

Quoth the Raven



Issue 13



Quoth the Raven



Issue 13

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When Nightmares Wake

Original Fiction

By Robert W. Elliott

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"A lucky shot that may have slain us both," Gustov Petroff remarked ruefully as he considered his ruined water skin. He had escaped the militia of the Vistin family, rulers of the Tordenmark, the Thundering Plain of southern central Nova Vaasa which is home to the coveted Vindhåre, the fastest of horse breeds. But in so doing he had been driven without drink for himself, let alone for his stallions, into the parched and blasted Dommark, the Plain of Judgement of eastern central Nova Vaasa where, according to the Lawgiver, "All may enter but few may leave."

Indeed the Vistin militia broke off pursuit, persuaded that he was escaping the judgement of man at the price of embracing the judgement of god, a verdict that they were in no hurry themselves to receive. But the rider did not believe in gods and did not believe that he was doomed.

Gustov Petroff was an assumed name. Branded upon the forehead of its bearer and concealed by long hair was the mark of Falkovnian property. The strong, lean man

was a hawksman and a deserter from the army of Vlad Drakov, turned horse smuggler. He had lost his taste for slaughter and war, but not his love of adventure and open country.

Above him a waxing moon hung from a star encrusted sky. The night was dead quiet and warm enough. It was the beginning of winter, the very night of the solstice, yet it felt more like the fall equinox, indeed so much so that the Svalich Pass, gateway to the West, remained open and the Falkovnian was tempting the Devil Strahd with one last run.

A trained owl returned to a thickly wrapped arm. Gustov deemed the animal to be a poor substitute for Fletch, sent cruelly plummeting to her death by the screech of an bat near Vallaki. He was determined to replace the owl with a bloodhawk this winter. Still he was able to learn from it that there were no obvious threats about and that the Vistin militia was not attempting to shadow him. But had units to the west been alerted by their horns and bull's-eye lanterns?

Gustov dispatched the bird in search of water. He had entered the Dommark from the south, was heading north, and would soon strike west for Barovia. The owl returned. Its plumage was wet. Incredibly, it had found water. A small spring emerged from a broken stone shelf. There were no skeletal remains about. The owl seemed fine. Gustov permitted one of the stolen stallions to drink and waited, musing all the while that an animal worth thousands of gold pieces in Pont-a-Museau was serving as a common Borcan wine taster. He permitted the second one to drink, and then the third. Satisfied, he let his mount drink and drank deeply himself.

The murmuring water relaxed the Falkovnian and wore away his wariness. Sleep crept over him. He was snatched up into a dream. In it he saw himself from the outside. He was desperate to wake himself but could not. His perspective widened. He was being hunted by the methodical and astute captain of the Vistin militia, the thread of his very thoughts being tracked where there were no prints to follow. Then he was seized violently out of his sleep, pinned face down to the ground, silenced with a razor blade pulling at his mouth like a bridle, and bound at the wrists. Next he was dragged to his feet, held from behind, menaced with a second razor blade, and asked softly, "Do you wish to confess your sins?" When he gave no sign the voice whispered, "Let us begin."

Gustov bolted upright with a cry. He fought to calm himself and shake the lead from his mind. Judging by the height of the moon, he had not been out for long. He was about to rise when he saw lying on the ground the saddle of his horse. Neither did he remember removing it nor would he have done so for a night with Gabrielle Aderre.

He looked at the spring and growled, "The damn water." But the horses seemed fine, as did the owl, which he sent off to scout the immediate vicinity. Where the ground would accept footprints there were none. He examined the saddle. Its strap had been cut cleanly.

A second and even more improbable Vistin arrow had to be the answer. Still the Falkovnian was happy to be gone from the place. A few minutes later, as he considered the moment to strike west, his hand went to his mouth, for its corners ached. His blood ran cold. He had been bleeding. But with an iron will Gustov Petroff mastered himself. The bleeding, a result of badly chapped lips, had been the cause, not the effect, of the nightmare.

Clouds gathered in the west and the temperature plummeted. The exceptional weather was at an end. Thankfully the owl found no hint of enemies. Still the anxiety of Gustov grew as he approached the frontier. The place itself was gruesome enough. The Vistin militia to the south and the Rivtoff militia to the north often dispensed with the niceties of legal process and left smugglers dangling by their wrists from the trees, and this only after having castrated them and dragged them to the border behind the very stallions they had stolen. Gustov thought such a barbarous fate fit for Vlad Drakov and Vlad Drakov alone.

Yet as troubling as the practice was, something else disturbed the Falkovnian even more. He was convinced, without a shred of tangible evidence, that something was following him. The obscure trail which he had chosen sadly did not lack for an abject Nova Vaasan warning.

A former colleague hung in waiting. The corpse was unidentifiable but Gustov had the misfortune of recognising the boots. "Bloody Vuchar," he swore. They belonged to an

Invidian, who, like other neophytes, had tried to persuade the Falkovnian to take him on as an apprentice. Then the corpse moved. Its head nodded in answer to some unspoken question. Whereupon the world spun and all went dark.

When Gustov came to, he was lying on the ground, in considerable pain, covered in a light dusting of snow. The moon and the stars were gone. It was nearly pitch black. He produced a knife licked by flames. The horses were gone too. But at least he recognised where he was, a few hundred feet from the frontier, on the very smuggler's way that he had been seeking and which led to the Old Svalich Road.

The last thing he remembered was approaching the mouth of the trail. His left leg had been twisted, but he thought he could stand. When he tried, the world spun again and he almost went down. A prodigious bump graced his head behind the left ear. Slight bleeding but not too serious he concluded. Had he fallen prey to some trap set by the Vistin? "More likely a branch," he spat in frustration.

He confirmed his suspicion that his mount had continued up the trail. With grim amusement he noted his good fortune in having escaped being trampled by the stolen stallions in its tow. "Such was the beginning of religion," he muttered. Wincing with every step, he set off after the horses. He whistled softly for the owl, but it did not come. "Hunting mice," he snarled and proceeded to curse heartily the Vistana who had sold it to him. He limped forward, massaging his knotted muscles and kneading his tender wrists.

An hour later Gustov froze in place at the scream of a horse. The wolves had come. He could not afford to wait them out in a tree. He would catch his death if he did not keep moving. And lighting a fire risked

summoning scores of them. There could be no question of returning to Nova Vaasa. Sneaking past them at least was possible, but the walk, in his condition, to the Weary Horse Inn was too long and too dangerous. He needed at least one of the animals alive and intact. A second scream sent him stumbling up the trail and a third warned him that the fight was at hand.

Gustov came upon the three stolen stallions. They were terrified and pulling wildly at the ropes which bound them together. With difficulty he calmed the trio. But their ragged breath left no doubt that each had been injured. Indeed there was a lot of blood beneath them on the virgin snow. His medical supplies were in his saddlebag and he had no great talent for healing but he would tend to them as best he could for salvation was a single stallion in good enough condition to carry him to safety.

Well before sunrise the Weary Horse Inn was astir. The village of Barovia was a long ride and all had to be ready by daybreak. The snow of the previous night, even if it had been but a dusting, foretold the closure of the pass. So with much well wishing what might be the last of the year's travellers stepped forth into the fresh air and fell silent.

A saddleless Vindhåre, formerly well cared for to judge by its muscle tone, lay on its side, not so much ridden to death, although there was evidence of that too, as dead of blood loss, for its genitalia had been sliced cleanly away. Tied behind it by the wrists were the bloody and pulped remains of an individual manifestly dragged many miles.

The shreds of clothing that remained to the corpse were sufficient for the innkeeper to identify it. A careful examination would have determined the cause of death to be blood loss resulting from a similarly unkind cut. The connection would be made in subsequent deaths of smugglers and their

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horses. Still the first victim of the Svalich Slasher, as the responsible party came to be known, was dated to 749 BC and was recognised as being a retiring but well-regarded foreigner with a Falkovnian accent who went by the name of Gustov Petroff.



Starlit Signs

The Zodiac of the Mists

by David "Jester" Gibson, Jakob and Jasper

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Dear Esteemed Brothers,

I have something else for you with my report. While doing my research on the fey I spent a number of days in the town of Sidnar. I managed to procure a few books for my research from the Collegium Caelestis, some of which might be of use. I will be reading the rest for the next few months but I am forwarding a few interesting chapters to you with my next report on the subhuman folk of our land.

The first should prove to an interesting read...

Respectfully as always,

Jonothan Lochspeare

Introduction

Greetings again my students, if you are reading this volume you have made it through the first two years of the curriculum and educational volumes I through XII. You will have already learned the proper lifestyle of an Omen Watcher, learned the philosophy

and mindset of one who observes what must be seen. You have learned the proper maintenance of telescopes, lenses and the instruments, learned the care of charts and maps of stars. You have learned the laws of our order and learned the rules that govern the heavens.

In this volume we begin discussion on the constellations themselves. The first twenty-eight chapters of this volume discuss the thirteen major constellations that make up the zodiac. The remaining chapters (and several chapters in later volumes) deal with other celestial bodies that impact horoscopes and interpretations of omens.

Below are brief introductions to each of the thirteen constellations. This is a change from the previous volumes as this textbook begins with a quick summary of the relevant information. This is not a shift in teaching style but merely a method of removing assumptions ahead of time, both on the signs and their meanings. Far too many pupils have incorrectly assumed they already knew

the names and traits of the Thirteen and wasted precious class time in re-education!

The students are reminded that they are encouraged not to attempt readings or horoscopes until they have completed their forth year of education and finished up to volume eighteen in this series.

The Constalations

Each sign if followed by its ancient symbol and the accepted dates that make up the sign.

Following the dates¹ are the key attributes of the signs. The first is the sign's relation to the seasons, be it fixed, mutable or cardinal. Fixed signs are always in a particular season, be it summer, winter, spring or fall. Cardinal signs exist in a time when the sun fully enters a new season (during both equinox and solstice), while mutable signs exist in a transitory period between two different seasons.

Cardinal signs are associated with intelligence, creativity and the power of the mind. Fixed signs are associated with personality, sense of self and individuality. Lastly, mutable signs are associated with common sense, adaptability and wisdom.

The elemental classification of the sign follow. Students may recall the detailed description and analyzation of the four classical elements and the current theories of a fifth element be it Aether or Void².

Fire is associated with energy, passion and drive. Earth is tied to stability, practicality

and responsibility. Water is bound to emotion, sensation and growth. Air is associated with thought, perspective and expression of ideas.

Finally is a brief summary of traits associated with the sign followed by a lengthier discussion including the stars themselves. Again, students are reminded this is hardly a comprehensive discussion and merely a re-introduction to the constellations.

The Prison



(July 18 - August 16) (cardinal, water): protectively, sensitively, clingingly.

The Prison is a sign of the emotional. They are loving and caring souls, sensitive, sympathetic and protective. They are very family-orientated and feel comfortable in the home. Timidity is a common trade of Prisons although masculine paternalism is also prevalent. Prisons are fond of 'nesting', making a home for themselves and the people they care about. To strangers or casual acquaintances they are formidable and reserved, even unemotional and thick-skinned and yet they are quite vulnerable and open to those they know and trust.

Prisons are prone to isolation; they cut themselves off from the world when they feel safe and comfortable. Many hermits and loners are of this sign. Prisons are clingy and possessive, they find it hard to let people go or live their own lives. When confronted by people they trust they grow overemotional and touchy, unable to let go of accidental slights and insults. Prisons are also known, on occasion, to construct elaborate fantasies for themselves. Romanticised and idealised perspectives on the world where they can feel safe and in control of their loved ones. The sign is also associated with the Moon and lunacy is not uncommon with Prisons.

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1. For ease of use these dates have been translated out of the local elven dialect into common Darkonian for our foreign students.
 2. Students interested in this are again encouraged to research the various elemental planer theories. Research into the theory of positive/negative planes are discouraged as it is a load of bunk and a waste of the student's time.

Stars

Twelve dim stars of make up this constellation. The Prison is the dimmest of all the constellations. On bright nights it barely escapes the darkness of the sky. A large cluster of stars can be found in the middle, surrounded by the rest of the constellation. One of the larger signs, the Prison dominates the March sky. Some scholars believe it is actually two smaller associated constellations that have simply become one over the centuries but so far this has gone unproven.¹

The Marionette

(August 17 - September 16)
(fixed, fire): generously,
proudly, theatrically.



The proud Marionettes are bossy and forceful, always longing to be in control. While enthusiastic and warmhearted they can be pompous, loud, intolerant and dogmatic as they interfere with other's lives. They enjoy being the centre of attention and many are grandiose, dramatic and theatrical². Marionettes are prone to spontaneous bursts of creativity that seldom sustain themselves. Marionettes think big and plan on a broad canvas, especially when they are in charge of others.

Marionettes are seldom good leaders, instead prone to abrupt actions that quickly fail or overly grand plans doomed to failure. Minor details often escape their notice. They are easily manipulated, especially

1. This is a frequent topic of debate amongst the older students in the Collegium Caelestis and many arguments, occasionally violent, have started due to this subject. So it has been banned and should not be discussed on punishment of expulsion.
2. It is a game amongst students to guess my sign and the Marionette is a particular favorite. Students who suggest so mockingly are expelled.

emotionally, and are often jealous and indulgent.

Romantic relations with a Marionette are sporadic. They can be entertaining, passionate and seemingly insatiable yet quickly become distracted. Despite this they can be quite kind and sincere and often remarkably trusting. While a relationship lasts they are devoted partners. Unfortunately, they are poor judges of character and play favorites with friends.

Stars

Thirteen stars of varying brightness make up the Marionette, including several of the brightest in the night sky. The brightest three are named "the Grin", the smiling mouth of the Marionette. A group of stars above the constellation were formerly known as "the Strings", and became their own constellation a number of centuries ago.³

The Innocent



(September 17 - October 17)
(mutable, earth): practically,
efficiently, critically.

The dominant traits of Innocents are diligence, modesty, practical natures with a desire to serve or aid others. They enjoy feeling useful and needed and thus Innocents typically require assistance in their jobs or relationships. They are commonly fussy or worriers, requiring much reassurance and support. Attempts to allay their discomfort often lead them to be perfectionists or overcritical of others. Innocents frequently have an aversion to dirt and are motivated by hygiene or cleanliness. Many are afraid of sickness and disease.

Innocents are often reserved in relationships and are often seen as cold or

3. See Fagellus' three volume essay The Signe of Strings and False Proffesies of the Marionet, circa 520 BC.

repressed. For some this is because they perceive shortcomings in their social skill while others have difficulty trusting others. Much of this outward aloofness is false; merely a defence and in actuality Innocents often have deep reservoirs of sympathy and kindness. Despite their own problems they are adept at pointing out solutions to the troubles of others, even if such advice is unwanted.

Stars

The month best suited for gazing at the Innocent is May where they nine bright stars are easily visible in the night sky. The Innocent is one of the more easily recognized constellations due to its proximity to the starts of the Great Berserker¹.

The Horseman

(October 18 - November 16)
(cardinal, air): co-operatively, fairly, lazily.



Of all the signs few are as debated as the Horseman. While we elves believe people born under this sign are diplomatic, romantic and charming, the Vistani believe those of the Horseman are erratic and ever-changing as well as self-indulgent and gullible. Like the fall season it embodies the Horseman can either be a festive time of the harvest and bounty or the time of reaping before the cold of winter; the climax of the growing season or the beginning of the end.

Regardless, most Horsemen are peaceful and idealistic, both open-minded and graceful. They are often impartial and excellent critical thinkers suited for resolving conflict and problems. But many are prone to laziness and inaction preferring

talk over other more immediate solutions. Some are frivolous and shallow, even indecisive. Many are so inactive as to be slothful or indolent.

In relationships Horsemen are compromising and understanding yet unfaithful. While not prone to outright betrayal they can be quite promiscuous at times. Their desire for pleasure often leads them into temptation and disaster.

Stars

All eight stars of the Horseman are inconspicuous; with no bright lights it is often overlooked even in the month of June when it is most visible. The Horseman is the most recent addition to the zodiac and was once associated with both the Temptress and the Innocent.

The Temptress

(November 17 - December 15)
(fixed, water): passionately, sensitively, anxiously.



The passionate folk of the Temptress are intuitive, empathetic and quite jealous. Known for obsessions and obstinacy Temptresses are nothing if not intense. One may appear calm and collected but they often seethe with veiled urges and desires. Charismatic and magnetic, few are not drawn to people of this sign in a visceral, primal fashion. Many practice limited self-control but their energy often shows through giving them an air of mystery, they tingle with visible secrets. It is no surprise many are noted for their self-control and willpower.

Dealing with Temptresses is often difficult as they are quick to be offended and often just as quick to anger. Vindictiveness, sadism, cruelty and revenge are often perpetrated by Temptresses. Of all the signs few are as passionate lovers as the Temptresses. They are quick to lose

1. The dwarves refer to this constellation as Bear-skin the hunter.

themselves in a moment and easily slip into debauchery. Persuasive, even if they resist their own urges they often spur others into acts of passion and intensity. It is no surprise that this sign had many excellent orators and leaders.

Stars

The Temptress contains many bright stars and the image of flowing hair is clearly visible on charts. July is the best month for viewing the constellation and is a month known for passion but not marriage. In Sithicus, a large number of stars in the Dragon Queen constellation come from the Temptress.

The Artifact

(December 16 - January 14)
(mutable, fire): freely, straightforwardly, carelessly.



Those born under the sign of the Artifact are often philosophical or deep thinkers but tend towards distraction. Abstract ideas and concepts are often easily understood by people born under this sign. They are often good humoured and are fun-loving with a strong sense of optimism. However, this optimism can be blinding at times. They are honest but sometimes lack tact and the subtle social graces being too abrupt or forward. Artifacts are frequently concerned with the truth and object to lies and falsehoods.

Artifacts have a desire to get to the heart of matters; they are often instrumental in great deeds, although they are seldom great themselves. Most must content themselves with being surrounded by greatness they can never personally achieve. This often leads to feelings of inferiority and melancholy.

In personal relationships Artifacts are trustworthy and dependable, seldom betraying trusts or leading to disappointment. However, they are

dangerous when angered and know exactly can be said or done to hurt someone the most.

Stars

The Artifact is made of 7 brilliant stars most visible during the month of August. When connected the stars are said to form "the great crown". Many have taken this as proof Artifacts are destined to rule when really the crown represents the crown of the head and seat of intelligence and thought.

The Mists



(January 15 - February 12) -
(cardinal, earth): prudently, cautiously, suspiciously.

Mists are practical, ambitious and dependable workers -albeit cautious and fatalistic. They can be rigid but are competent with an inclination towards business and the trades despite a miserly inclination. They can be exceedingly patient at time and careful in even the most trivial of tasks. High standards are a hallmark of Mists; they enjoy challenging themselves albeit in a highly controlled fashion.

