (x25), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cure Moderate Wounds), Cloak of Resistance +1

Purple Dragon Knight

The Purple Dragons do not exist in Ravenloft, so neither does this prestige class.

Rage Mage

The wild spellcasters known colloquially as "Rage Mages" are most common in the lands of Hazlan, Sanguinia, Valachan, and Vorostokov. In Hazlan they are solitary Sorcerers and Wizards that reject the common way of studying the arcane in favor of this more "natural" approach. In Valachan they are often Sorcerers who have learnt to protect themselves with barbaric might.

In Sanguinia and Vorostokov they are usually Bards or Sorcerers who have tapped into their savage heritage.

Katyenka, Female Vorostokovan Human Barbarian1/Bard4/Rage Mage3: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 1d12+4d6+3d8+3 (42 hp); Init +1; Spd 40 ft. (8 squares); AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; BA/G +6/+8; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Greatsword +9 melee (2d6+4, 19-20 x2) or Composite Shortbow +8 ranged (1d6+2 x3); FA Greatsword +9/+4 melee (2d6+4, 19-20 x2) or Composite Shortbow +8 ranged (1d6+2, x3); SA Spells; SQ Bardic Knowledge, Bardic Music 4/day (Countersong, Fascinate, Inspire Courage +1, Inspire Competence), Overcome Spell Failure, Rage 2/day, Spell Rage 1/day; AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 17.

Skills and feats: Craft (Leatherworking) +10, Gather Information +12, Perform (Chant) +13, Perform (Lute) +13, Profession (Tanner) +10, Survival +10; Back to the Wall, Combat Casting, Lunatic, Toughness

Possessions: Chain Shirt +1, Greatsword +1, MW Composite Shortbow (Str +2), MW Arrows (x20), Potions (Cure Light Wounds, Cure Moderate Wounds x3, Eagle's Splendor x2, Fly, Tongues x2), Wand of Summon Monster I (39 charges), Amulet of Natural Armor +1

Spells: (3/4/2; save DC 13 + spell level): Daze, Detect Magic, Flare, Light, Read Magic, Resistance; Cure Light Wounds, Lesser Confusion, Remove Fear, Sleep; Cure Moderate Wounds, Eagle's Splendor, Heroism

Ravager

Ravagers in Ravenloft do not devote themselves to Erythnul. Instead, they may follow Erlin, Kali, the Lawgiver, Morrigan, Set, the Wolf God or they may follow no god at all. The Ravagers are most commonly found in the Shadowlands, specifically the domain of Nidala. In that land they are often bandits and outcasts who follow the hag-goddess Morrigan. Otherwise, Ravagers may be found in Nova Vassa, Sanguinia, and Vorostokov. In the latter two domains they are savages who have taken upon them the evil nature of wild beasts, while in Nova Vassa they follow the teachings of the Lawgiver. Although few natives of Verbrek are Ravagers, many followers of the Wolf God find this prestige class to their liking. Many Ravagers are multi-classed Clerics with access to the Slaughter domain (see Ravenloft Gazetteer IV page 139).

Norward, Male Nidalan Human Ranger5/Ravager3: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 5d8+3d10+8 (50 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; BA/G +8/+11; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Longsword +13 melee (1d8+4, 19-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +11 ranged (1d8+1, x3); FA Longsword +13/+8 melee (1d8+4, 19-20 x2) or Longsword +9/+4 melee (1d8+4, 19-20 x2) and Longsword +9 melee (1d8+1, 19-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +11/+6 ranged (1d8+1, x3); SA Cruellest Cut 1/day, Favored Enemies (Human +4, Plant +2), Pain Touch 1/day, Spells; SQ Aura of Fear 10 ft. 1/day, Wild Empathy; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Bluff +3, Craft (Carpentry) +8, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (Religion) +7, Profession (Lumberjack) +12, Sense Motive +5, Survival +9; Cleave, Endurance, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (Longsword)

Possessions: Studded Leather +1, Longsword +1, MW Longsword, Composite Longbow +1, Arrows (x20), Potions (Cure Light Wounds x3), Eyes of the Eagle, Cloak of Elvenkind

Spells: (1; save DC 11 + spell level): Magic Fang

Reaping Mauler

The Reaping Maulers are common to land in Ravenloft. There are few followers of this class, because wrestling an undead creature is a foolish endeavor at best.

Haslav, Male Invidian Human Fighter7/Reaping Mauler1: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 8d10+16 (64 hp); Init +5; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; BA/G +8/+11; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Dagger +13 melee (1d4+4, 19-20 x2) or Unarmed Strike +12 melee (1d3+3 Subdual) or Composite Longbow +10 ranged (1d8+4, x3); FA Dagger +13/+8 melee (1d4+4, 19-20 x2) or Unarmed Strike +12/+7 melee (1d3+3 Subdual) or Composite Longbow +10/+5 ranged (1d8+4, x3); SQ Improved Grapple, Mobility; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Escape Artist +6, Intimidate +10, Tumble +6; Clever Wrestling, Combat Reflexes, Improved

Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Lunatic, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (Dagger), Weapon Focus (Unarmed Strike)

Possessions: Chain Shirt +1, Dagger +1, MW Composite Longbow (Str +3), Arrows +1 (x25), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cure Moderate Wounds), Cloak of Resistance +1

Ronin

Ronin are a rare Ronin are often ex-samurai, most commonly found in the domain of Rokushima Taiyoo. Ronin may also be found in other lands, known under other names. In Falkovnia, those warriors who flee Drakov's service can be eligible to take this class.

Udo, Male Rokuma Human Ex-Samurai6/Ronin2: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 8d10+8 (56 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; BA/G +8/+11; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Bastard Sword +13 melee (1d10+4, 19-20 x2) or Composite Shortbow +11 ranged (1d6+4, x3); FA Bastard Sword +13/+8 melee (1d10+4, 19-20 x2) or Bastard Sword +11/+6 melee (1d10+4, 19-20 x2) and Short Sword +11 melee (1d6+1, 19-20 x2) or Composite Shortbow +11/+6 ranged (1d6+4, x3); SA Banzai Charge, Kiai Smite 1/day, Sneak Attack +1d6, Staredown; SQ Infamy; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills and feats: Diplomacy +12, Knowledge (Nobility & Royalty) +10; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Bastard Sword), Haunted, Quick Draw (Katana & Wakizashi only), Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting (Katana & Wakizashi only), Weapon Focus (Bastard Sword), Weapon Focus (Short Sword)

Possessions: Banded Mail +1, Bastard Sword +1 (Katana), MW Short Sword (Wakizashi), MW Composite Shortbow (Str +3), Arrows +1 (x25), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cure Moderate Wounds), Cloak of Resistance +1

Spellsword

Although loners, Spellswords are not uncommon throughout Ravenloft. They are most often found in Darkon, Har'Akir, Hazlan, Necropolis, Sri Raji, and Vechor. In Darkon and Sri Raji they are most likely to be multiclassed Bard/Fighters or Fighter/Wizards. Har'Akir is most likely to produce Fighter/Wizards while Hazlan and Necropolis are most likely to have Fighter/Sorcerers or Fighter/Wizards. Vechor for its part is most likely to produce Fighter/Sorcerers.

Otherwise, Spellswords may be found in Barovia, Borca, Dementlieu, Forlorn, Invidia, Kartakass, Mordent, the Nocturnal Sea, Odiare, Phrazia, Richemulot, Rokushima Taiyoo, Sanguinia, Sithicus, Valachan, Verbrek and Vorostokov.

Rodrigo, Male Borcan Human Bard4/Fighter1/Spellsword3: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 4d6+1d10+3d8 (35 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 15 (16 vs. one opponent), touch 11, flat-footed 14; BA/G +7/+9; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Dagger +11 melee (1d4+3, 19-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +9 ranged (1d8+3, x3); FA Dagger +11/+6 melee (1d4+3, 19-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +9 ranged (1d8+3, x3); SA Spells; SQ Bardic Knowledge, Bardic Music (Countersong, Fascinate, Inspire Competence, Inspire Courage +1), Ignore Spell Failure 15%; AL NE; SV

Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 16.