People of the Mists have a strong connection to fate and often feel as if they have little control of their actions. This often leads to pessimism and negative behaviour. Mists frequently believe if they cannot control their own lives then they control what people know of them leading to secrecy. Mists are thusly known for the enigmatic behaviour and mysteries. Some grow paranoid when confronted about this.

Mists are unemotional and often unapproachable, distancing themselves from others. They can be unhappy when confronted with people and are ill at ease in relationships of all kinds. Many have difficulties with the opposite sex but are loyal and faithful once they have connected with someone.

Stars

The constellation of the Mists is one of the dimmest in the zodiac and even the faintest of earthly lights can render it invisible. Scholars debate on the number of stars included varying between seven and eight common lights with as many as six other additional stars.¹

The Mists is also located around several dim clusters of far away stars that add a constant diffusion of light giving the Constellation an appearance similar to its namesake².

The Spirit

(February 13 - March 14) (fixed, air):
democratically, unconventionally,
detachedly.

Spirits are honest and intellectual yet deeply concern with friendships, society and the welfare of others. They are frequently inventive and creative, full of original thought, with deep-seated humanitarian urges. However, they can be unemotional at times, detached and unreachable. Sprits have a tendency towards unpredictability. Equally prone to shyness and exuberance, Spirits often have both depth and frivolity.

Spirits have a strong conviction to the truth, they believe the past holds answers that must be uncovered or brought to the attention of others. There is a definite bond between the past, present and future in Spirits: their futures often depend on what they can unearth regarding the past. Sometimes this even manifests in psychic abilities, Spirits often have powerful minds.

Sprits, while concerned with people and friendships, do not readily make friends.

-
1. The correct number is in fact eleven, but the other Masters refuse to accept this.
 2. A large 'nebula' is also located in the Mist constellation but is only visible through powerful telescopes.

Often condescending and judgmental on humanity they do not open themselves up quickly and their alliances take time to grow and strengthen. Once they accept someone they are dedicated to extremes but have high standards and demands that lead to disillusionment. Once a Spirit has broken a relationship they can be quite vengeful and scorned.

Stars

Most visible during October, this constellation is made up of ten bright stars. It is one of the oldest recognized constellations and has long been associated with elven myths and festivals.³ The Sithican constellation of the Adamantine Wyrms is made partially from stars of the Spirit.

The Broken One



(March 15 - April 13)
(mutable, water):
imaginatively, sensitively,
distractedly.

Broken Ones are sensitive and imaginative with deep, spiritual sides. They are often artistic and compassionate and frequently selfless. But more often than not Broken Ones are escapist, weak-willed, neglectful, vague and prone to (often unnecessary) martyrdom. Their submissive, malleable natures make them ready victims and Broken Ones seldom try solving problem instead waiting for matters to resolve themselves.

Broken Ones are often dominated by people or events believed to be outside their control such as luck or even destiny. More often than not this is merely an excuse. They have problems making lives for themselves, living emotionally and instinctively rather

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3. The harvest festival is one such day formerly pledged to the Spirit, as well as the overly dramatic Day of the Pale Realm that ends the month.

than rationally. They frequently give-up when confronted by failure.¹

Their relationships tend to be one-sided as Broken Ones give more than they take. They prefer emotional relationships but are often coerced, sometimes forcibly, into physical ones. Despite this they are intensely loyal and dedicated.

Stars

While ten stars make up the constellation six others play supporting parts and are often included. It is easily observed in November nights. Legends state the Broken One was once a heroic sign associate with a powerful sea monster, an untamable creature that lived free in the rivers of the sky. One day it was caught by the neighboring constellation, the Beast, who partially devoured it and scarred it forever. The Beast has never been satiated since and continues to chase the Broken One across the heavens.

The Beast

(April 14 - May 14)
(cardinal, fire): assertively,
impulsively, defensively,
energetic, head down.



Beasts are aggressive, enthusiastic and highly individualistic. They are very self-orientated and often selfish. Despite this they are quick-witted and adventurous although hot blooded and prone to foolhardy behaviour. They range from confident to arrogant and make excellent leaders, especially when action is required. They are not very patient though, and often rashly favour instinct over reason.

Beasts are seldom passive preferring to take charge of situations and deal with problems directly and head-on. They are not

known for subtlety or tact. When enraged they can be fearsome. They are dedicated leaders, often with compassion for their followers and seldom use their subordinates in irresponsible manners. Like alpha wolves they care for the pack.

Lacking restraint, Beasts are often candid and direct. They are passionate and prone to promiscuity although intolerant of it in others. They are protective of their families and especially their children. Still, they make enthusiastic and generous friends and allies.

Stars

Often associated with the start of the zodiac this sign leads the way and heralds the later signs. Other times it is placed last, stalking patiently behind its prey.² The ten stars of this sign are best seen in December, charging headlong into a new year. The stars are dim now, as if tired and exhausted from the eternal chase.

The Hangman

(May 15 - June 13) (fixed,
earth): resourcefully,
thoroughly, devotedly,
patiently, indulgently



Hangmen are devoted to the point of being possessive and determined to the point of being stubborn. They are people of extremes. They call themselves persistent and sensible while others call them inflexible and greedy. They can be sensual and artistic individuals yet in a practical sense. They are paragons of strength of will and force of personality. Typically law-abiding they have a strong sense of property and seldom fall into debt. Conservative by nature they dislike change

1. I am positive a disproportionate number of students are of this sign!

2. I place it closer to the middle for my own purposes. Beasts must have both prey and predators and academic textbooks must have logical orders.

Quoth the Raven

and new ideas, they will do anything to preserve and maintain the status quo.¹

Hangmen have a tendency to become self-righteous and ultraconservative, argumentative and rigid. They lash out at anything they view as different and alien and demonize anything that deviates from their inflexible moral compass. If betrayed they will stop at nothing to seek revenge.

Loyal and loving describes Hangmen in relationships, although they are not fond of change or experimentation. They are creatures of both habit and routine in relationships and seldom accept shifts in roles.

Stars

Seven bright stars make up this constellation, the brightest of which is nicknamed 'the knot', a radiant crimson star at the edge of the loop of stars. It is most visible during the month of January, a month often believed well-suited for trials and executions.

The Raven

(June 14 - July 15) (mutable, air): logically, inquisitively, fast.



Ravens are known for their adaptability and versatile natures; they are quick-witted, communicative, eloquent and masterful orators. Often known for miming behaviour and mercurial moods they are prone to bouts of curiosity. However, Ravens can be inconsistent, nervous and easily distracted. Ravens often act contradictory and change their minds quickly. They are accused frequently of duplicity and flightiness. Charming and manipulative, Ravens can often talk their way out of any trouble they find themselves in.

1. Far too many dismiss this sign as bleak and negative. I find it quite refreshing and an excellent start to the year.

A reputation for information and knowledge, Ravens often know more than they let on. With their unpredictable natures and quick minds they can often make sense of problems or situations others cannot grasp. They are also sometimes sources of unexpected wisdom or clarity. They make excellent allies if convinced to aid come to one's aid.

Fickleness pervades most Raven relationships. They are emotional but prone to mood swings and shifts of interest. They are prone to falling deeply in love while simultaneously mocking themselves for doing so. Seldom taking anything seriously they lose interest quickly, often once the thrill of the chase has ended and they have caught their prey.

Stars

Nine stars light up this constellation best seen in February. Twin bright stars make up the tips of the wings and are two of the brightest stars in any of constellations. According to legend on nights of the full moon these stars shine even brighter for travelers far from home. This has given rise to the expression "traveling on the wings of the Raven".²



The Hero and The Dark Master

(July 16-July 17) (mutable, non-elemental): greatness, power, unpredictability.

The often overlooked thirteenth sign is one not easily discussed. Students interest in this are encouraged to read the separate book describing the myriad layers and subtext to

2. This is, of course, merely a legend and the actual luminosity of the stars does not change. Anyone arguing differently will be expelled.

this sign.¹ Deciphering horoscopes and messages from this sign are not for the inexperienced or imaginative!

People born under the thirteenth sign are prone to greatness and memorable deeds although these vary between deeds of great heroism and courage and great darkness and evil. There is often no telling with these potential children of destiny. While most lean towards the traits of the Raven or the Prison many are clearly the Hero or the Dark Master.²

There are few consistent traits of those born into this sign. Pride and ego are common but many have strong selfless streaks. Most lean towards order and justice but this is easily corrupted into tyranny. There is also the potential for great strength, either physically, mentally or of character.

Stars

The sign is small, composed of only three stars, but these three are brilliant and unmistakable. Interestingly, each is a different colour: red, yellow and blue. Each appears to be pale white to the naked eye like most stars but the hues are unmistakable through a focused lens.

Conclusion

This concludes my introductory glimpse into the thirteen signs of the zodiac and this brief first chapter of volume XIII in the Collegium Caelestis introductory curriculum. The details presented above are fully expanded

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1. Volume XV in this educational series and written by my capable, although often deluded, predecessor. My revised version will be completed sometime next decade.
 2. The noted Barovian liberator Strahd von Zarovich the first was reputed born under the sign of the Hero. Although, this may only be a legend.

upon in the following chapters written by the appropriate Master Watchers. Students are again reminded that anything (and everything) they think they know is wrong.

Astelath Oakenheart,
Senior Watcher,
587 B.C.

New Feat

Horoscope

You are able to read the stars and write personal horoscopes for others

Prerequisite: Intelligence or Wisdom 12+

Benefit: By reading the stars you can see a person's future. By making a Knowledge (Religion) check of a Profession (Astrologer) check at DC 20 you can accurately read the stars.

If the person can provide you with information on their astrological sign and date of birth you receive a +2 bonus on the check.

An accurate horoscope allows the person to add 1d6 to the result of a single d20 roll. This reflects the knowledge gleaned from the future. The decision to add the die can be made before or after the d20 is rolled but only before the results (success or failure) are declared. Alternatively, you can write a horoscope for someone to use against them and apply the die to your own roll as long as the action is one directly against the person.

Only a single horoscope can be written or in effect at a time. Writing a horoscope involves observing the stars for at least four hours and spending an additional hour interpreting and writing down the results.

Sign Bond [Astrological]

You have a pre-natural connection to your astrological sign.

Benefit: This feat conveys a number of small benefits. Firstly, you can always tell when the stars are out and instinctively discern whether it is day or night. Secondly, you can estimate the month or season with a Survival skill check (DC5); you can simply sense the date through a stellar connection. It is also possible to intuit directions simply by gazing at the stars for a moment (2-3 rounds)

This feat also grants a lesser version of low-light vision that functions as that ability under starlight (but not torchlight or other dim lighting conditions). Races that already possess low-light vision instead gain darkvision 30' or have the range of existing darkvision increased by the same.

Those strongly connected to their signs have archetypical behaviour or have a single strong trait affiliated with that sign.

Seasonal Bond [Astrological]

Your connection to your sign is heightened during related months.

Prerequisite: Sign Bond.

Benefit: During the months of related seasonal signs you experience a mental and creative boost. This improves grants skill checks a moral bonus of +1. For cardinal signs (Prison, Horseman, Mists, Beast) this affects all Intelligence related skills, for fixed signs (Marionette, Temptress, Spirit, Hangman) this affects all Charisma related skills and for mutable signs (Innocent, Artifact, Broken One, Raven) this affect Wisdom related skills. For example, someone born on June 25th, the Raven and a mutable sign, receives a Wisdom bonus on mutable months.

Fated

You have a destiny foretold by the stars.

Prerequisite: Must be taken at first level or after having future read/foretold.

Benefit: Your fate has been laid out and little can change this; although, as the future has not yet happened, nothing is immutable. Due to your prophesized key role in events to come (although a possibly minor role), your soul is hesitant to depart this world.

When reduced to negative hit points you may continue to function until reduced to your Constitution bonus plus two below zero. A character with a Con score of 14 can continue to fight until they fall below-4hp. However, you still continue to bleed and lose hit points at the standard rate. Furthermore, if you succeed a Fortitude saving throw (DC 20) you can cling to life until you reach -15hp!

Additionally, the character has an increased chance of returning as a ghost or walking dead. If rolled randomly, the chance of rising from the grave is doubled!

The true nature of the destiny is left to the Dungeon Master, but they are encouraged to work with the player in creating a compelling story.



The Omen Watchers

Sidnar's stargazers

by Jacopo "Jakob" Veronese

jakoov@hotmail.it

Lo duca e io per quel cammino ascoso,
intrammo a ritornar nel chiaro mondo;
e sanza cura aver d'alcun riposo,
salimmo sù, el primo e io secondo,
tanto ch'i vidi de le cose belle
che porta 'l ciel, per un pertuso tondo.
E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle".

My guide and I followed the arduous path
we began our ascent to the world of light
we never cared for resting,
up we went, he first and I following,
until I saw all those wonderful things
you see in the sky, in the round cave mouth.
At last, we could see the stars.

"I don't get it" Lucio said, clinging to the chilling railing of the tower, shivering in the winter night.

The "tower" was actually nothing more than an unstable mishmash of bricks plastered white and attached to a much more bigger spire, a testament to the past of the city of Sidnar.

"I really don't get it, Sioellen" Lucio whispered, hoping Master Oakenhart couldn't hear him over the night wind. The beard he learned to cultivate in the many winters he spent in Sidnar since his

admission at the Collegium Caelestis was shielding him from the chilling air of the night, that was true, but it was also starting to frost. The wind was unbearable, like a whip falling on his face, and the spell he had cast at the beginning of the exam, one designed to help him withstand the frigid cold of that Darkonese night, had already expired.

He was reclined on his individual telescopium, a rather new invention the Collegium imported from Lamordia; he had a map of the sky in his left hand and a pencil

in his right hand. Theoretically, the pencil was used to sign on the chart the position of stars and stellae errantes, so he could then prepare his own horoscopus, the definition of his personality according to his readings. In practice, said pencil was just being tortured by his teeth: he could remember anything.

His classmate, Sioellen, was a truly astonishing beauty, the sum of elven grace: delicate face, long pointed ear and chestnut hair grown to the waist. They had a tryst in his first year at the Collegium, but it was short lived, as almost every relation elves - true leaders of Sidnar- had with humans. Now, her ears were covered by a wool beret, her mouth and neck were wrapped in a wool scarf, and layers of wool covered her entire lithe figure. She was intently writing on her chart in the flowing Elven alphabet. She barely acknowledged what Lucio said, and kept writing on her chart.

Lucio tried to write something -anything- on the chart. He recognized the nebula of the Mists, shining high in the moonless sky, as it should be in the beginning of January. At least something he could remember. Lucio wrote on his chart the coordinates of the numerous stars that composed the constellation, sure that the Mists had some relevance on the observation, that night. He remembered instantly everything he was taught during the past five years about the sky during the winter, about the position of the stars in that moment of the year, about the meaning of the constellations, about their relations with Vistani gift for prophecy. He resumed his observation of the sky, this time without the telescopium. He felt he could see better the complex pattern of the stars, if he could see the whole sky, and not a mere part of it. This way, while his fellow students were concentrating on one part of the sky at time, he could see everything... That is, even the stella transvolans that crossed the constellation of the Temptress, down on the horizon. That was sure to have a meaning.

"You needed help on something, Lu?" Sioellen said, finally lifting her nose from the chart. "Don't worry, Ellie." Lucio smiled, despite his lips cut by the frigid wind "I think I found a way in the Mists"

The Star Spire

The main architectonical feature of the Darkonese town of Sidnar, an Elven community built over the Khoux River's canyon, is the Star Spire. This great tower is said to be the highest pinnacle of the citadel of the mage king Wormschild, a fortress that sunk in the earth when its master perished during the Arcane Age. Today, the Spire is used by a guild of elven astrologers, the Omen Watchers, as base of observation.

The Spire, said to be the proverbial doorway to Wormschild's sunken citadel, has become completely off-limits for all citizens and visitor, except for those who belong to the Omen Watchers or represent Azalin Rex (such as constables and nobles). The most prominent feature of the Spire is its apex, a great platform where the most prominent members of the Omen Watchers gather at night to discuss recent discoveries.

Recently, the guild decided to add a new tower, at about three quarters of the total height of the Spire, so that the students of the Collegium Caelestis (the most advanced astronomical college in the Core) could observe the sky without bothering the Watchers' leaders. This new tower is quite unstable though, despite its construction aided by Senior Watcher Lescion Oakenheart's stone shape spells.

Aside from this, it is more a collection of stone and bricks than a true tower and trembles at every strong gust of wind. To improve its safety, the Watchers decided to add a railing to the observation platform. Needless to say, the students were not much impressed by their concern, and they

frequently whisper the name of Senior Watcher Oakenheart (along with many bad, bad words) whenever the tower shakes under the night wind.

The first Watcher

The story of the Omen Watchers begins many years ago, during the Arcane Age, and dates back to the time of Wormschild's reign of terror. One of the most cruel and sadistic of the mage-kings that ruled Darkon before Azalin, Wormschild was a true racist, a xenophobe who hated demihumans with the passion and fervor we see today in the anti-Vistani pogrom of Malocchio Aderre. Under Wormschild's kingdom, elves, dwarves, gnomes and halflings were hunted as beasts and tortured cruelly. The people of Darkon did not support the hunt of demihumans out of heart but fear of Wormschild's wrath.

Soon, the demihumans resistance groups, formerly divided along race lines, started to collaborate. They were aided in their efforts by a mysterious being called "earth weird", an elemental seer that materialized one day in a mound near the Forest of Shadows' border. The seer greatly helped the resistance providing them clues on Wormschild's weaknesses. Many elves were particularly entranced by the creature and gathering around it, exchanging riddles and information, spells and knowledge. The coming of the earth weird is remembered, by the most venerable elves and by historians, as the rebirth of the school of elven divination.

Many elves became great seers, ancient chronicles telling they shown powers akin to those now wielded by the Vistani. One of them, an elven woman, became one of the greatest commanders in Darkonese history. She was a great mage, some say even powerful as Wormschild, but nothing about her is known, save for her nom-de-plume:

Orphea. Under her directions, the rebellion grew stronger and stronger, until even many humans joined its ranks.

History says one day the commander was captured by Wormschild's spies and brought to Sidnar -then a great citadel built over the Khoux River. She was taken to the top of the citadel, a platform where Wormschild practiced the unholy rituals that granted him the arcane power he was using in his fight with the rebellion. It was a clear night. Wormschild tortured Orphea with mundane and magical instruments, trying to break her will and make her his slave. The woman never cried, and withstood the pain silently watching the sky and the stars. Then, when almost every bone in her body was broken, when her sore muscles could not even allow her to stand, Orphea started to laugh. Thinking her mad, Wormschild lifted his sword. He was about to strike, but Orphea kept laughing, her beautiful face distorted in a madness-wracked mask. She gazed into the sky, while Worschild watched her, puzzled. Then, she started talking: her words are now considered the first horoscope of the modern Darkon.