Skills and feats: Bluff +11, Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (Architecture & Engineering) +11, Knowledge (Local) +12, Knowledge (Nature) +11, Knowledge (Nobility & Royalty) +12, Perform (Act) +10, Sense Motive +7; Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Sympathetic Spell, Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (Dagger)

Possessions: Studded Leather +1, Dagger +1, MW Composite Longbow (Str +2), Arrows +1 (x25), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cure Moderate Wounds x4, Eagle's Splendor, Fly, Tongues), Wand of Summon Monster I (13 charges)

Spells: (3/4/3; save DC 13 + spell level): Daze, Detect Magic, Flare, Lullaby, Read Magic, Resistance; Cause Fear, Cure Light Wounds, Lesser Confusion, Sleep; Blindness/Deafness, Cure Moderate Wounds, Eagle's Splendor

Stonelord

Stonelords are rare in the Demiplane and most commonly found in those lands that host dwarves in significant numbers. Surprisingly, Necropolis possesses many Stonelords. Many residents were Stonelords before the Requiem and were just caught in the blast. Otherwise, Stonelords may be found in smaller numbers in the dwarven settlements of Darkon.

Summon Earth Elemental: The Summon Earth Elemental power automatically calls Dread Grave Elementals when used in Ravenloft. These creatures do not turn on the Stonelord and disappear at the end of the power's duration.

Bofsha, Female Necropolitan Wight Dwarf Fighter5/Stonelord3: CR 9; Medium Undead (Augmented Dwarf); HD 8d12+3 (60 hp); Init +2; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 25, touch 12, flat-footed 24; BA/G +8/+13; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Heavy Pick +14 melee (1d6+6, x4) or Slam +13 melee (1d6+5) or Composite Shortbow +11 ranged (1d6+6, x3); FA Heavy Pick +14/+9 melee (1d6+6, x4) or Slam +13/+8 melee (1d6+5) or Composite Shortbow +11/+6 ranged (1d6+6, x3); SA Create Spawn, Earth Power, Energy Drain; SQ +2 to save vs. Poison, Spells, & Spell-like Abilities, Darkvision 60 ft., DR 5/magic, Earth's Blood, Stability, Stonecunning, Stone Shape 1/day, Undead Traits; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 21, Dex 15, Con --, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and feats: Craft (Stonemasonry) +14, Intimidate +11, Speak Language (Terran); Blind-Fight, Courage, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Craft: Stonemasonry), Toughness

Possessions: Breastplate +1, Heavy Steel Shield +1, Heavy Pick +1, MW Composite Shortbow (Str +5), Arrows +1 (x25), Potions (Bull's Strength, Inflict Moderate Wounds), Cloak of Resistance +1

Tattooed Monk

The esoteric practices of the Tattooed Monks of Ravenloft originate in the land of Sri Raji. Their practice has spread far since then, however these monks are still rare due to the general scarcity of Monks in the Demiplane.

Tattooed Monks have been known to appear in G'Henna, Har'Akir, Hazlan, Lamordia, Mordent, Necropolis, Nova Vassa, Paridon, and Rokushima Taiyoo. Hazlan has slightly more Tattooed

Monks than other lands, as the magical tattoos fit well into the Mulan culture.

Tattoos: The centipede tattoo's Shadow Walk power and the Crescent Moon's Ethereal Jaunt powers are affected as the spells of the same name as described in Chapter Three: Altered Magic of the Ravenloft Player's Handbook. The Falcon tattoo gives complete immunity to magical fear, but against natural fear the Tattooed Monk only receives a bonus equal to the bonus he gives allies within 10' with this tattoo (i.e. Charisma bonus + number of tattoos).

Atman, Male Rajian Human Monk5/Tattooed Monk3: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 8d8+8 (47 hp); Init +2; Spd 50 ft. (10 squares); AC 19, touch 18, flat-footed 17; BA/G +5/+7; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Kama +8 melee (1d6+3) or Unarmed +7 (1d10+2) or Sling +8 ranged (1d4+2); FA Kama +8 melee (1d6+3) or Unarmed +7 (1d10+2) or Sling +8 ranged (1d4+2); SA Flurry of Blows, Ki Strike (magic); SQ DR 4/magic, Evasion, Purity of Body, Slow Fall 20 ft., Still Mind, Tattoos (Chrysanthemum, Crab); AL LN; SV Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +11; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Craft (Gemcutting) +11, Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (Arcana) +11, Knowledge (Religion) +11, Sleight of Hand +13; Deflect Arrows, Endurance, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Reincarnated (Sleight of Hand), Snatch Arrows, Voice of Wrath

Possessions: Kama +1, MW Sling, Bullets (x10), Potion of Cure Moderate Wounds, Bracers of Armor +1, Cloak of Resistance +1, Ring of Protection +1, Amulet of Natural Armor +1

Thayan Knight (Hazlani Knight)

Naturally, Hazlani Knights originate from Hazlan but members of this class can be found in other lands, providing the character then journeys to Hazlan. In particular, those who leave the island of Vechor often find that they possess the necessary skills to become Hazlani Knights.

Requirements: The feat requirements for this prestige class are slightly changed to reflect the homeland of the knights. Hazlani Knights require Weapon Focus (Falchion) instead of Weapon Focus (Longsword). As well, any reference to the Red Wizards should be changed to reference the general wizards of Hazlan. The term “Zulkir” has also been changed to “Red Academy.” This does not change the effects of the ability, but simply represents the fact that almost all the wizards that the Hazlani Knights protect are taught at the Red Academy in Ramulai.

Horrors of Hazlan: This bonus applies to natural Fear effects as well as Horror effects.

Cemiyet, Female Rashemani Hazlani Human Fighter5/Hazlani Knight3: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Human); HD 8d10+19 (67 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 18 touch 10, flat-footed 18; BA/G +8/+11; Atk Falchion +13 melee (2d4+7, 18-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +10 ranged (1d8+1, x3); FA Falchion +13/+8 melee (2d4+7, 18-20 x2) or Composite Longbow +10/+5 ranged (1d8+1, x3); SQ Horrors of Hazlan (+2 Fear & Horror, +1 Charm), Red Academy's Defender, Red Academy's Favor; AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +6; Str

17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Intimidate +11, Knowledge (Arcana) +5, Knowledge (Local) +5, Ride +2; Iron Will, Jaded, Mounted Combat, Ride-By-Attack, Toughness, Voice of Wrath, Weapon Focus (Falchion), Weapon Specialization (Falchion)

Possessions: Half-Plate +1, Falchion +1, MW Composite Longbow, Arrows +1 (x25), Potions (Bear's Endurance, Cure Moderate Wounds), Cloak of Resistance +1

War Chanter

These warrior-bards are most commonly found in the domains of Kartakass, the Nocturnal Sea, and Sri Raji. The practice is thought to have originated in the land of Kartakass, but could very well have first appeared in Sri Raji. The sailors of the Nocturnal Sea however, were introduced to this prestige class by wandering Kartakans and have taken to it very well. As few domains have any standing armies, War Chanters have to strike out on their own to hone their skills with adventuring groups. Otherwise, the War Chanters are found in Forlorn, Odiare, Richemulot, Rokushima Taiyoo, Sanguinia, and Vorostokov.

Henrika, Female Kartakan Half-Elf Bard6/War Chanter2: CR 8; Medium Humanoid (Elf); HD 6d6+2d8+8 (40 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; BA/G +6/+6; S/R 5 ft./5 ft.; Atk Rapier +8 melee (1d6, 18-20 x2) or Light Crossbow +8 ranged (1d8, 19-20 x2); FA Rapier +8/+3 melee (1d6, 18-20 x2) or Light Crossbow +8 ranged (1d8, 19-20 x2); SA Spells; SQ +2 to save vs. enchantment, Bardic Knowledge,

Bardic/War Chanter Music 8/day (Countersong, Fascinate, Inspire Competence, Inspire Courage +1, Inspire Toughness, Suggestion), Immunity to Sleep, Low-Light Vision; AL CG; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 17.