"It makes sense, now! It does! My observations come to a conclusion now, here in the vast sky! My life will come to an end here, but my life has found its meaning!"

Wormschild was even more puzzled by her words. The elven woman pointed her bloodied finger to the sky and resumed her speech:

"My stars were there, since my birth: the Moon was three-quarters into the Raven when I was born! My destiny was in my ascendant, the Broken One: here I lie before you, my body wracked by pain. But my brutal death will be negated by the Artifact, my second ascendant. I will become of great importance in history and for the rebellion!"

The archmage lifted his sword for the strike, but Orphea spoke again:

"You, Wormschild! The Temptress always led your way, since birth! Your desires have influences on many people, and you reached a place of power unlike anyone ever had. But there are two more signs guiding your steps, mage: the first is the Horseman! Great calamities await you in your life... Then there is the Marionette. Yes, Wormschild. With all your power, you are nothing more than a pawn!"

Shrieking in anger, Wormschild cut Orpheas's head from her body. He lifted the head by the flowing hair and moved to the edge of the platform overlooking the Khoux River. He watched Orpheas's head closely and said:

"Where are all of your prophecies now? Were are your divinations? Where is your magic, elf? They didn't help you against my sword, my arcana, my strength, didn't they?"

That said, Wormschild threw the head over the edge of the fortress. It was with horror that he withstood that the head, instead of falling, was floating in the air, a few feet from his reach. Her lips were unmoving, but Orpheas's voice was speaking to his very mind:

"You must never doubt the stars, for in them is the future. The Artifact is my future. The Horseman is yours. And, guiding the fate of us all... Are the Mists."

With that, the head disappeared.

A year later, Wormschild lost his fight with the rebels in a battle near the village that was to become the city of Viaki. As soon as his sentence to death was carried, the citadel of Sidnar buried itself into the earth, and those elves who were among Orpheas's most faithful disciples settled in the area.

The rest, as people say, is history.

The Watchers

There is not much to be said about the Omen Watchers in the few centuries that passed since the foundation of the order. The leaders always did their best to estrange the community from the struggles for power that riddled Darkon since the fall of Wormschild. They were contacted a few times by the new leaders of the nation and neutrally gave advice to them and to their enemies, as long as they let the order pursue their researches in peace.

With the coming of Azalin Rex and the death of the last archmage, Darcalus, the situation changed. Azalin's iron fist could not tolerate that his own subjects gave to his enemies information and predictions: when he discovered that Astelath Oakenheart, then third Senior Watcher of the order, had provided a horoscope to a group of fleeing rebels he had the venerable elf imprisoned and executed. Astelath's son, Lescion, learned well his lesson. He stated that the order was not to provide help to anyone, save those who had Azalin's permission. The Rex of Darkon was pleased by the agreement.

Around the Watchers, the city of Sidnar grew. To find new members Lescion Oakenheart founded the Collegium Cealestis more than a hundred years ago. It has now become the most advanced astronomical school in all of the Core. Unfortunately, the prospective students of human heritage are not encouraged by the curriculum. Master Lescion Oakenheart, in fact, decided that no students could consider themselves true astrologers unless they spent at least a portion of their life studying the sky. From the elven perspective, the studies must take at twenty years to be completed.

Nonetheless, in 751 BC, the Watchers admitted their first member lacking at least a modicum of elven blood. His identity, though, is kept a secret.

The Omen Watcher

Becoming an Omen Watcher is not easy. Those who wish to become a member of the order must show magical potential, a penchant for divination magic, a fascination with horoscopes and stars, and become an expert of the astronomy. More important, he must have completed his curriculum at the Collegium Caelestis with laude.

Elves compose the bulk of the order, with half-elves representing a significant minority. As already told, there is only one human in the order, a recently appointed Watcher who distinguished himself during his studies. Through subtle influence he's trying to open the Collegium to more human students, most of them scared by the prospective of spending at least a quarter of century under elven tutelage.

The career of an Omen Watcher starts right after the graduation from the Collegium Caelestis when the Senior Watcher accepts his request (provided he made request to enter the order, of course). The graduated won't be accepted if he didn't receive a laude for his conclusive research project and has reference from at least two of his mentors. Only then, the former student becomes a Watcher. Joining the Watchers is for life: either one has the calling to become a Watcher, or he doesn't. There have never been members who left the order, nor dissenters.

The order is now composed by twelve Master Watchers (seven elves, four half-elves and one human), one for each zodiacal sign. Supervising their gatherings and their rites is a Senior Watcher (currently the aged elf Lescion Oakenheart), representing the thirteenth sign. Under them is always a cabal of thirty-six adepts (three for each astrological sign, not counting the thirteenth) who serve the ringleaders as servants, apprentices and laborers. It is their task to

keep the secrets of the order and respect their master's will. Only this way they can hope, someday, to become Master Watcher.

The title of Master and Senior Watcher is not based on arcane power or birth: it is instead bestowed on the elder of the order or on those who are especially gifted with the boon of prophecy. Those who are accepted in the order can take level in the prestige class with the same name.

Most of the petitioners are elves and half-elves, given the natural distrust the elves of Sidnar have for the short-lived humans. Dwarves and gnomes are refused without even a test: the Masters justify this by explaining that their ties with the earth are too strong to gaze into the sky. Many dwarves claim the Masters are just bigots: was not the gift of prophecy bestowed upon the elves by an earth weird? To this, the elven Masters just shrug. Lately, a petition made by an unusually long-lived caliban is being scrutinized. Senior Watcher Oakenheart said: "I will take my time to think about it". The caliban see these words as a pathetic attempt to wait for his own natural lifespan to end and renews his petition every month.

Those who benefit most from levels in the Omen Watcher class are, of course, spellcasters. Wizards (diviner in particular) and bards, with their emphasis on knowledge and their arcane power, are naturally attracted to the curriculum necessary to enter the order. Sorcerers, whose power come not from study but from their inner nature, find the twenty-years-long lessons of the Collegium a bit annoying. Some clerics and druids, especially those of Hala and of the Dementlieuse sect of Ezra, find the order akin to their dogma. The circle of the Masters, in particular, hosts a Witch and a cleric of Ezra (former of Dementlieu, now "naturalized" Darkonese), friends and comrades despite their different faith. It is

also possible for adepts and prophets (see the Ravenloft Dungeon Master's Guide) to become a Watcher. Other classes find the order too focused on knowledge and passive observation to be of any interest to them.

Omen Watcher

With their emphasis on knowledge and spellcasting, those who have a high Intelligence (or, in any case, the relevant key ability for spellcasting) find themselves in advantage over their less bright peers. Since their abysmal Hit Dice, a high Constitution score helps greatly.

Hit Dice: d4

Requirements

To qualify as an omen watcher (OmW), a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Base Will Save: +4

Skills: Gather Information 4 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 9 ranks, Knowledge (nature) 4 ranks, Profession (astrologer) 6 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks.

Feats: Spell Focus (divination), Greater Spell Focus (divination)

Spells: The character must be able to cast 3rd level spells, and at least two spells known (in case of bards, sorcerers and

wizards) for each level must belong to the divination school.

Special: The character must have completed the curriculum of the Collegium Caelestis (requiring at least twenty years of study) with laude and have the sponsorship of at least two of his teachers.

If the character has a divination-related quality or innate spell-like ability he doesn't need to fulfill the spellcasting and feats requirements.

Class Skills

The Omen Watcher's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4+ Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the omen watcher prestige class.

Table 1: Omen Water Prestige Class

Class level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort	Ref	Will	Special	Caster level
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Horoscope +1, Knowledge of the Stars	+1 to existing caster level
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Astrological Mind	+1 to existing caster level
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Horoscope +2	+1 to existing caster level
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Astrological Body	+1 to existing caster level
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Horoscope +3	+1 to existing caster level
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	Gaze in the Sky	+1 to existing caster level
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Horoscope +4	+1 to existing caster level
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Astrological Link	+1 to existing caster level
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Horoscope +5	+1 to existing caster level
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Vision	+1 to existing caster level

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: An omen watcher gains no new proficiencies with weapons or armor. Armor check penalties apply to the relevant skills, as normal.

Spells per day: At each level, you gain new spells per day (and spells known, if applicable) as if you also gained a level in the spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one spellcasting class before becoming an omen watcher, you must decide which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day and spells known.

Horoscope (Ex): An Omen Watcher of 1st level and higher is capable of writing the detailed horoscope of any person, provided he knows his given name and his date and place of birth (which can be known by direct interview or with a Gather Information check).

To write the horoscope, you need 24 hours of work, time necessary to observe the sky and compare such observation with your notes and tomes on astrology, and a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) or Profession (astrologer) check (whichever has the higher modifier), necessary to write and memorize the horoscope. You can write and remember the horoscope of a number of people equal to 1 + your Intelligence score. Each time you write a new horoscope, the oldest one memorized is wiped from of your mind.

The horoscope can provide you with insight of that particular person's motives, behavior and weaknesses. Each horoscope grants you an insight bonus equal to +1 to attack rolls, as well as Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Knowledge, Intimidate and Sense Motive checks related to the subject of the horoscope.

For every two levels after the first, the bonus provided by the horoscope class ability grants an additional +1 (+2 at 3rd level, +3 at 5th level and so on).

Knowledge of the stars (Ex): All Omen Watchers, with their knowledge of the movement of the sky, gain deep knowledge of the past. This class feature works exactly like the bardic knowledge class feature of the bard class (see the Player's Handbook), and any bard level you had before becoming an omen watcher stacks for the purpose of determining the bonus to the check.

Astrological mind (Ex): By tapping into the deep meaning of her zodiac sign, a 2nd level watcher gains a bonus feat, to be chosen from the list of intellectual feats belonging to the character's sign. If the feat has prerequisites, the watcher must meet them. A watcher whose astrological sign is the Thirteenth can chose any feat from the list.

- The Spirit: Haunted*, Jaded*, Negotiator, Open Mind*.
- The Broken One: Deceitful, Entities of the Id^, Magical Aptitude, Persuasive.
- The Beast: Back to the Wall*, Combat Casting, Courage*.
- The Hangman: Combat Casting, Diligent, Iron Will, Open Mind*.
- The Raven: Eidetic Memory#, Inquisitive, Spell Penetration.
- The Prison: Ancestral Legacy+, Extended Spell, Haunted*, Negotiator.
- The Marionette: Courage*, Deceitful, Iron Will, Persuasive.
- The Innocent: Combat Casting, Investigator, Iron Will, Jaded*.
- The Horseman: Combat Casting, Eschew Materials, Leadership, Negotiator.
- The Temptress: Muse+, Smitten+, Spell Focus (enchantment), Tantric Ability°.

- The Artifact: Iron Will, Jaded*, Open Mind*.
- The Mists: Improved Counterspell, Jaded*, Spell Focus (abjuration), Warding Gesture+.

*From Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

^From Ravenloft Dungeon Master's Guide.

°From Champions of Darkness.

#From Heroes of Light.

+From Van Richten's Arsenal vol.1.

Astrological body (Ex): By tapping into the deep meaning of her zodiac sign, a 4nd level gain a bonus feat, to be chosen from the list of physical feats belonging to the character's sign. If the feat has prerequisites, the watcher must meet them. A watcher whose astrological sign is the Thirteenth can chose any feat from the list.

- The Spirit: Blind-fight, Ethereal Touch°.
- The Broken One: Dodge, Weapon Finesse.
- The Beast: Brawler°, Combat Expertise, Run.
- The Hangman: Agile, Nimble Fingers, Toughness.
- The Raven: Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Quick Draw.
- The Prison: Combat Expertise, Toughness.
- The Marionette: Agile, Power Attack.
- The Innocent: Combat Expertise, Great Toughness.
- The Horseman: Improved Unarmed Strike, Mounted Combat.
- The Temptress: Nimble Fingers, Power Attack.
- The Artifact: Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Quick Draw.
- The Mists: Back to the Wall*, Stealthy.

*From Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

°From Champions of Darkness.

Superior Horoscope (Ex): From 5th level onward, the bonus provided by horoscope class ability applies to all spells you can cast. From that moment on, the bonus you gain with the subjects of your horoscopes applies to the DC of the spells you cast against people you made the horoscope of, as well as to caster level check made to overcome eventual spell resistance of the subjects.

Gaze in the sky (Ex): A 6th level or higher Omen Watcher uses the sky to cast his divination and scrying spells. Spells like legend lore, scry, greater scry or vision do not require any material component, provided they are cast under a clear, starry night. Every other feature of the spell remains unchanged.

Astrological Link (Su): An omen watcher of 8th level or higher can establish a form of link to any people whose horoscope he memorized. To do this, he must study the horoscope he prepared for the subject for at least an hour. By doing this, the omen watcher forms a permanent status spell between him and the subject. The watcher can establish the link with a maximum number of people equal to his Intelligence modifier (minimum one), provided theirs is one of the horoscopes he memorized.

If the caster chooses to forget the horoscope of a subject (if he want to memorize another horoscope, for example), the link is broken, and cannot be established until he can write and memorize a new horoscope for the same subject.

An unwilling subject can choose to resist the effects of the spell with a Will saving throw (DC 14 + the watcher's Int modifier).

This bond is broken as soon as the caster and the subject find themselves in different domains.

Vision (Su): An omen watcher who reaches of 10th level can use, once per night the night, a vision spell-like ability, provided he has an unobstructed view of the stars.

Sample omen watcher

This section describes Lescion Oakenheart, current Senior Watcher of the order. This is an alternate version of the same character who appeared in the Darkon section of Gazetteer II, in the sidebar describing important people of Sidnar. In that manual, he was a male elf expert 3/wizard 4. A Dungeon Master may choose the official version or the one presented here, as he prefers.

Lescion Oakenheart

Male old elf Diviner 6/ Omen watcher 3: CR 9; medium humanoid (elf); HD 9d4-18; 19 hp; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 armor), touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +4; Grp +2; Atk masterwork longsword +5 melee (1d8-3); Full Atk masterwork longsword +5 melee (1d8-3); SA Spells; SQ Call familiar, horoscope +2, knowledge of the stars (+9 to checks), comprehend languages, detect magic, read magic; AL LN; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +12 (Fear +12, Horror +12, Madness +8); Str 7, Dex 14, Con 6, Int 19, Wis 18, Cha 13.

Skills and feats: Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +10, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nature) +12, Profession (astrologer) +16, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +18; Eschew Components, Greater Spell Focus (divination), NegotiatorB, Skill Focus (Profession [astrologer]), Spell Focus (divination), Spell Mastery (arcane sight, clairovidence/clairvoyance, detect thoughts, nondetection).

Signature Possessions: Bracers of armor +1, masterwork longsword, vest of minor cold resistance (like ring of minor cold resistance), crystal ball, spellbook (three copies).

Languages: Darkonese, Draconic, Elven*, Gnomish, Lamordian, Mordentish.

Spells typically prepared (4+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/1+1; DC 14+ spell level, DC 16 + spell level for divination spell): 0-arcane seal, detect poison, light, prestidigitation (2); 1-feather fall (2), identify, magic missile (2), protection from evil; 2-alter self (2), detect thoughts (2), levitate, locate object; 3-Clairaudience/clairvoyance, gaseous form (2) nondetection (2); 4-Dimension door, locate creature, scry (2); 5-Mordenkainen private sanctum (2), prying eyes.

Spellbook: 0-All except enchantment spell; 1-comprehend languages, detect secret doors, detect undead, feather fall, identify, magic missile, protection from evil, protection from good, true strike; 2-alter self, detect thoughts, levitate, locate object, see invisibility; 3-arcane sight, clairovidence/clairvoyance, gaseous form, nondetection, secret page; 4-Dimension door, locate creature, Otiluke's elastic sphere, scry, stone shape; 5-Break enchantment, dream, Mordenkainen's private sanctum, permanency, prying eyes.

Carrying himself with dignity and nobility, this old elf has a few wrinkle on his forehead, and wears what seems a perpetual frown. He has black hair streaked with gray and green eyes. His figure is covered by a red cloak trimmed with gold, and wears a refined blue silk vest. A shining longsword hangs from his belt.

Background

Lescion was born in Sidnar about three hundreds years ago. He spent many years under the tutelage of his father, Senior Watcher Astelath Oakenheart. The presence of his father, always judging and criticizing him, made his childhood quite dull, spent as it was studying the sky in the cold Darkonese night. As a child, he was quite reserved, and

even now he rarely speaks to strangers, preferring his disciples to carry on "diplomatic" duties. He only speaks if he has to.

His life would have been one of a submitted adult, but the untimely death of his father under the executioner's axe changed this situation. Looking for a new leader, the Master Watcher found Lescion to be the ideal candidate: he was a good spellcaster, he loved to look at the sky and, most important, he had the blood of Senior Watcher Astelath, a great diviner. Lescion just wanted his life to continue as peacefully as it had always been: becoming Senior Watcher was the most direct route to preserve his routine and beloved isolation from Azalin's intrusion.

Current sketch

Lescion, in the two hundred years since his father death, has become a powerful mage (he even cast permanency on himself for comprehend languages, detect magic and read magic) and an excellent astrologer. Under his lead, the order of the Omen Watcher became more organized, and the foundation of the Collegium Caelestis has served its purpose: gather apprentices and servants for the Master Watcher.

Lescion Oakenheart has married three times, every time with a blonde human girl. His two precedent weddings bore him two sons: while the elder chose to follow his father's footsteps and became a member of the Watchers, the other one moved to Neblus, where he built a family and is now member of the clergy of the Eternal Order.

The Senior Watcher is becoming old, and now he feels age weighing on his shoulders. While physically it manifests in an aching chough developed in the many nights spent in the open, watching the sky, mentally he's keeping his mind quite well. He's as sharp as when he was in his prime and his life-long observation of the sky has made his

knowledge of omens and history one of the most accurate in the whole Core.

Combat

Lescion has never been a good fighter, nor with sword and bow, nor with spells. He always found fighting as an occupation below his concern, and thus never bothered with learning offensive spells (aside from magic missile, a spell he only casts defensively). The longsword he carries is more for show than for actual use, since it's an old relic of the Oakenheart family.

In case he is attacked, Lescion relies on his apprentices to cover his escape, while he casts defensive spells such as protection from evil/good or, in case of great danger, Otiluke's elastic sphere. If caught alone, he tries to escape as quickly as he can by using dimension door and gaseous form, two spells he often uses to reach a room in the Collegium Caelestis he keeps secret even to the Master Watcher.

The other spells he often prepare are tied to his need and duties in the Collegium. For example, many a student falling from the secondary tower had the benefit of being saved by Lescion's quickly-cast feather fall.

Dread Possibilities

Recently, Lescion found that someone is spying him. He saw two times the sensor of a scry spell, and he fears for the secret he's keeping as Senior Watcher. Because of this, he is now spending many hours a day covered by nondetection spells, especially when he's pouring over thought-lost tomes or consulting with the creature inhabiting the secret room of the Collegium Caelestis.