Skills and feats: Craft (Carpentry) +12, Gather Information +15 Knowledge (Nature) +11, Perform (Oratory) +14, Perform (Sing) +14, Perform (String Instruments) +14, Profession (Lumberjack) +9, Survival +4; Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Weapon Focus (Rapier)

Possessions: MW Studded Leather, MW Rapier, MW Light Crossbow, Bolts (x10), Potions (Cure Serious Wounds x3, Eagle's Splendor x2, Fly, Tongues x2), Wand of Summon Monster I (5 charges), Amulet of Natural Armor +1

Spells: (3/4/3; save DC 13 + spell level): Detect Magic, Ghost Sound, Light, Lullaby, Read Magic, Summon Instrument; Cure Light Wounds, Identify, Sleep, Ventriloquism; Cure Moderate Wounds, Eagle's Splendor, Sound Burst

Warshaper

The Warshaper is a unique prestige class in that it can be taken very easily by any Druid, Sorcerer, or Wizard. Any domain where spellcasters are common is likely to have Warshapers among the populace. There are rumors that one of the high ranking ministers of science in Falkovnia is experimenting with Warshapers and their abilities, perhaps training them as warriors for another invasion.

Josette, Female Dementliuese
Human Wizard8/Warshaper1: CR 9;
Medium Humanoid (Human); HD

8d4+1d8+9 (35 hp); Init +2; Spd 30 ft. (6 squares); AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 13; BA/G +4/+4; S/R 5 ft.5 ft.; Atk Quarterstaff +4 melee (1d6) or Pistol +7 ranged (1d10, x3); FA Quarterstaff +4 melee (1d6) or Pistol +7 ranged (1d10, x3); SA Morphic Weapons, Spells; SQ Morphic Immunities; AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +10; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and feats: Craft (Bookbinding) +15, Decipher Script +14, Disguise +4, Hypnosis +10, Knowledge (Local) +14, Knowledge (Nobility & Royalty) +14, Profession (Bookkeeper) +12; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Iron Will, Logical Mind, Open Mind, Quick Draw, Scribe Scroll, Still Spell

Possessions: Quarterstaff, MW Pistol, MW Bullets (x10), Arcane Scroll (Summon Monster IV, 8th-Level Caster), Potion of Cure Serious Wounds, Cloak of Resistance +1, Ring of Protection +1, Wand of Magic Missile (9th-Level Caster; 46 charges), Bracers of Armor +2

Spells: (4/5/4/4/2; save DC 13 + spell level): Daze, Detect Magic, Ghost Sound, Mage Hand; Animate Rope, Charm Person, Color Spray, Silent Image, Sleep; Daze Monster, Fox's Cunning, Invisibility, Touch of Idiocy; Displacement, Greater Magic Weapon, Hold Person, Suggestion; Confusion, Polymorph

Feats

Improved Familiar: The familiar gained by this feat is a Dread Companion as described in Chapter Two: Classes of the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

New Cleric Domains

At the DM's option, some of the new cleric domains presented in Complete Warrior may be granted by existing deities in Ravenloft.

Courage Domain

Deities: Brigantia, the Morninglord, the Overseer, Ra, Tvashtri

Fate Domain

Deities: the Ancestral Choir, Arawn, the Eternal Order, Hala, Yutow

Nobility Domain

Deities: the Overseer, Ra

Planning Domain

Deities: the Ancestral Choir, the Eternal Order, Hala

Tyranny Domain

Deities: the Lawgiver, Math Mathonwy, Zhakata

New Spells

Cursed Blade: Those killed by a weapon under the effects of this spell often rise as free willed undead creatures of Hit Dice equal to the character's level. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Hound of Doom: See Illusion (Shadow) in Chapter Three: Altered Magic of the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Guardian Familiars

Unlike normal Guardian Familiars, those created in Ravenloft are sentient. They have an Intelligence score as a normal familiar and advance accordingly. As well, Guardian

Familiars are Dread Companions, as described in Classes in Chapter Two of the Ravenloft Player's Handbook. An additional danger is present with these creatures in Ravenloft. Guardian Familiars may be constructed without magic, as a golem of obsession. The resulting Guardian becomes a Dread Golem and will eventually turn on its creator.

New Magic Items

Gauntlet of Utterdeath: Using this item is cause for a Powers Check.

Standard of Courage: This standard gives its bonus to natural Fear checks as well as magical fear checks.

New Exotic Weapons

Below are the effective cultural levels for the new exotic weapons presented in Complete Warrior.

Buckler-Axe, Dwarven: CR 2+

Lightblade, Elven: CR 6+

Tortoise Blade, Gnome: CR 5+

Maul: CR 2+

Pick, Dire: CR 3+

Scourge: CR 2+

Thinblade, Elven: CR 6+

Warmace: CR 2+

Greatspear: CR 2+

Hammer, Double: CR 3+

Lajatang: CR 3+

Mancatcher: CR 7+

Poleaxe, Heavy: CR 5+

Blowgun, Greater: CR 1-2

Darts: CR 1-2

Bolas, Barbed: CR 1-2

Boomerang: CR 2+

Greatbow: CR 7+

Greatbow, Composite: CR 8+

Secrets and Sorcery

The Eye

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutton
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As the nineteenth century draws to a close, a voice cries out in dissent: The end is near; man has been weighed in judgement by the Eye and has been found wanting. Only by shunning the material and giving one's self over to the divine nothingness, can one escape the coming wrath. These are the words of Jeremiah James, prophet of the Eye. This nihilistic message is whispered in forsaken backwoods and scrawled upon the walls of alleys.

Known to the world as a Christian tabernacle, the Eye is in reality a bizarre cult. Jeremiah James and his acolytes have taken it upon themselves to purify humanity of its excess, by force if necessary. Behind a benevolent façade, these charismatic cabalists plot the subjugation of humanity, one victim at a time.

History: The prophet Jeremiah James began his bizarre journey as an alcoholic corn farmer in the boonies of Nebraska. In 1882, his life took a turn for the worse; in the space of three months his wife divorced him, his children were taken, and the farm teetered on the edge of bankruptcy. Stirred by desperation and a jug of moonshine, James torched his barn for the meagre insurance policy. Confused and intoxicated, Jeremiah trapped himself in the loft and succumbed to the choking fumes. Amidst the dancing flames, a dark, shadowy pall slowly spread. It was, James claims, the abyssal

Eye, watching as the life leached from his choking lungs. As his mind slipped away into the growing darkness, James offered his soul to the dark presence in exchange for his life.

Somehow his delirious prayers were heard; the searing heat died away and new life flooded into his lungs. In the roar of the flames, James heard the whispers of his fell saviour. At its command, he would found a church to serve the abyssal Eye. This cabal would work the grim will of the dreadful deity, spreading its fiendish influence across the world.

The cult of the Eye began as a small collection of bankrupt farm owners using Jeremiah's church as a tax exempt shelter. These farmers became Jeremiah's "acolytes", partners in business more than spiritual supporters. With newfound charms, Jeremiah gathered a flock of followers from the desperate, disillusioned dregs of society. Once lured to the farms, these hapless subordinates were brainwashed and put to work as slave labourers. The farms of James and his associates have been remade into "tabernacles", where their underlings labour in exchange for religious salvation.

Activities: The cult of the Eye is based in the town of Emptiness Nebraska, so named by the cult after overrunning the town and driving out all of the regular citizens. Cultists of the Eye lurk in the destitute slums, running

soup kitchens and shelters as a lure for potential recruits. The most hopeless and suggestible individuals are offered a place at one of the farms in Emptiness where they are promised safety, security and friendship. Once within the clutches of the cult, these victims are indoctrinated and put to work. Initiates labour on farms owned by the cult; planting, harvesting and working at cottage industries all year round. A few initiates are raised to the position of “disciple” and are sent back to the slums to recruit others.

The urban cells are also used to enforce the will of Jeremiah James, acting as his spies and assassins outside of Emptiness. Apart from procuring new victims, the disciples organize illegal activities to increase the value of the cult’s investments. They may be called upon to spread blights in rival farms, attack competitor businesses or even cause civil unrest to drive more victims into their shelters and hostels. These saboteurs revel in the chaos and corruption they spread, often taking it on their own initiative to find targets. Though the acolytes fear these crimes will lead to exposure, James encourages his disciples to spread as much chaos as possible.