While many students in the Collegium Caelestis make fun of the fascination that Senior Watcher Oakenheart has with blond human girls (to the point of calling it "fetish"), there is a much more dark side to this. When he was still young, Lescion

composed his own horoscope, foreseeing the death of a dear person (his father, he concluded) and the birth of a young blonde female half-elf in his family, whose coming would be the catalyser of a great change for the order, a change destined to bring great good to the whole Darkon. Lescion is now taking one wife after another in hope they will produce the heir he's waiting for. Unfortunately, he only had two children, both male and both gifted with his beautiful raven hair.

After four years of wedding with his current wife, the beautiful twenty-four-years-old niece of Baron Constantine, he's starting to suspect his wife with being barren. Since he cannot break this favorable wedding, he is starting to look closely to the horoscope (and physical appearance, of course) of some of his blonde female students. The hubris of leaving a trace in history might tempt Lescion. He is now toying with thinking that, by magically changing his guise, he might even get away with one or more adultery.



The Isle of Ravens

A Report to the Fraternity of Shadows

By Nathan

Nathan@fraternityofshadows.com

*O where is my lover
Who went to the battle?
O where is my lover
Who went to the war?
The ravens have found him;
They feast on his sweet eyes,
And bathe in the pool
Of his sword-spilt gore.*

The young woman singing sat at the window of the tower, staring out at the sea raging against the cliffs at the tower's foot. Flakes of snow drifted through the window on the eddying air, spangling the lady's white arms and black hair, where they clung for long minutes before melting.

She paid no attention to the snow, despite the fact that she was clad only in a simple, sleeveless black gown clasped at the shoulders; her face was as blank as the tower walls as she stared out at the ravens playing in the storm. They swooped and dove, at times coming so close to the tower that it

seemed inevitable they would strike it headlong-but catching themselves at the last moment, they whirled away to form battalions and divisions and engage in mock combat in the air.

At last one of their number swooped to the window and alighted, cocking a bright eye at the lady-an eye glittering with more than avian intelligence. The woman leaned forward, her attention fixed on the bird; from their expressions, an observer might almost believe that the bird was about to convey some message to the woman in black. Opening its mouth, the raven cawed hoarsely; the woman leaned back, her face growing slack, as if in some deep disappointment. Smiling sadly, she held out her hand to the great black bird; it stepped forward onto the outstretched hand and seemed to bow to her.

"I know, my dear," the lady said quietly. "Men approaching from the south-east, isn't that what you were about to tell me?"

The raven clapped its beak and cawed again, then took wing and flew across the

chamber. Coming to rest on a bust of Athena set above the door of the chamber, it turned its attention to preening itself. The woman followed it with her eyes, her hands gripping at her gown; standing, she addressed it again, her face distorted by some inner despair.

"Speak!" she whispered harshly. "Why don't you speak to me?"

The raven gave her a disinterested glance, then turned back to a careful rearranging of a few feathers strayed out place. Satisfied at last, the bird took wing from its perch above the door and darted through the window to join its fellows outside.

For a moment the woman stood, shaking, her hands grasping aimlessly; then she composed herself, a blank mask of impassivity falling over her countenance. Without another word she passed through the chamber door and began to descend the stair, going to receive her visitors.

Report on the Isle of Ravens

Chronological relation of events of July 760

Encryption: Metaphysical II

Key phrase: "I am a stranger in a strange land"

Having reached the Isle of Ravens, I expressed my desire to go ashore there. The captain pointed out that I had promised that no-one would be asked to accompany me, and asked if I really intended to visit the infamous island alone. I assured him again that completeness was the entire point of my expedition, and pointed out that the Lady of Ravens was known to send some from her island unharmed, especially scholars, and that as a wizard herself she might extend to me a professional courtesy which she was unwilling to grant to common sailors.

In retrospect, this was probably an impolitic thing to say; certainly the captain was put out, and at least one crewman spat

upon the deck and muttered something to the effect that "devilfish swim the same waters;" but it had the desired effect insofar as the captain ordered a rowboat lowered for me. I indemnified him for the declared value of the boat, as the captain declared he was unlikely to get it back (see expense report page 3, item 7), and rowed to the island.

Most of the island is inaccessible to vessels of any size, with great black stones poised to rip the hull of any boat open and highly uncertain currents, but our circumnavigation of the island had showed a white-sand beach on the southeast shore, and it proved possible for even so indifferent a seaman as I am to bring the rowboat safely to the shingle. Stepping out, I pulled the boat well above the high-water mark and set off toward the tower that we had seen at the other end of the island. The boat was immediately mobbed by ravens, who seemed determined to make it a playground; reasoning that they could hardly harm it much, and fearing that harming them might incur the wrath of their presumable mistress, I left them to their sport and set off toward the tower.

The island is covered in dense forest, a rather stunted species of oak predominating, with a great deal of mossy ground cover attesting to the frequent rainfall on the island. The undergrowth was quite dense in places, and I was forced to follow the course of several small streams as I worked my way northward. Despite the fact, previously mentioned, that we had previously determined that the island could be no more than a mile square, and despite my magnetic compass (so necessary for navigation of the Nocturnal Sea) I spent several hours lost in the forest. It was a deeply uncanny place; many times I thought I saw faces among the branches, and once I was sure I heard some fey voice call my name and laugh-a high, sweet laughter with nothing human in it. The ravens were my constant companions throughout this voyage; they almost seemed

to have the character of an audience at a (rather dull) play, watching my every action intently and commenting among themselves in their strange bird-language on my attire and actions. At length I realized that their chatter became louder and more raucous when I was making progress toward the tower (or, more accurately, when I was moving northward); accordingly, I directed my steps according to their reactions and soon found myself at the base of the tower.

After all these exertions my arrival at the foot of the tower seemed quite sudden; as I could later see from the windows of the tower itself (for I did gain entry to it, and spoke with its mistress), it is ringed in a small belt of fine green grass, then a ring of conifers, beyond which lies the rest of the forest which makes up the terrain of the rest of the island. The whole island slopes upward from the point at which I arrive to the prominence on which the tower rests; the tower seems to reach at least four hundred feet into the air (even a good estimate of its total height was surprising difficult to make, as the tower's top was shrouded in clouds), and on its northern side a sheer cliff plunges an equal distance to the sea. If there had been a squad of ravens sent to accompany (or to give surveillance over) me, here was the army from which they had been called. Whole troops, battalions, squadrons of ravens flew overhead, now in random motion, now sweeping into a great corkscrewing maelstrom with the tower at its eye, now dividing into corps which did mock battle in the air. I might have spent the rest of the afternoon (for it was now at least three o'clock) watching them; but having arrived at my desired destination, I had a more pressing interest. At the foot of the tower a great brazen double door stood ajar; reasoning that this must constitute an invitation of a sort, I went to it and entered, some dozens of ravens swooping in behind me and taking places in the great dark

chamber in which I found myself. I took little note of my surroundings, however, for there in the hall awaiting me stood that dread sorceress known only as the Lady of Ravens.

She is a small woman, a full head shorter than I, and slender; she wore a black robe, clasped at the shoulders, which left her arms bare, and her raven-black hair was caught up in combs on her head. She had the terrible beauty and the absolute deathlike stillness of a figure carved in marble; I could hardly have affirmed she was a living thing until she spoke.

"Stranger, I bid you welcome to the Isle of Ravens," she said.

Bowing as deeply as I dared, I answered, "I thank you for your welcome, m'lady. I bring you the salutations of the Fraternity of Shadows and bring you a token of our esteem." Here I brought out the book on the stories surrounding the Isle of Ravens prepared by the brothers at the Brautslava Institute and held it out; the woman in black came forward, unhurried, and took the book from me, thumbing through its pages. After a very brief perusal she looked up at me. Never have I seen such eyes-beautiful, deep, and inhuman as the sea. All gods send that I never see such again.

Would someone please tell Brother Dirac to refrain from injecting poetickal conceits into what was intended to be a scholarly work? Rhapsodizing on women's eyes, indeed. - M S

"The Fraternity of Shadows," she repeated. "I have heard a little of you, and I see you have heard something of me. I wondered at your determination; few of my visitors are nearly so eager to meet me." From another I might have taken this as a bon mot, but already I knew that jests of any kind were as foreign to this woman as they are to the sea and the storm. "Why have you come?"

"We are scholars of the Lands of Mist, m'lady," I told her. "My superiors have commissioned me to make a survey of the islands in the Nocturnal Sea and to learn as much as I can of their inhabitants."

"And what do you wish to learn of me?"

I sensed immediately that much depended on my answer to this question; under the circumstances I found it logical to hew closely to the truth. "We wish to know who you are and what you want, m'lady."

Say, rather, that he was bewitched, perhaps by the aforementioned eyes, into giving up the truth! - M S

Seeing that my response had struck a chord with her (though she did not respond immediately) I hurried to say, "We know you are a seeker after knowledge, as are we ourselves, m'lady. It may be that an association between you and our order could therefore be our mutual benefit. We have heard that you are seeking after records regarding your name and history, and therefore made bold to compile what we have learned up to this time in the book before you. We would be happy to continue to furnish you with whatever information on this point comes into our hands."

Nodding, she asked, "And what would your...order...expect in return?"

"We have been given to understand that you have acquired a rather extensive library of your own, m'lady..."

"And you wish to peruse it."

"You have understood me exactly, m'lady."

"And I suppose you would further request that those of your order who come here unwillingly be sent away again."

"So long as they offer no offense, m'lady, we would hope so much."

Here she stood in thought for several moments, then said decisively, "You spoke

of superiors. Are you authorized to negotiate on their behalf?"

At this I was somewhat put about; to commit the Fraternity to any other point on my own recognizance seemed well above my competence. Under the circumstances, I thought it wisest to say only, "I am authorized to put forward the idea of an association and what we hope to achieve from it, but a more formal reckoning should be authorized by the Fathers of my fraternity."

"Very well, then," she replied, and her voice, already deep and cold, grew deeper and colder as she spoke. "Tell them that I have heard their proposal and entertain it; if they wish to formalize it, they must send here one authorized to speak on behalf of all his order in confirming the details of such an agreement, as I can hardly negotiate with a lackey."

At this she turned away, the book in hand; I saw that I had been dismissed, and that summarily. Despite my anger at so preemptory a dismissal, I saw immediately that nothing further could be won by argument; and I dare to hope that the overall content of the interview may be of use to us. Turning, I made my way from the hall into the waning afternoon sunlight.

The forest now seemed more open and amenable to my passage, and it was only a half-hour before I came down to the shingle where I had left the boat. You can well imagine my surprise and dismay to find the boat bereft of its oars! A moment's inspection revealed that something had come to the boat, taken (as I must suppose) the oars and carried them up the beach; my close inspection (though I am hardly expert in the arts of the hunt, I have some experience in it) revealed only one set of footprints, and those hardly human, seeming to have but four toes, splayed in a way hardly consonant with human digits.

Sheer necessity compelled me to follow these tracks; I could hardly leave the island without oars. (The origin of the rustic Mordentish phrase "up a creek without a paddle" was suddenly clear to me.)

I followed the tracks into the wood and soon found the oars placed neatly at the foot of a scrub oak in an especially dark and quiet "clearing"-here an open space beneath the trees, not a meadow. I approached cautiously and took them up, then turned to find myself literally face-to-face with something. My first confused impression was of a man, then of a tree; it spoke, and it might have been a tree speaking as a man.

"You have seen the witch," it said in a dull bass voice. I could not tell if this was intended to be a question or a statement; in any case, it hardly seemed worthwhile to deny it. "Yes, I have," I said, more coolly than I felt, while I tried to get some idea of what creature it was I faced. It was formed something like a man, but taller and more crudely formed-as if someone had made a mold of a very large man and filled it with mud, then crowned it with moss and bedizened it with twigs, leaves, grass, and other detritus of the forest, but with eyes startlingly and unpleasantly like a human's; it wore nothing save its leaves and a crude necklace of twisted fibers supporting a raven's skull. Despite its size it was easy for me to see why I had not seen it there with me in the forest. Almost reflexively I asked, "Who are you?"

"I have no name," it declared. "The first men I saw called me "caliban"; you may call me so, if a name I must have. Follow me; the witch will not send her eyes where we go."

Saying this, it turned and walked into the woods. This was so intriguing an opening, and its attitude so apparently non-threatening (if it had meant to harm me, it could have struck me from behind while I was picking

up the oars), that I resolved immediately to follow it as it had commanded.

Despite its great size it was not at all easy to follow the creature; it moved near-silently, even while walking at a pace I could only match with difficulty, and its skin (or raiment) of forest-stuff blended into our surroundings almost perfectly. It favored its left side heavily, and I could see the woody "bone" of the thing through the mud which seemed to make its flesh in the lower left leg. After only a few minutes it led me to another shadowed clearing.

This clearing into which the earth-man led me was decorated with what I thought for a moment were some kind of ballons or bubbles-white shapes suspended in the air. A closer look showed that they were skulls of many hundreds or even thousands of ravens, each attached to a thin string and suspended from a tree branch. A passing breeze stirred them, rattling them against each other; so eerie a sound I hope never to hear again. The brute thing chuckled and waved me forward with one misshapen hand. "Nothing to fear for you," he said. "For her, and her servants, yes."

"You mean the ravens?" I asked.

"Them, mostly. And others," it replied. "You must come again, is that not so?"

I assented, cautiously, as I was not quite sure if I will come again myself.

"All the ones she sends away, they all come again," he said, as if to himself, and then, immediately, "Do you hate her?"

Something in the way it leaned forward, and the way it had assured me that the Lady's servants could not come where we were, told me that this question had but one correct answer, and I gave it. "Yes, I do," I told it.

It seemed to take this half (or, perhaps, quarter) truth at face value. "I made a sword," it muttered, its great hands grasping as if holding the weapon. "Like the ones you

humans carry, but for me. Big." Here it gestured with its hands to indicate something a little over half its own height-perhaps four and a half feet. "With...faces at the part that goes across. She called it "Felauragoth"; perhaps that is what it is called where you are...It hungers. I am hungry for it. Bring it back to me and I will give you this."

Here it opened one hand and showed me three huge rubies, each the size of a man's thumb from the third knuckle up.

Nodding, I said, "I will remember. I go now."

It seemed to nod as well, inclining its whole upper body. "Go now," it muttered. "When you come again bring me what is mine."

When I arrived again at the beach, oars in hand, I was slightly surprised to see that this second eerie interview had occupied no more than half an hour. I set to sea immediately and was aboard the Seahawk before nightfall, much to the befuddlement of captain and crew, who frankly avowed they were sure I would never be seen again.

Esteemed Brother Dirac seems to regard this enterprise as an opportunity for literary exploits, rather than scientific reporting of events; other than that, I can find little to criticize in his management of the affair. It will, of course, hardly be necessary to immediately inform her of any side trip we may make while there. Who among us should essay the visit to the Lady of Ravens to negotiate for access to her library? - M S

The Isle of Ravens At A Glance

Cultural Level: Classical (Tower of Flint) or none

Ecology: Full

Climate/Terrain: Temperate forest

Year of Formation: Unknown

Population: One (the Lady of Ravens); there are a few fey and many thousands of ravens.

Races: See Population.

Languages: None

Religions: None

Government: None

Ruler: None

Isle of ravens

Landscape

The Isle of Ravens is a small island, only about a mile square, set in the Nocturnal Sea. The island is heavily forested; the undergrowth is dense, and broken only by a few clearings and numerous small streams. The only sign of human habitation is the single tower that dominates the island-a tower made entirely of flint, towering some four hundred feet into the air, whose top is hidden in the almost continual shroud of fog that lies over the island. The climate is extremely damp and cool, with rain falling almost daily in all seasons, occasionally turning to snow in winter months.

Flora

The Isle of Ravens is covered in dense deciduous forest, mostly oak and elm, turning into a coniferous forest of pine trees near the foot of the Tower. The undergrowth is dense throughout the deciduous forest, clearing as one approaches the Tower, and consists of low shrubs, ivy, and mossy ground cover.

Fauna

By far the most striking fauna of the Isle of Ravens are, unsurprisingly, its ravens. There are many thousands of these large black birds, usually congregated around the Tower, but venturing to all parts of the Island and for several miles out to sea. The island is also home to a fair number of rodents and rabbits, which are occasionally killed and eaten by the ravens. Larger animals simply cannot subsist on so small an island. There are several species of largish ground-nesting birds, including turkey and pheasant; smaller birds and large, predatory birds are not to be found, probably because any which arrive at the island are immediately mobbed and killed by the ravens.

History

The Isle of Ravens has no internal history; since it has no human inhabitants other than its darklord, the Dark Powers had no need to supply a false history, and its history since it entered the Mists lies entirely with its sole inhabitant, who has never troubled herself to share it-if she has even bothered to make note of it at all. It seems reasonable to assume that the Isle of Ravens entered Ravenloft some time after the creation of the Nocturnal Sea, but even this is contradicted by much of the available evidence; sailors' first-hand accounts of shipwreck on the Isle of Ravens go back roughly fifty years

(although many of those stories reference much earlier stories of the same place), and many stories place the Isle of Ravens in the Sea of Sorrows. It might simply have been lost somewhere in the Mists before being placed there.

The Realm

Populace

The only human inhabitant of the Isle of Ravens is its nameless ruler; the ravens might be counted inhabitants, but they are more accurately considered extensions of their dark mistress. The island is, however, home to a dozen or so fey creatures summoned by the Lady of Ravens from far realms and trapped in Ravenloft. Each streamlet has its own naiad, and several dryads and mist sylphs wander the island, each claiming a jealously guarded territory of her own. The most important of these fey creatures is a massive earth-creature known only as "Caliban", who makes his home in a burrow in the southeast corner of the island.

Government

The Isle of Ravens is ruled at the whim of the nameless lady in black; the ravens and her summoned minions obey any instruction she may give them. In addition to the elemental and fey creatures currently bound to the service of the Lady of Ravens, several similar creatures have escaped her service and roam the island. These creatures are free-willed and do as they please, but all except the earth-spirit Caliban live in mortal fear of the woman in black.

Heroes

There are no native player characters from the Isle of Ravens.

Encounters

Encounters with the ubiquitous ravens are certain to occur (100% chance) during the daytime; the ravens will almost never attack directly (1% chance), but will make nuisances of themselves by stealing food and small items. However, if the adventurers tire of the ravens' games and try to kill them off, they may provoke an attack en masse. Encounters with the creatures summoned by the Lady of Ravens may occur both day and night (20% chance, checking four times per day).