Membership and Organization: James’ words are gospel to the cult and are obeyed without question. The nine farm owners who assisted James hold the rank of “acolyte” and manage the finances of the cult. These acolytes understand the true nature of the cult but depend upon it to maintain their wealth.

The next most important members of the cult are known as “disciples”. These disciples are picked from the most intelligent and charismatic members of the cult. The urban disciples live in squalor little better than the homeless

they recruit, thus they are chosen only from the most fanatical initiates.

Finally, the majority of the cultists are the “initiates”, brainwashed slaves of the cult. These workers number above a thousand, though their ranks grow steadily. These victims of the cult are systematically stripped of their identity; they are given new names, forced to wear the uniform robes of the church and subjected to terrifying rites and initiations. Most feared of all such rituals is “The Abyss”, named for the massive sinkhole discovered beneath the ruins of James’s barn. Disobedient initiates are lowered into the black, muddy waters and left for days or even weeks. Victims who survive are so traumatized by the experience that the very threat of returning breaks their will to rebel.

During the day the more aggressive initiates are assigned as taskmasters. Under the watchful eye of these sentinels the initiates must complete their chores or suffer from brutal punishments. Each night the slaves are counted by the disciples and locked into their communal houses until morning. The initiates are given no privacy and allowed no contact with friends or family. Families within the cult are broken up so as to speed the assimilation process. The initiates are fed only enough to sustain them; those who are disobedient are broken by hunger. Each Saturday and Wednesday the initiates are rounded up and taken to Jeremiah James’s farm where he leads the cult in mass chants to further bend them to his will.

Resources: The Eye has fewer resources than most cults; the total number of members of the cult is only slightly more than a thousand. The cult is wealthy since James and his acolytes

have carefully invested their profits from slave labour. The Eye owns a number of firearms, most of which are located at Emptiness and are used by the taskmasters to maintain security. Finally, the cult produces a large amount of produce each year and as such can supply food to the urban cells at no cost.

Adventure Hooks: The Eye functions best as a villainous organization. The cult can be introduced with the disappearance of a close friend. This friend might have been investigating the strange organization that runs a local soup kitchen from which transients have been known to disappear. The cult might have abducted this friend and perhaps brainwashed him into the cult.

In recent years Jeremiah has expanded his malign influence into the halls of power. Known to the world as “The Eye of the Lord”, the cult is a well respected church. With carefully placed donations James has ingratiated himself to congressmen and Christian lobbyists. As the Eye’s human resources continue

to expand, Jeremiah James may become a power broker. Indeed, with the cultists acting as campaigners, James might even make a bid for a seat in Washington. Only the mad prophet dares dream of what chaos he might spread from such a seat.

There may be more behind the origin of the cult than even James suspects. It is no coincidence that Jeremiah found the Abyss beneath the barn where he experienced his great revelation. The lightless waters of the sinkhole run deep into the umbra of the earth, reaching to subterranean lakes that the sun has never seen. Those poor souls that have been imprisoned in the Abyss whisper of a *presence* in the fathoms below, watching them from the impenetrable blackness. There is no telling what foul things slither beneath that sinkhole, nor can it be known what dread influence they may have over the cult. None the less, it is sure that a dark, alien shadow spills forth from beneath the town of Emptiness, spreading chaos and corruption in its wake.

Credits

Contributors

David "Jester" Gibson

david.jw.gibson@gmail.com Author of The Heart of Stone. David has also contributed to QtR# 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9 and presumably needs another hobby. He has been lost in the Mists since sucked in through a Red Box and has been trapped ever since. There he is often seen in the company of a smiling man of a possible Mordentish background. Someday David may escape the hold of the Dread Lands, but not today.

Mark Graydon

mortavius@hotmail.com. Author of the Misty Warrior. The Complete Misty Warrior is the biggest article I have ever undertaken. I endeavored to go above and beyond in this writing, and provided an NPC for each prestige class. These NPCs are a bit different from standard ones however, for their names, skills, feats, and equipment all reflect the domain they are from. In essence, they are tailored for Ravenloft.