D M's Appendix

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The clearing into which the earth-man led me was decorated with what I thought for a moment were some kind of balls or bubbles-white shapes suspended in the air. A closer look showed that they were skulls of many hundreds or even thousands of ravens, each attached to a thin string and suspended from a tree branch. A passing breeze stirred them, rattling them against each other; so eerie a sound I hope never to hear again. The brute thing chuckled and waved me forward with one misshapen hand. "Nothing to fear for you," he said.

"I made a sword," it muttered, its great hands grasping as if holding the weapon. "A weapon to kill her. But she took it from me, and sent it away..." Turning its head, it examined me with its startingly human eyes. "Without it I can do nothing."

Caliban

Male fey; CR 12; Large fey (8 feet tall); HD (10d6+40); hp 75; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +5; Grp +14; Atk slam +10 melee (1d12+5, slam); Full Atk 2 slams +10/+10 melee (1d12+5, slam); SA spell-like abilities, SQ DR bane, 10/cold iron, hide in plain sight, immune to steel weapons and acid, resistance to fire, cold, sonic 10, low-light vision, SR 16; Skills and Feats: Craft (weaponsmithing) +4, Hide +13, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (nature) +15, Intimidate +8, Listen +17, Move Silently +17, Spot +17, Survival +19; Craft Magical Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Great Fortitude, Track; OR 4.

AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +11; Str 20 Con 18 Dex 10 Int 14 Wis 18 Cha 8

Spell-like abilities: 3/day: entangle, pass without trace. 1/day: fear, hallucinatory terrain, invisibility, plant growth

+4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks in wooded terrain. In wooded terrain Caliban has the "Hide in plain sight" special quality.

Bane: Caliban is afraid of light; he takes 1 point of damage per minute from direct sunlight, and he will not approach anyone holding a torch or other light source, nor enter the range of a light or daylight spell unless he is forced to. If he is forced to, he acts as if dazzled (see the Player's Handbook).

Caliban was the first fey servitor summoned by the Lady of Ravens after her first coming to Ravenloft, and her first experience with the alteration of summoning magic in the Land of Mists. He did not, as both of them expected, simply disappear to the woodland from which he had been summoned after he had rendered her the

service she demanded; instead, he found himself unable to leave the mysterious island on which he found himself, and he was enraged and frightened by his captivity. The Lady of Ravens had no interest in dealing with this enigma; she ignored his demands to do something to set the situation right, and when the fey lost his patience and his fear and attacked her she used her magic to hurl him from the top of the Tower of Flint. Caliban survived the fall, but suffered terrible injuries; in his own words, he "healed crooked", and his left leg is still warped and weak. Caliban fled to the far end of the island and used his magical abilities to create a sanctuary where the ravens could not come, where he waited to regain his health and plotted his revenge.

Sailors landing on the Isle of Ravens occasionally met this dark and terrifying figure as he skulked about the island, and they referred to the deformed humanoid as "a caliban", after the familiar sports and mutants sometimes seen born to human parents in the Core and elsewhere. Mistaking this for an identification of he himself, the fey (until that time nameless, except for the secret name which no fey will willingly reveal) began to call himself Caliban. He also noted the tools, and, especially, the weapons of humans, and decided that such a thing was what he needed to take vengeance on the Lady of Ravens. Accordingly, he forged the sword now called Felauragoth (see the Book of Sacrifices for information on this infamous weapon) and attempted to kill the Lady of Ravens with it. His attempt was unsuccessful; she drove him away and took the sword, although she failed to kill him outright. The Lady of Ravens kept the sword for a time, until an opportunity arose for her to dispose of it by giving it as a "present" to a visitor before sending her back to the mainland. Caliban had poured his own soul into Felauragoth, and it had become an

extension of his person; separated from him, it must feed on life energy to activate its powers, and Caliban was greatly weakened by its loss. He believes that if he recovers it he will be able to kill the Lady of Ravens once and for all, and he will approach any visitor to the Isle of Ravens he finds in an attempt to encourage them to find it and return it to him.

Caliban appears to be a human-like creature (although much larger than an adult human) made of mud and wood and covered with moss where a human would have hair. His eyes are frightening human, but the rest of his body is a sort of parody of the human form. His left leg is obviously weak; the branches which form his "bones" can be seen clearly, and he favors that side heavily when he walks.

The Lady of Ravens

Darklord of the Isle of Ravens

Human Female Sor18: CR 20; Medium humanoid (human) (5 ft tall); HD 18d4+36; hp 81; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; BAB +8; Grp +7; Atk +9 melee (special, see below) touch; Full attack +9/+4 (special, see below) touch; SA spells, altered magic, Circe's eye, Circe's touch SQ mistress of ravens, polyglot, spell resistance 18, undying soul AL NE; SV Fort +11, Ref +10, Will +17; Str 7, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 22.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +11, Concentration +23, Diplomacy +10, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (nature) +5, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +5, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Spellcraft +16; Extend Spell, Heighten Spell, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Still Spell, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (Enchantment), Spell Penetration.

Spells: (6/8/8/7/7/7/6/5/3)

Spells known: (9/5/5/4/4/4/3/3/2/1) 0-dancing lights, detect magic, flare, ghost sounds, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, read magic, resistance; 1st-charm person, shield, sleep, summon monster I, unseen servant; 2nd-detect thoughts, invisibility, rope trick, summon monster II, summon swarm; 3rd-fly, hold person, suggestion, summon monster III; 4th-charm monster, dimension door, greater invisibility, summon monster IV; 5th-dominate person, baleful polymorph, summon monster V, telekinesis; 6th-disintegrate, geas, summon monster VI; 7th-ethereal jaunt, summon monster VII, teleport object; 8th-maze, power word stun; 9th-power word kill.

Signature possessions: robe of the archmagi (black), crystal ball

Background

The Lady of Ravens was born into a noble family on an unknown Prime Material world, only child of a degenerate line whom inbreeding and isolation had brought to the point of madness. Her home was a massive, decaying castle, most of it no longer maintained, abandoned to the ghosts of past generations and the ravages of time. She grew up alone and mostly in silence; her mother had died before she could speak and her father rarely spoke to her or to anyone else, wandering the halls of the castles in silence like his ghostly ancestors or dreaming the days away in narcotic-induced visions. The servants who fed and clothed her spoke to her but little as well; the social gulf between them forbade casual conversation, and the young girl was aloof and disdainful by nature. Her experience and her personality both taught her that those around her were not her equals, and she largely ignored them except when giving orders.

In this intense isolation her only real companions were the ravens who made their

home in the Tower of Flint, a towering structure dominating the center of the castle. She, like all of her house, was gifted with the ability to speak with the birds of the tower, and they became her friends and confidantes. Even as a child she would steal away to the tower and spend hours telling the ravens stories she had read in books and hearing their stories in return. Under such circumstances it is, perhaps, not so surprising that she came to believe that her world was literally constructed to please her whims. Her father's servants did all in their power to comply with her wishes; the ravens believed her stories implicitly; her father seemed to live in a world of his own making; and she herself knew so little of the world outside the castle that she took the fairy tales of her childhood to be unvarnished truth. She was hardly surprised at all when she discovered that she could summon playmates from nothing and dismiss them when she tired of their company, or bend the servants' will to her own, or change a disliked meal into something more palatable; she took it as natural that the world should conform to her wishes, and perhaps that faith made her strange power over the world around her all the greater.

It is also, perhaps, not so surprising that she should come to feel that she must, necessarily, have anything she desired to have or be the best at anything she desired to do.

When she was only eleven years old, she heard the beauty of one of the servant girls compared favorably to her own; determined that no one in her domain should be more beautiful than she herself, she laid a trap for the girl so exalted above herself.

Climbing among the towers and roofs of the castle was a principle pastime of the children of the castle, and the young girl she had marked for revenge was among the most agile of the climbers; one day, the Lady of

Ravens joined the games of the rest of the castle's children and challenged her rival to walk the parapet of one of the towers of the keep. The challenge was accepted and the girl walked most of the length of the parapet quickly and nimbly; but just as she reached the far end two ravens leapt into the air at her very feet, startling her so that she fell into the courtyard some fifty feet below and died. It soon became understood in the castle that any criticism of its future mistress would be punished in strange and unforeseen ways, and the servants of the castle grew eager to avoid any contact with their strange and vengeful charge.

After the death of her father when she was in her late teenage years, the Lady became even more reclusive, retiring to the Tower of Flint (which had been unoccupied, save by the ravens, for generations) to live in the company of the ravens. At first, her visits to the castle outside were only sporadic, but on one of these rare excursions through the castle that the Lady saw one of the children she had despised so long ago, now grown into a young man; he was just of her own age and of extraordinary grace and bearing, cheerful and well-spoken, admired by everyone in the castle. The Lady of Ravens, isolated from any real human contact for so long, promptly fell desperately in love with him; more and more often she left her sanctuary in the tower, hoping to catch a glimpse of him and following him covertly when she found him. Narcissistic as she was, she imagined that he must love her, and his apparent indifference she put down to shyness or reserve. Not long afterwards the young man was called away to war, and for two years the Lady of Ravens suffered, imagining her loved one would never return, or engrossed in bittersweet daydreams of him dying on some foreign field of battle with her name on his lips. When castle gossip confirmed he would return, she fainted away from nervous excitement.

Convinced he was returning to make her his, she awaited his coming with anticipation so intense that she could neither eat nor sleep for three days prior to his arrival. On the day he arrived, she took a place where she could see the returning soldiers; immediately, she picked him out, and her heart thrilled to see him well and handsome as ever. Her excitement was chilled, however, when she saw him leap from his horse and take a serving girl into his arms. Her suspicions roused, she followed the happy couple as they sought a secluded spot, where she heard them exchange vows of undying love and plan their marriage.

On hearing this, the Lady of Ravens knew her love was unrequited, and she was consumed by the desire to destroy the woman who had stolen her love and the man who had been unworthy of her. Returning to the tower, she whipped the ravens into a murderous frenzy and sent them forth to kill the young man and his lover; she watched from the tower as the deed was done, then hid herself in the depths of the tower, weeping and raging over the betrayal of her love.

When she emerged days later, she found the Tower of Flint set on an island in the middle of the sea; the surrounding castle and servants had disappeared, and she was absolutely alone. She saw the ravens of the Tower around her; she called to them, but they made no reply. Soon she learned that she could control them by an act of will, but no longer did they speak with her or tell her their stories. Stranger still, she could no longer remember her name or the name of the castle of which she had been mistress. The Mists of Ravenloft had claimed another for their own.

Current sketch

The Lady of Ravens is a small woman, no more than five feet in height and petite; her hair and eyes are black, her skin white as milk. She always dresses in a simple, sleeveless black gown clasped at both shoulders; she usually wears her long hair caught up in combs on her head.

Her features are regular and even beautiful, her expression and demeanor regal and aloof. She almost never expresses emotion in the presence of other human beings, displaying a complete and unnerving indifference to others more frightening in its way than rage or malice would be. When she does show her emotions, they are of almost superhuman intensity; her anger is terrifying, her smile entrancing, her despair unnerving. Her charisma is such that she can dominate almost any group by sheer force of personality; attacking her or even disobeying her orders is well-nigh inconceivable for most people.

She is absolutely indifferent to other humans, regarding them as nuisances or tools, depending on the circumstances. Her deep and impartial callousness is only broken when she is in the presence of the ravens of the island. She regards them as her true family and her only pleasure is to watch them at play in the air above her island. However, even this pleasure is turned has been made bitter by the curse of the Dark Powers: she can no longer communicate with the ravens in any way. The ravens are under her absolute control; she can see through their eyes and speak with their mouths-but the ravens are now a part of her, and she can no more communicate with them than she could with her hand or her eye. The Lady of Ravens is desperately isolated without the contact of the only friends she has ever accepted, and she strives ceaselessly to break the barrier between herself and the ravens and communicate with them as

friends and equals again. The Lady of Ravens believes that the key to her inability to talk with the ravens stems from having forgotten her name; since the ability to communicate with the ravens was a legacy of her ancestors, if she can re-establish her ancestry she will learn how to speak with the birds again. Whether this is true or not, no one in Ravenloft knows anything of her family, so she is destined to search in vain.

If the Lady of Ravens encounters a person or group of people whom she regards as well-read or capable of accessing unusual sources of information, she may decide to send them out to search for her name rather than transforming them to avian form. She will usually lay a geas on the individual or the party; if she feels some extra inducement is needed for a group of searchers, she may polymorph one of the group to raven form and hold him as a hostage, making an agreement to change him back if the rest of the group will search for her name for a set period of time (usually a year and a day). Despite her alignment she takes such an agreement very seriously and will hold to the letter of any bargain she makes. Past searchers have brought her a bewildering variety of tomes, parchments, and papers that she has pored over meticulously; from this library (now quite extensive) she has learned more than most about the Demiplane of Dread, most particularly its folklore and its noble families. (She has concentrated her reading on those topics since she believes they have the greatest chance of giving some clue to her identity).

In addition to the ravens, the Lady of Ravens has, at times, summoned various elemental and fey creatures to her service. Some of these creatures are still in her service; others have escaped, had their term of indenture expire, or have been forgotten, and these creatures, unable to return to their planes of origin, still wander the island. Three invisible stalkers and one grave

elemental roam the Tower of Flint, obedient to the whims of the Lady; the island is also home to several corrupted elemental kin. Mist sylphs (from the

Book of Shadows) are often encountered; corrupted naiads and dryads also lurk in the streams and forests of the island.

Even though these creatures are no longer bound by magical ties to the Lady of Ravens, they fear her and will certainly not act directly against her. In addition to these creatures, the Tower of Flint is also home to several ghosts bound to the Tower, all of whom predate the Tower's arrival in Ravenloft; they recognize the Lady of Ravens as one of their own, a rightful inhabitant, and will take a dim view of interlopers attacking her.

Combat

The Lady of Ravens has no interest in combat; if she doesn't want to deal with a group or believes they have no relevant information she will use her mass polymorph ability to turn them into ravens, only leaving one of their number in human form and sending him to warn others away from her island. If her mass polymorph is not completely effective and the rest of her opponents continue to attack she will teleport away and send her summoned minions to deal with the player characters, possibly engaging in combat from long distance with spell abilities. If actually forced to engage in hand-to-hand combat she will employ a final ability: the ability to transform others into ravens by touch.

Mental Prowess: The Lady of Ravens may cast any of her spells normally requiring a material component or arcane focus without the component or focus. Her force of personality overrides the need of the material to channel arcane energies.

Circe's Eye: Once per day the Lady of Ravens may cause any and all persons she

can see to make a Will saving throw at DC 25 or be transformed into a raven. There is no maximum number that can be affected, and she may elect to have the spell affect some people and not others. If she is unaware of a person (for example, due to invisibility) this ability does not affect that person. Persons transformed to ravens in this fashion instantly fall under the control of the Lady of Ravens.

Circe's Touch: By making a successful touch attack against an opponent (using Dexterity rather than Strength to modify the attack roll), the Lady of Ravens can transform the person touched into a raven under her control; the person transformed instantly falls under her control. A Will saving throw at DC 25 will prevent the transformation. This ability can be used at will.

Mistress of Ravens: All ravens within the domain of the Isle of Ravens are constantly under the control of the Lady of Ravens; she can see through their eyes, speak with their mouths, and control their bodies as if they were a part of her own. She usually chooses not to assert this ability, preferring to see the ravens "free", but if angered she can cause the ravens to attack anyone she wishes. Ravens that are familiars or dread familiars get a Will save at DC (15 + number of days spent within the domain) to resist this compulsion; if successful, they remain under their master's control. This save must be repeated every day at dawn; if failed, the raven leaves its former master, and the master suffers the experience point penalty of having dismissed his familiar. A raven animal companion gets no save and deserts its former master immediately.

Polyglot: The Lady of Ravens understands any language spoken in her presence and can read any writing she sees. When she speaks to others, she always seems to be speaking in the hearer's native tongue.

(This ability is probably a part of her curse, since it prevents anyone conversing with her from getting a clue as to her place of origin.)

Undying Soul: If slain the Lady of Ravens will disappear; one week later at sunrise one of the ravens circling the tower will swoop to the floor of the highest room in the tower and transform into a petite woman with black hair and eyes and white skin. During that week the border will remain open and the Lady's summoned minions will be under no authority; they may attack, flee, or ignore the party as circumstances warrant.

Closing the Border

When the Lady of Ravens closes the borders of her domain, the ravens will flock to the domain border, about one mile out to sea, and attack without mercy any creature crossing the border of the domain. There are so many of the ravens that no effective defense can be made; players caught in the frenzied attack of the birds will take 5-20 hit points of damage each round unless they turn back.

The Tower of Flint

This strange edifice-the only sign of human habitation anywhere in the domain-is a 400-foot spire of dark-gray flint, roughly sixty feet across at its base and narrowing to twenty feet across at its top (which is usually obscured by fog and invisible to viewers at ground level). The entire tower is apparently made of a single piece of stone; there is no sign of individual stones or mortar anywhere in it. Enormous bronze double doors form the only entry into the tower; a wide set of stairs rises some twenty feet from ground level to these doors.

The ground floor is an enormous entry chamber, spanning the entire floor, with a forty-foot ceiling. Numerous small windows set at the top of the chamber illuminate the

whole room; at the end of the room opposite the double doors there is a dias, on which stands a great stone throne. If the Lady of Ravens is (relatively) kindly disposed toward her visitors she will wait to meet them in the center of this entry chamber; if she is not so disposed, she takes her seat at the great throne instead. There are numerous ravens in this room at all times. A circular stair of stone winds upward behind the dias and throne to the second and higher floors; this same stair leads eventually to the top of the tower.

Below this room (accessible only by a trapdoor set in the dias in front of the throne) is a metal ladder, rungs set directly into the stone, which leads to what was once a dungeon below ground level. Half of this space is given to cells, the other half to a torture chamber, its equipment uncared-for and rusting. A 3rd magnitude ghost and a grave elemental make their homes on this level and attack anyone other than the Lady of Ravens who comes here (they do not coordinate their attacks, as each is totally unaware of the other's presence). The ghost (now nameless) is unable to speak and can only be put to rest by dismantling the rack on which it was killed; unfortunately, it considers the torture room its territory and attacks intruders with blind vehemence.

Above the main entry hall are two floors of what might loosely be termed "guest" rooms; on the infrequent occasions when the Lady of Ravens receives visitors whom she doesn't transform into ravens immediately, she instructs them to spend the night here. The possessions of past occupants may well be found here.

Above these two floors lies the "library", where the Lady of Ravens spends much of her time perusing the many books, scrolls, maps, charts, and so forth brought to her by those whom she has geased to do so. Visitors are strictly forbidden from visiting

this floor or higher floors. This room is generally watched over by an invisible stalker, a 1st magnitude ghost now known only as "the librarian", and a 3rd magnitude ghost known as "the moneychanger", who sits at a table only he can see counting non-existent coins.

If the librarian is elsewhere (she can wander freely throughout the Tower) the invisible stalker will probably ignore intruders, and the moneychanger certainly will, but if either the librarian or the Lady of Ravens is present they will encourage both to attack. The Lady of Ravens tolerates the librarian, probably because she performs a useful function (left to herself the Lady of Ravens would simply put everything on the floor), and ignores the moneychanger; if not attacked or provoked into action by the librarian or the Lady of Ravens, he is perfectly happy to ignore everything except his imagined money.

Above the library are two floors of what might loosely be termed "storerooms", where the Lady of Ravens put things that are not books. (It was on this level that she kept Felauragoth, for example, before arranging for it to be taken to the Core.) When a ship is wrecked on the Isle of Ravens she often has her servants (especially the invisible stalkers) go to it and ransack it; anything she thinks interesting, pretty, or valuable is put here. This floor is patrolled by two invisible stalkers at all times, unless there is a disturbance in the library, in which case the invisible stalkers normally here have been instructed to assist their fellow; a 2nd magnitude ghost called "the walker" appears here sporadically, parades the length of the tower (walking directly through the walls as necessary) several times, then disappears. He will not attack unless accosted or interrupted in his promenade.

The Lady of Ravens herself makes her apartments above this level, furnishing her

room with those things she likes best of the detritus the sea brings her. Her most prized possession, a crystal ball, is here, and she spends much of her time observing far lands through it.

Above this level are two empty floors, then an empty set of rooms occupied (if such a word is applicable) by a 4th magnitude ghost referred to as "the weeper"; why she weeps is no longer known, but she takes very great exception to having her mourning interrupted and will savagely attack anyone but the Lady of Ravens whom she finds on this level.

The tower terminates at last in a crenellated viewing platform; on the very rare days when the weather permits it, a person with a telescope can see every domain bordering the Nocturnal Sea from this point (only as a long line at the horizon, of course).

Adventure Hooks

- A survivor from the Nova Vaasan ship Drakohart makes his way to shore, bearing the tale of his comrades' transformation at the hands of the Lady of Ravens. Soon afterward, the PCs are approached by a member of the Order of Guardians. The Order has identified an item from the ship's manifest as possibly being the Rift Spanner, and the Order wants very, very badly indeed to lay their hands on it before the Lady of Ravens finds out what it is and uses it, and before other artifact-seekers such as the Kargat and the Fraternity of Shadows can get it. The party must penetrate the Tower of Flint and retrieve the artifact, remaining undetected by the Lady's thousands of servitors and the inhabitants of the Tower of Flint.

Quoth the Raven

- A Darkonese warship, the Indomitable, foundered on the Isle of Ravens, and was reported lost with all hands. Azalin Rex has learned that all members of the crew were almost certainly transformed into ravens by the Lady; unfortunately, one of them was a very highly placed Kargat agent with information vital to Azalin's most recent scheme to take his vengeance on his tormentors. Azalin summons the player characters and deputizes them to negotiate the release of the agent; the PCs must then negotiate successfully for the Kargat's release and meet the price the Lady of Ravens will demand for this boon.
- The player characters have come into possession of Felauragoth (see the Book of Sacrifices), and the evil sword has decided that it wishes to return to its original master. By dreams and visions the player character holding it finds himself directed to take ship to the Isle and meet with Caliban, who will attempt to recruit the wielder and any who come with him to make a final end of the Lady of Ravens.

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, featuring small arrows pointing outwards at the top and bottom.

Story of the Fallen Queen

Stars of Dark and Light Merge

By M istshadow

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Murillia

In a different reality, perhaps another dimension, there is a beautiful world spinning in the star-spangled ether. And on this world grow trees that are the most magnificent mortal eyes have ever beheld. These trees grow huge and tall and live to great age. Their bark is silvery-white and their branches arc and twist into fantastic shapes. Come spring their rosy-violet blooms give forth a scent that can only be described as heavenly. In summer their gracefully formed leaves are rich green with undersides almost as silvery as the bark.

With the breath of autumn, the leaves on the young trees turn burgundy, but the leaves on the older trees turn to bright gold. These trees are called murillium, and is it any wonder that they are the symbol of an immortal race, the fairest this world has ever seen?

This race came from another realm and would eventually go back, but in the long centuries before their departure they would guide the young races of this beautiful world. They were tall and pale, with silvery or golden hair, their ears coming to delicate points at the tip and we know them now as elves. The elves brought music, art and knowledge to the young races. These gifts were gladly accepted and the elves were held in respect, even awe, for centuries uncounted. Thus the elves joyously lived in forests among the murillium untroubled by evil under the guidance of their great queen, the wisest and most resplendent creature the world would ever know. So great was her wisdom that none could deny her words, so kind her heart that she relieved the sufferings of the weak and strong, and so lovely was she that mortal eyes laid upon her were blinded.

But such could not last forever and, of course, it did not. A dark thing from a twisted reality known even by the wisest only as the Far Realms, crept almost unknown into the world. This horrific entity, said to be more powerful than any being in all creation, wanted nothing less than to tear the beautiful young world from its allotted place among the stars and drag it into its own dimension. The elves did not know what had happened, but they sensed its presence and grew afraid, as did many among the young races, who were disturbed by dreams of the darkest sort. Many went to the great queen to ask her what to do.

"We must all become as one to fight this creature", she told the representatives of the races of the world. "For it is powerful beyond measure, but it cannot stand against the unity of us all." And all agreed that this was what needed to be done.

But the Dark One had not been idle while the races divined the ordeal set upon them and came to their collective decision. Its essence was even then infecting the world like a terrible disease, twisting trees and flowers into grotesque mockeries and driving the wild animals insane as it slowly drained away their life forces. Each day its touch spread and each day more of the world was changed forever, spawning things that would haunt the darkest, wildest places for many long years afterward. But the greatest forces of the world banded together to banish the Dark One back to the horrible realm from whence it had come. And they almost succeeded.

The battles were costly; many mages died during the great banishment ritual and many soldiers died fighting the poor creatures the Dark One had corrupted and dominated. And yet, the Dark One still could not be wholly banished from the world, leaving behind a piece of itself that the mages, at least those who were left, bound into a gem.

This gem was brought before the elven queen. What was to be done with it? If it were destroyed, the Dark One's essence would be freed upon the world once more. Throw it into the sea? Hide it forever in the most secret parts of the world?

The queen consulted the heavens and pondered long. There would come a time, she foretold, when the stars would arrange themselves perfectly and the gem, now called the Black Star, could be destroyed and the essence of the Dark One dispersed. But that time was far away in the distant future. Until the time was right it must be hidden and protected. So her counsel was to take the Black Star to a place deep in the earth, build a fortress with the most powerful wards they could make and guard it carefully. But, alas, that was not to be.

There was a powerful wizard among the mortal races who had bravely battled the Dark One. Perhaps it was the Dark One's touch that had corrupted his mind. Perhaps it was the grief and trauma of the short but vicious war. Or perhaps it was simply that he lusted for power. None can say for certain now, for it was long ago. When the Black Star was in transport, he struck, killing the guards and stealing it away. And the wizard was never found again, but it was soon obvious to all that his power was not enough, for the Black Star overcame his will.

The elves were weary, weary with healing the world of the Dark One's twisting, but nevertheless, they led the fight against this new threat. The wizard's minions assaulted the forests of the elves and the settlements of the young races, killing even the family of the wizard himself at his behest. Happily, his minions were too few in number to triumph and they were defeated. The wizard destroyed himself attempting to consume the Black Star's power. And the Black Star vanished. None knew what became of it until over two millennia had passed.

The time was near, the time when the Dark One could be banished forever, and the elves were hunting the Black Star. Yet it was a sickly mortal girl who found it, for it was buried under her house, troubling her sleep with nightmares too awful to bring into words. Finally, she dug it up. She knew not what this thing was but she decided to take it to the elves, who were known across the world still for their power and wisdom.

She traveled long and avoided many dangers, enduring hunger, cold and thirst, until at last she saw what made her heart quicken with joy ? the murillium trees of the elven forest. Staggering now, her body almost broken, she came into the forest and begged the elves to help her. The elves, some weeping for her, brought the girl before their queen.

The girl, eyes cast down to avoid being blinded by the elven queen's splendor, took the Black Star from her pack. Its touch charred her tender flesh and she cried with pain, but she nonetheless held it up in her trembling hands to the queen. "Take this thing of evil", she implored, "for I can endure it no more."

The queen's graceful hand closed upon the Black Star and the girl collapsed at her feet in death. The elves began to sing a mournful song for the girl, and this song can still be heard at twilight in the forest of the lovely murillium trees even now. But everything about the forest was soon to change, for the elven queen knew that she was powerful enough to conquer the Black Star. And she was right.

The queen had grown powerful beyond the imaginings of even the wise elves in the centuries since the time of the Dark One, yet her heart was careworn and far colder than it had once been. The queen chose the path of evil to gain power such as none of her kind had ever known. She intended to go back into the realm that had birthed the elves so

long ago and she would rule it for all eternity. Yet that would not come to pass.

The forest twisted that night, becoming the embodiment of nightmares. The leaves of the trees danced without wind and whispered foul things in the darkness. The beasts of the woodland were simple creatures no longer, now wanting only to kill and torment other living things. Some of the elves were frightened, but all too many had eyes that had turned black and proclaimed that their queen had defeated the Dark One. The uncorrupted elves knew they had not only the twisted forest to fear but also their own kin. Seeking to understand what had happened and hoping to undo it, they came before their queen for what would be the last time.

Merely the appearance of the queen was shocking. Her silver hair had turned the gray of iron, her sapphire-blue eyes were now black, and her fine, cream-colored skin had become the clammy white of the sick. "The Dark One shall trouble this world no more", she said reassuringly. But then the other elves and the creatures of the nightmare forest attacked while the queen watched with a grim smile. The ground fog rose and thickened unnoticed, until as the battle was being fought, it engulfed the forest. The battle ceased, for all sensed that something unexpected and terrible had occurred. The elven woodland, which would be known as Murillia after the beauty of the magnificent trees, had been claimed for the Realm of Dread.

The Land

Murillia is a small domain, only about 23 miles wide and 25 miles long, floating somewhere in the Misty Border. Unfortunately, a mistway connects it to Sithicus and the inhabitants of Murillia have taken advantage of it.

Murillia itself is the heart of an ancient elven forest. Elven houses were built onto the largest and oldest trees are all over this part of the forest. Once beautiful, these great tree-houses have turned black, the leafy vines of traditional elven design having twisted to form mocking faces and other horrific patterns. Even worse are the trees themselves. Most of the trees have transformed into varieties of dangerous plants such as evil treants and quickwood. One in four of these trees are telepathic, able to use detect thoughts as a spell-like ability at will; they can also speak to the minds of people within 3 feet, but rarely do. A few might have even more dangerous powers. All of the sentient plants are evil.

The forms of plant life that might possibly be found in this terrible wood are too numerous to list here but any such plant from a temperate woodland climate can be freely used. One in six of all dangerous plants of species that are normally mindless become sentient in Murillia, gaining an Intelligence score of 8 to 10 and the telepathic abilities outlined above.

Animals in this land are unnatural creatures. All can be assumed to have an Intelligence score of 8 to 10 and an evil alignment. The animal's basic natures can be used as a guide to their ethical outlook. Wolves, for instance, are hierarchal pack predators and are therefore lawful. All animals have the ability to communicate among their own kind and many (about 10%) are learning to speak with other creatures, including the dangerous trees. One in ten of these animals are telepathic in the same manner as the trees.

Generally, one can expect an encounter with an evil animal, dangerous tree or other form of plant life (such as crawling ivy) up to three times per hour while on Murillia. In addition, one can expect an encounter with a vampire-elf once per day.

The very center of the forest is clear of the twisted plant and animal life and vampire-elves, in a circle about 75 yards in diameter. This place, formerly the home of the elven queen, is sacred as long as Teizala's spirit haunts the area (see below). The fallen queen may not enter nor may her powers reach in this area. Here one can see the glory of the elven forest as it was, as the murillium trees are apparently healthy. At night the tiny lamps hung from the branches light up of their own accord and the forest appears to twinkle like the stars in the sky above. At twilight a moving, sorrowful song begins that lasts for an hour ? the lament for the girl, Teizala, who brought the Black Star to the queen. Characters who hear this song are usually moved to tears and inspired by her bravery and determination, intuitively understanding the song even if they do not speak elvish. The lament should be treated as a bardic music effect by a 12th level bard; which particular effect at that time is the DM's choice.

There is also a sacred spring in the center of the forest. It can wash away the negative effects of any powers the fallen queen has used against the subject, such as her telepathic ability to inflict nightmares. Only Grimbough the treant can use the waters of the spring, however; without his aid the spring is just a spring.

It seems that no creature can use the Mists to escape Murillia; apparently, the Mists can bring beings to the desecrated elven wood but cannot (or will not) take anyone out of the domain. (Presumably the Vistani would be an exception, but it is hard to imagine what could bring them to so dangerous a domain.) Fortunately, the Mournful Song (see sidebar) is the only known mistway that normally transports others to Murillia. Spells, magic items or supernatural effects that could possibly take one to another domain fail, for unknown reasons.

Cultural Level

The elves had achieved a Medieval (7) culture in general, but their knowledge of the medical arts and sciences such as astronomy should be treated as Renaissance (9).

The Folk

All of the folk left in Murillia are vampire-elves; these are the elves who had a tiny thread of corruption in their hearts and were transformed even as their queen was. However, the vampire-elves are not truly undead and thus do not gain the special immunities and vulnerabilities of undead ? they do , however, retain the special powers and vulnerabilities unique to elven vampires (see *Denizens of Darkness* for details). Rough estimates put the population of vampire-elves at 200, but no one can say for sure.

Murillian vampire-elves are able to propagate themselves, but it is rare that the conditions could be met for them to do so. They can only change another elf into a vampire by feeding on an elf who has been called upon to make no less than three powers checks in the past or failed one. After that, the elf to be changed must be taken into Murillia itself and remain there for two nights and one day. During the second night the elf falls into a deep sleep from which he or she cannot be awakened and becomes a vampire as dawn breaks on the second day. Murillian vampire-elves cannot transform half-elves into vampires though.

If the DM has chosen Darkon as the domain the Murillian elves have fled to, the ethnic tension between the Darkonian and Murillian elves is unlikely to be as high as depicted here; the Darkonian elves were much more similar to the Murillian elves to begin with.

The surviving uncorrupted elves fled into Sithicus during the first few days after the domain's emergence in the Realm of Dread. Fortunately, the influx of the Murillian population has not been large enough to cause a strain on the resources of the land; Murillian elves number only a little over hundred altogether. Many of the Murillian elves are practitioners of magic, mostly sorcerers, with a few bards and wizards, but there are also a small number of rangers among them.

To the Murillians, it was obvious that the Sithican elves were laboring under a curse that dampened their spirits and even, alarmingly enough, made them mortal ? a few of the Murillians are older than a Sithican elf's lifespan is ever known to have been. Of course, the Murillians, having lost their homes and families, cast into an accursed and unnatural land, aren't any better off. The immigrant Murillian elves, their spirits unhampered by curses, outshine the Sithican elves in almost every way, and although many of the Sithicans resent them, some of the younger Sithican elves revere them. As one might expect, there are rumors of vampire-elves pretending to be surviving Murillians to spy on the elves, serving their queen's horrible plans for them all, so a number of Sithicans are paranoid about their new neighbors. Only time will tell how relations between the two elven races pans out; with their knowledge, skills and wisdom, the Murillians are trying to make themselves useful in their new homeland, yet they live under the shadow of their corrupted queen and kin.

Native Player Characters

Native Murillian elves are those who fled into Sithicus. They should be treated as elves in the PHB. Their hair is silver or gold, their eyes usually violet or blue. They tend to dress in bell-sleeved long robes,

embroidered with their traditional leafed vines motif and characters from their language. They begin the game able to speak their own tongue and the Sithican language.

Unlike elves in some worlds, they are truly immortal; when they reach the end of their lifespan, they would normally return their realm of origin, but as they are cut off from that realm now, they will instead dwindle in power. Treat a Murillian elf past the end of his or her lifespan as a having lost all elven racial abilities except for their martial weapons proficiencies, favored class and skill check bonuses, but their lifespan should be increased by 300 years. Otherwise they are treated as elves as outlined in the Ravenloft Campaign Setting and other rulebooks.

Personalities of Note

Selanithûr Veleriand (7th level sorcerer, CG) is the great-great nephew of the queen. He has vowed her destruction one day but acknowledges that he lacks the kind of power required. In fact, all of the Murillian elves put together do not equal her power now. Nevertheless, he remains firm in his vow, continuing his research into her possible means of destruction. He will probably leave Sithicus in a few years as he needs to seek out powerful magic and allies for help.

Narimeinna Hioniel (9th level wizard, 1st level Loremaster, NG) is the granddaughter of the queen. She has promised aid to Selanithûr, but is still in shock at the events that led to Murillia being taken by the Mists. They are quite protective of each other, as they are literally the only direct kin either has left alive. Eventually, she will likely join Selanithûr as she recovers emotionally.

The girl who brought the Black Star to the queen, **Teizala of the Bradolmar** (NG), now haunts the uncorrupted center of the forest in Murillia as a 2nd magnitude ghost. She only

has the power to manifest during the hour of twilight as the song is sung to mourn her death. At all other times she is incorporeal and helpless. Teizala's haunting cannot be ended until the queen is destroyed. Teizala's special powers and weaknesses are not detailed here; this should be left for the DM to tailor to his or her preferences.

Grimbough, an ancient treant (NG), lives in the sacred center of the forest. He gets his name from the large knots over his eyes that make him appear to be perpetually scowling. He can use the waters of the sacred spring to heal those afflicted by the fallen queen's power, as noted above, and will usually do so unless Teizala has a negative reaction to the characters. He can also control the murillium trees in the center of the forest, causing them to entangle others whenever he desires. Grimbough is able to leave the sacred center of the wood, but rarely does so and never goes far even when he does, as the queen senses it instantly and directs her minions to attack him.

The Law

The only law in Murillia is the command of the queen. She has the power to telepathically command any of the corrupted inhabitants of the domain to do her bidding at any time, and these commands are not broken if the creature leaves Murillia (but she cannot issue new commands until the subject returns to her domain). Luckily, the creatures of Murillia are apparently unable to use the Mists to escape the domain due to the land's unique curse to carry out her desires elsewhere at present. Sithicus is their only way out and the Sithicans are doing their best to blockade the borders between the two domains.

Darklord of Murillia

*His form had yet not lost
All his original brightness, not appear'd
Less than arch-angel ruined, and th' excess
Of glory obscured.*

Milton, Paradise Lost

Celēanthiel Aigremia

Female aberration 18th level wizard/ 7th level Loremaster: CR 23; Size M humanoid (5 ft tall); HD 25d4+25; hp 90; Init +2 (Dex); Spd. 30 ft; AC 16 (touch 13, flat-footed 12, +4 robes); Atk. +12/+7 (touch attacks, dagger); SA Spells, telepathy, corrupt & command; SQ Mental defense, planar senses, undying soul, owl dread familiar ("Lagimil"); AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +24; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 19, Wis 20, Cha 19.