Thomas R. Rasmussen aka Malus Black

malus_black@hotmail.com. Creator of André Duvet. I'm a 16-year-old Norwegian who only recently got into D&D, although I've been interested in fantasy, literature and history since long before that. I got into Ravenloft because it was and is different and more mature than the generic settings, and the underlying, thought-provoking themes of the setting captivated me instantly. Other

than Ravenloft, I enjoy writing, reading, drawing, playing and listening to music, philosophy, science, culture and history.

Uri "Shadowking" Barak

uzibarak@zahav.net.il. Author of The Show Must Go on, Aspects of the Four Horsemen and Perilous Pursuits: the Nightlord. I first knew Ravenloft some 5 years ago from reading "Vampire of the Mists", "Knight of the Black Rose" "Dance of the Dead" and "Heart of Midnight", and became enthralled. When I also became familiar with D&D 3 years ago I played and DMed a few short campaigns set in Greyhawk, then moved to the wonderful world that is Ravenloft. Ever since then I became smitten with the setting. My inspiration for the Weeping Rose Actor Society came from the computer game Manhunt which deals with a mad snuff director and his main "star", the Aspects from a post in the EN World site (didn't like their versions and decided to do mine) and the Nightlord is from Champions of Darkness and the waste of a great idea there. Also, expect my "Mist and Shadow" netbook within 2-3 months.

Stanton Fink

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Author of Double Effects and Double Effects Companion. I'm a 40 year-old stay-at-home mom and homemaker. I was in the US Air Force for 10 years. My husband is currently in the US Air Force. We have an active 8 year-old son. We currently live in Maryland, USA. My favorite D&D/AD&D worlds are Ravenloft and Planescape. I enjoy reading and listening to music. My favorite books/series are the J.R.R. Tolkien and Harry Potter books, the Ravenloft books, the Forgotten Realms Dark Elf books and classics like Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allen Poe and Emily Dickenson. My music tastes are broad, including pop, opera and industrial/goth.

Editors

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Dion is a 23-year old masterals student living in Baguio City, Philippines. He has been a Ravenloft fan since 1998, has contributed fan-based articles for the campaign world, including the Worlds of Ravenloft series of netbooks, and manages the Midway Haven Alchemical Observatory. Dion is also a local folklorist and scholar of urban esoterica, whatever that means.

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Member of the Fraternity of Shadows and a person of many tastes. I have had some success in the professional animation, design and illustration fields and since decided to try and write a book of poetry, I also have plans for a novel in the future (when he finds a good

proofreader). Previous work in the Online Ravenloft Community may be found in the Kargatane's Book of Sacrifices, Midway Haven's Crisis in Hunadora (a long narrative compiled by the kind souls at the Midway Haven Alchemical Observatory), The Malodorous Goat Netbook as well as previous Undead Sea Scrolls netbooks and the first Quoth the Raven. Other than Ravenloft, I have many interests including theology, some parts of history, folklore, mythology, reading, the occasional video game, art, poetry and writing in general.

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Creator of Perilous Pursuits: The Fraternity of Shadows. I'm a graduate student in San Francisco; I teach headless cockroaches to avoid electric shocks and perform other services to humanity. Among them are money laundering (I recommend Tide), finding life mates for single socks, feeding Drusilla, and contributing to and editing the Undead Sea Scrolls. Three and a half years in the Mists and counting...

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2003 year was full of changes for me. Again, I'd like to thank my family and friends for support.

Jason "Javier" True

xaos313@hotmail.com. Co creator of Perilous Pursuits: Fraternity of Shadows. A 27-year-old man living in the suburban jungle of the Windy City (Chicago, Illinois), who has been a teacher, a pharmacist, and most recently

a doctor. When I am not busy working, I enjoy spending time with my lovely wife or pursuing my role-playing interests with friends. While there was not enough time for me to write anything for this issue, I would like to thank all of the authors who made a contribution. It is due to their efforts that we can continue to produce our works!

Stephen “ScS” Sutton

stephensutton@hotmail.com. Author of The Eye. Just want to say thanks to everyone who contributed to this months issue. Look forward to some changes in the coming months, and let's all get ready to repel the second invasion of the Red Death.