Skills & Feats: Bluff + 10, Concentration +15, Craft (Alchemy) + 12, Decipher Script + 18, Diplomacy +16, Heal +9, Intimidate + 8, Knowledge (Arcana) + 19, Knowledge (History/ Elven) + 16, Knowledge (Planes) + 16, Perform (Sing) + 9, Sense Motive +15, Spellcraft + 21, Use Magic Device +14; Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Enlarge Spell, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Counterspell, Maximize Spell, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Knowledge (arcana), Spell Penetration, Widen Spell

Secrets of Lore (Loremaster class ability): The lore of true stamina (+1 Fort), Applicable knowledge (Enlarge Spell), Newfound arcana (bonus 1st level spell), More newfound arcana (bonus 2nd level spell)

* The queen could replace two of the feats given above with two epic-level feats of the DM's choice.

Languages: Celēanthiel speaks only her native elvish, but can usually communicate with any sentient creature with spells or her telepathy.

Wizard Spells Per Day: 4/6/6/5/5/4/4/4/4/4. Base DC = 14 + spell's level.

Spellbook: The fallen queen knows almost all spells from the PHB and several that are unique to her world. Her spellbook is thus left to the DM's discretion.

Signature Possessions: At present, only her silver robes (+4 AC), masterwork dagger and her spellbook. As shown above by her feats, however, she is capable of manufacturing magic items.

The fallen queen looks much the same as she appeared before the elves on the night Murillia was drawn into the Realm of Dread. Her long, wavy hair is iron gray, her eyes all black, her lips pale and her skin a pallid, sickly white. Yet the blinding beauty she had before her transformation still shows in her graceful form, fair face and melodious voice.

Background

Celēanthiel Aigremia was born in whatever faraway land (or dimension) the elves came from and was already old even by elven standards when they settled in the world of the murillium trees. Virtually none of the Murillian elves can remember a time when she was not their queen. Even now, the elves cannot conceive the notion that she was ever truly evil; all believe that the Black Star somehow corrupted her mind. But this isn't true.

The elven queen was once as kind-hearted as her people thought her to be, but her patience with them and the world wore thin over the long centuries. Her advisors and family thought that she was simply weary with care. There was some truth to that, but she had come to resent her people's dependence on her. She began to care less about her own people and began to resent her obligations. Then the Dark One came.

Like any sane creature, the queen was utterly appalled at the evil of the Dark One and the terrible forms it twisted the life of the world into. Her ardor to see the Dark One defeated and banished was as real as it appeared to be. Nevertheless, once the idea of such great power had entered her mind it wouldn't go away. Although her advice to hide the Black Star is an underground fortress was true and sound, even then the thought occurred to her that its guardians would freely allow her to pass. She was actually somewhat relieved when the Black Star was stolen and couldn't be found.

The resentment she had felt before grew over the years after the Dark One's banishment, for there was much to do and most of the world was literally depending on her. She carried out her appointed duties with all of her wisdom and grace, and if she was not quite as compassionate as in the time before the Dark One, few noticed. Those who did notice, such as her immediate family and advisors, attributed it to weariness. Yet no one would ever suggest that the queen step down. Who could ever take her place? She was very nearly divine in their eyes and no one else could ever be qualified to replace her, even temporarily.

Even the queen herself cannot say when she really decided to attempt to absorb the Black Star's power, just as the mortal wizard had before. The thought was always there. The wizard had simply not been powerful and strong-willed enough. But she was much

more strong-willed than any mortal wizard and had centuries to attain the power she needed. Even so, the temptation of the Dark One grew.

So her power grew as she studied ancient lore and pursued her studies in magic. As the time drew near she sent the elves out to search for the Black Star, knowing that she had only the one chance; if she failed it would be a disaster, as the door would be open for the Dark One to return.

And then Teizala came, bringing the Black Star with her. How it wound up buried under the house of this girl's family no one will probably ever know—save perhaps the queen herself. Teizala was born in that house and the Black Star affected her body even while she was in her mother's womb. She was sick and frail from birth and remained so throughout her life, yet it could not corrupt her spirit, as she was a truly good person. Once free of her mortal shell, she perceived the queen's true purpose and could only watch helplessly as the queen betrayed everyone and everything.

Current Sketch

All darklords are cursed with imprisonment in their own domains, but this is a far greater curse upon Celéanthiel Aigremia than most others. She had intended to go back to the realm from whence the elves came and subjugate that world to her will. As she had served them for millennium upon millennium, she thought, now they would serve her. Rulership of the core of the elven forest is a very pale shadow of the future she foresaw before the Mists took her.

Once the initial rage at her situation had passed, she calmed and began to think. Clearly whatever entities had imprisoned her in this accursed land were more powerful than she. Well, centuries before she had not been powerful to conquer the Black Star, but that changed.

Perhaps she could become powerful enough to break free of this unnatural copy of the elven forest and take revenge on the powers that abducted her. Now she constantly seeks a means of escape and knowledge of the powers who have imprisoned her in Ravenloft so to as take her revenge, accumulating as much power as she possibly can in the meantime. Woe to anyone with magical power she think she can use or with knowledge of the demiplane who should fall into her clutches. Since the elves were the most magically powerful race on her world, they seems like the best place to start as far as Celēanthiel is concerned. Thus, she hopes to gain both magic and knowledge about the nature of Ravenloft from the elves and her plans do not involve asking politely.

The queen found that neither she nor her minions could return to the sacred center of the forest as soon as they left it. Many of her books and several magic items belonging to her and other elves are still there. Needless to say, she wants all that back. She might attempt to bargain with characters who come into her domain to retrieve her possessions, but she is untrustworthy at best. However, she will automatically regard powerful wizards and sorcerers as enemies, as everything can be learned about her in her former home, including her studies of the Black Star and the rite she used to absorb its power.

Although she senses that her bond to Murillia is stronger now than ever, Celēanthiel still doesn't quite understand the what it is to be a darklord, nor does she know that there are other darklords in this new world. She considers her current situation purely in terms of a spell ? thus, she thinks there must be a way to break it. She hasn't yet realized that in order for her bond to the land to be so strong means that she herself has must have been subtly altered.

In addition, although she was powerful and strong-willed enough to absorb that little piece of the Dark One, its essence was so alien that what has happened to the queen isn't merely a matter of corruption. She truly isn't an elf anymore (thus her aberration creature type despite her humanoid form) and as time passes her body will mutate. After a millennium has passed it is doubtful that she will be recognizable as having once been an elf. She feels these incipient changes, but believes she can undo the effects with her powerful magic as they occur. She is wrong.

The elves once adored her, even though they weren't actually subservient to her in any way. The vampire-elves and even the beasts of the forest are completely hers now to control, but each and every one of them despises her. This irks her although she tells herself it doesn't matter. Deep down, however, it does matter; despite how much she resented the burden of rulership (without many of the benefits rulers of other races would take for granted) her people loved her, and she is accustomed to being loved and honored. Strangely, it seems that the trees still adore her; no one knows why. Thus, she spends most of her time among the trees, singing the ancient elvish songs to them, simply because she likes the trees better than the vampire-elves or the animals.... but that doesn't mean much so long as there are still many of them. Only if, for whatever reason, the sentient trees became few in number would she move to defend them.

Combat

The fallen queen fights in much the manner of wizards everywhere. She prefers to summon minions to fight for her as she cast spells. However, she has a few special powers gained from her absorption of the Dark One's essence.

Telepathy: The queen maintains telepathic contact at all times with the corrupted sentient plants of Murillia. This is like a constant detect thoughts that she can also use to speak to the subject. She may initiate telepathic contact with any of the corrupted animals or vampire-elves at any time as a free action. All of the corrupted animals, plants and vampire-elves will obey her commands unhesitatingly. She may also do the same with any sentient creature who enters her domain, but this requires her to maintain her concentration; anything that blocks mental effects, such as a ring of mind shielding, protects a non-corrupted creature from the queen's telepathy.

She can also use her telepathic powers in a far more insidious manner if she wishes. She can implant horrible nightmares in the mind of a sleeping creature in her domain with whom she is able to establish mental contact. These nightmares invoke a horror save when the target awakes. The queen can control the power of the nightmare (mild to severe) as she wishes.

If she establishes mental contact she can also cast mind-affecting spells through it on the target (only). However, this is not as efficient as having the target within the spell's normal range, lowering the save DC by 4. Thus, she would only do this against mentally weaker opponents.

The queen cannot use her telepathy on any creature within the sacred center of the forest.

Corrupt & Command: The queen can corrupt any plant or animal brought into Murillia, even familiars or a paladin's special mount. The corrupted creature becomes the same as the other plants and animals of the domain, with the plant changing species as necessary -- however, a plant that was intelligent will not change into a non-intelligent species.

The change takes 24 hours for normal animals and plants. For familiars, special mounts or other more magical animals the change requires 2d4 days. Once corrupted, the creatures falls under command the same as all the other corrupted creatures of Murillia and remain so unless the effect is reversed with powerful magic (wish or miracle).

The queen may invoke this power as a full-round action. The targets must be within 10 yards of her. She cannot use this power on the target(s) if they are within the sacred center of the forest.

Planar Powers: The Dark One had great power as a plane-traveling entity and the queen has inherited some of this through her absorption of the Black Star, but many of the possible applications of this ability has been stunted by the Dark Powers. The queen can unerringly sense any outsider within her domain, pinpointing its location within 5 yards (even within the sacred center of the forest). She also has the equivalent of the Ethereal Empathy feat. As a full-round action she can see into the Border Ethereal as long as she concentrates. As a full-attack action that provokes an attack of opportunity she can also pull a creature in the Border Ethereal into Ravenloft and fight them normally.

Mental Defense: The queen has SR 20 against any and all mind-affecting abilities and spells. She can feel this protection and currently believes herself immune to such powers. However, this is a temporary weakness; should her SR even come close to failing to protect her she will "wise up" and realize that she is not totally invulnerable in that regard after all.

Undying Soul: This is a power granted to her as darklord of Murillia. Should Celēanthiel die, her spirit flies out to possess one of the vampire-elves in Murillia.

If, for whatever reason, there are none left alive in the domain, those very few who have migrated to elsewhere in Ravenloft are immediately overcome with the compulsion to return to the domain as quickly as they possibly can. The vampire-elf, instantly or as soon as he or she crosses the border into the domain, falls into a deep sleep from he or she cannot be awakened. After a full day has passed, at the next sunrise, the vampire-elf becomes the fallen queen, who remembers everything up to the point of her death. The only way to permanently kill the queen is to slay every vampire-elf from and within Murillia and then the queen herself. When this happens, the domain returns to the world from whence it came, the plants and animals changing back to their normal forms within the hour.

Closing the Borders

When Celēanthiel Aigremia closes the borders, the trees at the domain border interlock their branches; the undergrowth grows impossibly dense and studded with thorns and briars. Breaking through this bramble does 1d4 hit points of damage per round, and the plants regrow so quickly that trying to clear a path by cutting through them or destroying them with fire or magic is impossible.

Adventure Hooks

- Selanithûr has come across the knowledge that a great deal of magic remains in his great-great aunt's home untouched. Perhaps others would like to join him in attempting to acquiring some of it? Once actually in Murillia, he can simply teleport to the center of the forest. Should be easy, shouldn't it? But what if it's a trap?
- The incursion the Sithicans feared has come. A force of corrupted plants and animals, led by a few vampire-elves, has made it across the border heading for.... Nedaargard Keep? What are they looking for there? Perhaps the Black Rose left behind something Azrael Dak cannot put to use himself. Whatever it is, it can't be good.
- Vampire-elves, posing as Murillians, commit evil acts in Sithicus and attempt to frame the most important surviving Murillians. As it turns out, they are acting under their queen's orders. Why does she fear these particular elves? And can the Murillians be cleared of these terrible crimes as ethnic tensions build?
- Many of the Murillian elves are reporting that they've lately been suffering awful nightmares related to the queen. Could it be that she has found a way to slowly corrupt or attack them from within Murillia? If so, how is she able to do this? And how can it be stopped?
- Several Sithican elves are found dead, nailed to trees with Murillian symbols carved into their flesh. Many blame the Murillian elves, but, not surprisingly, they claim this to be the work of the vampire-elves. Who is committing these terrible murders and why? Perhaps some Murillian elves were affected by the same corruption as their kin, just much more slowly and now some are going mad. On the other hand, maybe they are being framed. If the Murillians are right, why are the vampire-elves doing this to some of the Sithicans? Regardless, who is next?
- Rumors are circulating about Azrael Dak and Murillia. Some say that he is using Murillia itself to punish rebellious elves; once captured, they are bound, gagged and then deposited just inside the twisted forest. Is this true? If so, the revolt he fears may come soon, so why is he doing this? Others say he is only doing this to Murillian elves, so they aren't worried. Another rumor claims that he has made a

Quoth the Raven

deal with the vampire-elves, allowing them into Sithicus, and this piece of hearsay is backed up by witnesses. If so, what does he get out of his side of the bargain?



Children of the Night

Ermintrude

By David Gibson aka Jester

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"The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

- Unknown, often wrongly attributed to Samuel Johnson

There is a much-repeated wisdom that proper attitudes, beliefs and spirit alone do not earn one's place in heaven. The implication of this being that it is good deeds that truly matter, a variant on "the ends justify the means". Does this then mean someone performing noble acts for the most base and selfish of reasons is, in the end, a noble being?

Ermintrude is an annis, a hag, long-drawn to violence and battle even before the Change. Once an adventurer crusading for treasure and blood she retired only to become what she once fought. She embraced her new life only to find it disappointing and lacking. Turning back to her long abandoned career she became a warrior anew, this time for the glory and praise of those she rescues. Hidden by illusions and disguises she has become an unlikely champion in the Mists.

Nevertheless, the question remains for others to answer: is the road to heaven paved with good accomplishments?

Ermintrude

Ermintrude, female annis Ftr3: CR 9; Size L (7 ft., 5 in. tall); HD 7d8+3d10+20; hp 78; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 23; BAB +8, Grapple +19; Atk +14 melee (1d6+6, claw or 1d8+6 longsword), or +9 ranged (1d6+6, short bow); Full Atk +14 melee (1d6+6, 2 claws or 1d8+6 longsword) and +9 melee (1d3+3 bite), +9 ranged (1d6+6 short bow or spells); Space/Reach 10ft./10ft.; SA rake, improved grab, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 2/ bludgeoning, SR 19; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 22, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 11.

Skills: Appraise +4, Bluff +4, Climb +8, Disguise +4, Handle Animal +2, Hide +7, Listen +8, Move Silently +1, Ride +4, Sense Motive +2, Spot +6.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot.

Languages: Vaasi, Balok.

Signature Possessions: Chain Shirt, short bow. Ermintrude also has an +1 Icy Burst longsword she calls "Winterglow". It is forged of a pale blue steel and is always foggy with condensation. The magical steel seems immune to rust and corrosion. Winterglow was stolen from the armoury of a small Nova Vassan lord a few decades prior, back when Ermintrude was a member of her Covey. Benedikte used to disdainfully refer to the weapon as "Ermintrude teat". Ermintrude never found this very amusing.

Appearance

Ermintrude has the midnight blue skin typical of the annis and the matching black hair and fangs. Her nose is short and crooked curving sharply to the left, a remnant of a long-ago battle that has grown more pronounced over the years. Her lower jaw noticeably protrudes over her upper with her fangs curving up past her lips. She keeps her hair cropped short, ending just above her shoulders, often tying it back with a leather strip or length of cord.

Broad shouldered and wide she is a massive imposing figure that is shorter than the average annis in height, but this is more than rivaled by her width. Ermintrude is far from bulky however, being quite muscular and fit. She dresses much as she did in life favoring light armours in addition to the garb of her native Nova Vassa.

With her ability to mask herself with illusions, she appears much as she did before the Change. Her hair becomes a dark brown and her skin dark and well tanned. She is not attractive but is strong and charismatic due to her confidence and presence.

Her nose is straightened to what it was prior; although Ermintrude has been known to slip-up when distracted or weary allow her illusion to reflect the crooked reality. Ermintrude is still quite stocky, she always has been, and her illusion reflects this muscular stature. Her illusionary garb is a cleaned and tidied version of her true clothes, a worn chain shirt and a style of tunic and pants not worn for two centuries. It is antiquated but still quite functional.

Background

Born into a lower-class family almost two hundred and fifty years ago the hag now known as Ermintrude was the unremarkable daughter of an unremarkable family on the outskirts of Bergovitsa, Nova Vassa. Her birth name has long since been forgotten, if it was ever remembered or recorded at all. Early in her teenage years Ermintrude grew unsatisfied with her life and followed a local group of adventurers out into the world.

The group of heroes, known as the Riders Four, traveled across Nova Vassa righting wrongs and fighting evil where they came across it. Ermintrude, then going by the name Etrude, trained with the group as a warrior eventually replacing one of the fallen members. She fought for the pleasure of battle, rejoiced in the spilling of blood and defeat of her enemies. After a heroic career notable primarily for her survival, Etrude retired to a small farm to live out the rest of her days. Until she began to change...

Aided by another hag, of whom Etrude never speaks, she became what she is now. Rapidly discovering her new powers Ermintrude delighted in her unnatural talents and abilities quickly terrorizing the local village. She began a year-long swath of chaos and destruction once again throwing herself into battle as she had in her prime.

She reveled in the strength and durability her new body gave her. She quickly became more dark and twisted than any evil thing she had ever dispatched. And yet, something was missing from her life, there was a empty place in her heart that longed to be filled.

To her it was obvious what was missing, she lacked the camaraderie of her past life, someone to share her experiences with. Ermintrude quickly found more of her kind and the trio formed a Covey. Believing herself complete, the new group launched itself into schemes and plots terrorizing the local neighbourhood. Their machinations were grand, as were the results. They grew in reputation and power, with none more feared than Ermintrude herself. Eventually adventurers, the sort of champion Ermintrude had once been, were hired by the local beleaguered farmers and sent to slay the witches.

The battle of wits and skill lasted months as the covey plotted and schemed against the heroes sending minions and distractions against their foes. All the while, the hags prepared for their victory, their long thought-of plan was being put into motion. After an extended period of cat-an-mouse games, the weary heroes finally tracked down the crones and made their final attempt at ending the madness. They were slaughtered. The hags were vicious and relentless, but so were the heroes. Even the dark women marveled and the resolve of the doomed warriors as they fell one by one. They did not surrender or beg for mercy but fought to the last, ending the hag's grand scheme. Alive but foiled, the women were denied even their vengeance but it was what happened next that truly shook Ermintrude to the core.

The hags journeyed in disguise to the local village, the one that had hired the heroes. They expected sad faces of the ruined and dismayed, people who had lost their one hope. However, this was not the case.

The villagers celebrated the heroes and their sacrifice, praised the names of the warriors who gave their lives to save their humble town. It was then Ermintrude realized what was truly lacking in her life.

She missed the adulation, the praise, the respect, the feeling she had accomplished something remarkable. Her years as a creature had reminded her life was cheap and easy to take, even a mangy wolf had the power to take down a man. Surely she, a skilled warrior and hag, was more powerful than a wolf! In her one and a half centuries as a hag, she had been feared but never once praised.

The very next day she gathered together her most treasured possessions, clad herself in her old attire, and left Nova Vassa heading south towards Hazlan. She told the people of the first village she past her name was Etrude, the granddaughter of the hero by that name. With that, Ermintrude began her third life, one as a warrior for light.

Personality

Ermintrude is not a true hero, she is selfish, vain, and acts only to satisfy her own dark desires. She longs for carnage and violence and find it, through the slaughter of beasts and monsters. She wishes to be praised and adored for her deeds so she helps villages with their problems. She is quite evil. And yet she saves lives.

Ermintrude is a martial creature, she thinks aggressively and directly. Guile, while apart of the hag, is not in her nature so she must work hard at deception. She prefers to face problems and conflict head on, striking directly at the source of any discomfort or problems and almost never thinks of a non-violent solution to a problem. She is blunt, crude and insensitive towards others.

Combat

Ermintrude prefers to use her natural weaponry in combat. However, to maintain her ruse as a human, she regularly fights with a longsword. After five decades masquerading as a hero she instinctively draws her weapon rather than attacking with her talons.

In addition to her martial skills Ermintrude also possesses the standard powers for a annis of her age and can cast the following spells an unlimited number of times each day. She typically uses these abilities to complement her already formidable martial talents.

Spell-like abilities: At will - *disguise self*, *magic fang*, *obscuring mist*, *true strike*.

These abilities function as if cast by an 10th level Sorcerer.

For Fame and Glory!

This adventure is designed for 4-6 heroes of levels 6-8th level but can be modified to accommodate other numbers and levels. It takes place in the small wooded town of Kevalla in Nova Vassa, although it could easily be moved elsewhere. In the adventure Ermintrude unwitting crosses over into her former homeland and becomes embroiled in a scheme to discredit or kill her. If it is moved elsewhere, Ermintrude's background can be modified accordingly.

Adventure Background

The former member of Ermintrude's covey have waited long for her return. They have tracked her for years through her exploits and their spies. Both of these pointed to her heading in the direction of Nova Vassa and Kevalla. There they hope to spring a trap which will destroy the traitor.

They arrived in the town a few weeks before Ermintrude and prepared for her arrival. They know the annis is playing the role of hero now and will not pass up an opportunity to help some people and inflate her ego, so they have created the legend of a convenient monster to be destroyed. Meanwhile, they have sent word of the village in need across the region hoping to draw in other adventurers whom they hope to pit against their former covey member.

Ermintrude, in her role as the female warrior Etrude, arrived in town a few days prior to the start of the adventure, thus she has a few days head start on the players in investigating the matter. At the start of the adventure she is unaware of any trap and simply believes this to be the matter of another town besieged by the forces of darkness.

The Adventure Begins

A Dungeon Master can start 'For Fame and Glory' in a number of ways. The players could hear the rumours of a beast in the woods around Kevalla and head there to investigate, either for the promises of a reward or the simple good of saving the town. They could be called over directly by someone they know who lives in the village, or be sent there by someone in authority. Or they could stumble into the matter while journeying elsewhere. At some point they will hear rumours of the Beast of Kevalla, possibly in another town or from a traveler on the road to the town.

'Ello, fellow travelers.!

Ye'd best be careful on this road, may wish to take the fork on the left up ahead. Why? Well, if ye take the right fork ye'll heed straight to Kevalla, and ye dinnae want that, no sirree.

What's that? Ye have nae heard about Kevalla? Well now, that's a different matter entirely. The town be cursed, a fell beast roams the woods round the town. Been eatin' up the livestock for a couple o' weeks now. Just over a fortnight, really. Nasty business that is. Not much left of the poor wee beasts after it's been done with 'em. The whole area's abuzz with whispers and talk on the matter, and the village has a pool growing, set aside for whomever can bring them the heed o' the creature.

It has nae taken a man yet, but that'll be only a matter o' time. And once it gets a taste for human flesh, well, there'll be no stoppin' it...

This speech provides several important clue for later, that it hasn't killed anything but livestock and that it has been in the area for over two weeks, but otherwise the boxed text can be customized however the DM wishes.

Following the exchange above the player have an opportunity to go directly to town or to explore the woods around the village first. If they choose the first option move onto the next section, if they choose the latter skip ahead to A Covey of Two.

The Town of Kevalla

Kevalla is assumed to be a small hamlet of no more than two-hundred men, women and children but it could easily be a large village of just under a thousand people or as small as fifty individuals.

The village is deep into the disliked Graenskov, also know as the Border-woods, the small expanse of the forest north of the border with Hazlan. The town survives on the little traffic that follows the small roads from Sly-Var into Nova Vassa. The road itself is only paved for a mile or so in either direction from the town, becoming a heavy dirt road beyond those points famous for

becoming muddy and impassable after heavy rainfalls. The road divides the town in two as it cuts right through the middle with the town square being an extended paved areas in the center of town that fills with wagons and travelers at night. There are no real fortifications around Kevalla save a single ancient moss-covered wall around the north semi-circle of the town that just a couple of feet from the earth resembling a curved jaw full of teeth.

At the moment most travelers have begun to avoid the town so the square is almost empty of wagons save a couple tucked close to the neighbouring buildings. The inn is equally empty and the innkeeper is most happy to have more business, currently there are only the three traders staying and a solo adventurer (Ermintrude).

Here the heroes can learn the following information from talking to the people of Kevalla:

- The beast has been killing sheep and other livestock for just over two weeks.
- It has mutilated the animals it killed, disemboweling them in a hideous fashion.
- All attempts to track it have failed.
- No one had caught a clear glimpse of the monster.
- No one has been killed yet by the beast.
- Only one person has responded to the call for aid, a hero by the name of Etrude, she arrived two days ago and has been investigating the matter.

If the players seek her out Ermintrude will share much of what she knows but remain hesitant to work with the heroes. She does not want to share the credit with others. When they meet Ermintrude knows little more than the local villagers

The heroes are free to roam about the town and may talk to the local citizens. Some residents of note include:

Anton Poul, the Mayor Ari4: He is suffering quietly for the loss of his son (stillborn). An aged with a young bride, the family line now dies with him. Quiet and withdrawn over the stress of the town's troubles, but puts on a brave face as best he can.

Kaj Bjørn, town butcher/drunken, Exp2: An angry man bitter over his wasted life, he drinks away his anger and disappointment of a lifetime without accomplishment. He bottles away his rage presenting a façade of stoicism.

Werner Trygve, Innkeeper, Com2: A loud salesman fond of large words and adjectives. Brews the local drink in the back of his inn/tavern but also has been known to spike the odd drink to lift a purse or bed a woman.

Rolf Flemming, local Shepard, Com2: A superstitious man and devout worshiper of the Lawgiver. Told the town that it was their wicked ways that brought the beast upon them, until some of his flock were slaughtered. Now he believes it is his fault while doubting his beliefs.

Kai Aslaug, housewife and gossip, Com3: A fast and energetic talker who uses as frequent hand gestures and quick motions. She claims to know everything that happens in the town but is always disappointed by the lack of activity. She is secretly thrilled by the attention the beast is causing.

Stina Else, young barmaid, Com1: Stina is a plain young girl of limited skills, talents and a clumsy nature who only found employment through the pity of Trygve. Stina is envious of Vibeke (see below) and the girl's good looks, and has stirred up trouble with her before. It was Stina that started the rumours that Benedikte was a hag. Ironically, this is both true and exactly what the woman wanted.

A Covey of Two

The heroes can come across the other two members of the covey in one of three ways. They may decide to search the area around the town before or after they enter Kevalla, they may stumble across the small cottage while hunting for the beast or they may become lost and happen upon them while starting off the adventure in the first place.

The two hags moved here a number of years ago replacing the previous occupants and taking their place. When the players reach the cottage read the following text:

You reach a small clearing set off to the side of a game trail, nestled near the edge is a small wooden cottage built of the local timber. The structure looks old and bent, as if the frame of the old wood were barely holding the roof and walls. The entire building seems to bend and sag with age and the movement of the shutters in the wind resembles a wheezing breath.

Despite this the area seems peaceful and quiet, there is a constant chirping of birds noticeable in the distance that only seems to grow louder as you near the cottage. A small garden bursts with life and you spot all manner of flowers and plants set into the many fenced-off areas and pots.

Benedikte and Vibeke are disguised respectively as an elderly blind woman and her young daughter. Benedikte is tall and skinny to the point of emaciation, her eyes are a pale milky white and her head moves almost randomly about responding to stray sounds. Vibeke is young and pretty with her medium-length curly brown hair braided tightly and tied back but steadfastly refuses to remain neat. She is fond of giggling and enjoys teasing men, unaware yet of her feminine wiles.

In reality, the pair are hideous crones not that different from Ermintrude. Their skin is sickly green shade and a mass of wrinkles and warts while their hair is a tangled mass of vines and stray twigs. Benedikte is quite blind although her other senses are remarkable astute more making up for this handicap. Over the years, she has grown adept at feigning weakness. She is skinny and thin with long boney limbs and a hunched appearance. Vibeke is shorter and of average weight but equally hideous. Her giggle is a vicious cackle that cuts through the nerves and induces shivers and terror. Her hair is a mass of tangles and briars from her treks through the woods, more than one person has pricked themselves on her locks, which she blames on hairpins.

Their home is carefully and deliberately masked with as many illusions and disguises they can muster. What cannot be concealed is tucked away in the cellar. The aura of corruption surrounding Benedikte scares away all natural animal life so they cloak themselves in illusionary birdcalls with sound of the occasional deer or other small, friendly animal (magical or summoned animals are immune, as are familiars).

The inside of the cottage resembles the outside with a feeling of age and weariness. The shelves sag in the middle under the burden of herbs, books and assorted knickknacks. The floor is uneven and the boards creek loudly. There is an ever-present scent of mildew kept in check by constant cleaning and maintenance.

The two have the typical stats of green hags as presented in the Monster Manual except as follows:

Benedikte (Green hag, Wiz3): This hag is blind but possesses the Tremorsense (Ex) ability within 60 feet and cannot be blinded or affected by any spells with a visual component. However, she can be dazed by loud sounds and vibrations such as that from

an explosion. When dazed she suffers a -2 to all skill checks and saves and enemies are treated as having one-half concealment. She has a DC of 5 plus the damage done or the spell save DC -whichever is higher.

Spell-like abilities: At will - ghost sound, invisibility, ray of enfeeblement, silent image, tongues. These abilities function as if cast by a 12th level Sorcerer.

Vibeke (Green hag Rgr3): The youngest of the three hags Vibeke has no special powers being almost entirely subservient to Benedikte. She is fond of laying traps around the cottage, typically brambles and thorns coated with poisons. Her favorite poisons causes paralysis or a special toxin of her own devising that induces blindness (Vibeke's Poison, Injury DC 18, Initial Damage: 0, Secondary Damage: Blindness, 650gp. Blindness lasts 1d3 days.). She is fond of aiding those struck blind and convincing them she means to nurse them back to health. Those left in her care seldom recover or return changed and subservient. If questioned on the blindness she will claim the unknown hag's aura can corrupt nearby food which inflicts the condition.

Spell-like abilities: At will - dancing lights, disguise self, ghost sound, invisibility, pass without trace, tongues, water breathing. These abilities function as if cast by a 12th level Sorcerer.

Vibeke will be the first of the pair the heroes encounter, possibly running out to greet the travelers and questioning if they are lost or need assistance. She will answer their questions and invite them inside to meet "her mother" who "knows the answers to everything!"

Benedikte will welcome the heroes into her humble home, put on a kettle of tea, and then warn them to leave the area. For their own safety of course, for there is a beast that roams the woods and other dangers to be aware of.

Benedikte speaks of a hag, a foul corruption of nature that has stalked the area for a number of years. She believes this hag is behind the beast and must be destroyed. If pressed for evidence Benedikte will off up as much evidence as she can pointing to the stillbirth of the mayor's child and how an entire batch of cider spoiled a couple months back. Vibeke will claim that the villagers have harassed her grandmother several times, claiming she was a witch or dark sorcerer when really she is but an old woman who has done much living. These 'facts' are all true strengthening the tale and can be confirmed in the town, however it was Benedikte who spoiled the cider and caused the still-birth.

On the Trail of the Beast

At some point, the heroes will decide to hunt the beast in the woods and examine the scene of the crime. Despite guards and dogs around the livestock the beast managed to slip past and kill one animal every 2-3 days. So far only six animals have been killed, four pigs and two sheep. The animals have been eviscerated with none of the flesh eaten. Careful examination of the bodies will show that not all the organs are present and that some have been removed! One organ has been 'harvested' from each of the slaughtered animals: the eyes, stomach, lungs, tongue and liver. This should only be discovered through careful investigation and the right line of questioning.

If this information is mentioned to or in front of Etrude she will recognise the significance as a hag ritual, or rather an exaggerated version of one. The expression on her face may be noticeable to any careful observers but she will say nothing. If questioned about the possibility of hag magic and the missing organs as regents she will quickly dismiss the possibility of a hag.

At each of the scenes there are no unusual tracks or trails. No paw prints or heavyset indentations. A skilled woodsman or tracker might be able to spot that the only footprints around the animals belong to human, no surprise given the number of people who have walked over the ground both before and after the incidents.

The players are free to set traps, position themselves on stakeout duty or produce some manner of bait. In the end, it will likely make little difference. The next night the beast breaks from its pattern and kills a man.

The victim is a local farmer, an unremarkable fellow by the name of Peder Mikkell whose only mistake was venturing out in the late evening. His screams echo through the village and will probably be heard by both the heroes and Ermintrude. They will find the body in similar condition to the animals only missing its heart.

Heroes who positioned themselves in town or have some means of quickly reaching the screams might catch a glimpse of the beast as it runs away. Others will have to follow the fresh trail. Suspiciously, the trail it leaves is much easier to follow than the previous ones so even groups without a woodsman should be able to track the beast. Depending on the head start the beast has it may be necessary for the party to find some way of cutting it off or slowing it down, but eventually they will catch some glimpse of it:

The moonlight catches the shape of the creature as it spills through the sagging branches of the trees. In the dim illumination only a rough outline of the hulking brute is visible.

The beast is roughly human in appearance only much larger, well over eight feet tall with rough bestial features and short cropped hair. It's disproportionately long arms dangle low to the ground and it

hunches over with a low stoop drawing more attention to its large head and its twisted features. Muscles unmistakably bulge from under its skin as the powerful creature shuffles quickly forward.

As you move closer it slows and stumbles about, the heavy canvas sack clenched tight in its hand bounces against a tree as the creature catches its breath from the chase.

The beast is actually a traveler ensnared and bewitched by the hags, they shattered his mind slowly over a period of weeks breaking him to obey their commands. Through their wicked potions they increased his size and strength at the cost of what little intelligence and willpower he had left. He is now their servant doing simple tasks for them and guarding their hut from predators. It fights aggressively and without mercy but also clumsily, it is not used to its new frame. It crashes almost mindlessly through the trees if enraged often blocking out the moonlight with its bulk. If incapacitated or slain the spells expire and the body reverts to what it once was. For simplicity's sake, the stats of an ogre have be used:

Ogre, large giant Ftr4: CR 7; Size L (8 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 4d8+4d10+15; hp 55; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 8, flat-footed 16; BAB +7, Grapple +17; Atk +13 melee (2d8+8 greatclub); Full Atk +13/+7 melee (2d8+8 greatclub); Space/Reach 10ft./10ft.; SA-; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +10 Ref +1 Will +1 Str 22, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 5, Wis 8, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +10, Listen +4, Spot +4, Swim +6.

Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Inside the creature's sack is a large carving knife caked with blood and a human heart. If the dead body of the former-beast is examined it quickly reveals there is more going on. It bears the scars of much torture with barely healed wounds criss-crossing its back. The figure is also thin, clearly starved, and is missing the pinkie finger on the left hand. There is nothing of value on the corpse save a single large quartz broach, the oval white stone is set into a white gold backing. This stone is not a hag's eye but is designed to resemble one; its destruction will do nothing.

If Etrude was not with the party when the creature engages them in combat she soon will be, not missing an opportunity for battle. She leaps into the fray with reckless abandon striking without mercy. It has been too long since she smelt blood in the air and is anxious to take a life.

By the Pricking of my Thumb

At this point the heroes are on their own when it comes to unraveling the matter. They may believe a hag is involved and try to determine whom in the village fits the profile. This relies strictly on the players and Dungeon Master to be done effectively.

The players may even believe that the parts are being harvested to complete some dread ritual and think that another attack is imminent. Indeed, if there seems to be no progress in their plans Benedikte may send Vibeke out in an attempt to inspire more terror. Vibeke may also attempt to slip into Etrude's quarters with the severed pinkie, now tied to the end of a length of cord, and plant it somewhere in the room in an attempt to suggest the warrior was using the digit to control the beast. Whether the young hag is noticed by the innkeeper or the staff is up to the DM.

If a player attempts to deduce what ritual or purpose the organs or severed finger serve they can attempt to research the matter or draw upon prior experience. This requires a Knowledge (Arcana) check, DC 20. If they succeed, they learn the truth: the items serve no purpose - though they may not believe this. If they fail the roll by less than 6 the Dungeon Master is encouraged to create all manner of frightening rituals the hag could be preparing for with the ingredients. This should also create a sense of urgency to finding the hag.

Presumably, the players will uncover Etrude's true nature with enough digging. If confronted she will deny if there are witnesses present but admit the truth if in private. She will trust in her skills to defend herself if cornered. In the end it lies on the heroes to decide if they believe her or not and if they find the real hags or not. Ermintrude will gladly take the opportunity to kill her former covey members.

Recurrence

If Ermintrude survives, she will continue on her quest to destroy evil and gain personal glory. If she is unmasked as a hag in public she will adopt a new façade and seek revenge on those who ruined her reputation.

If the covey members survive they will continue to plague Ermintrude if she lives or the players if they injured or offended them. If neither occurs, they will simply remain content with harassing the people of Kevalla.

Ermintrude's future development is also in the hands of the Dungeon Master. How long can she play the good-guy before she becomes bored and drifts back into evil? Or can she recapture her lost humanity and perhaps even become a real hero? Or worse, will her yearning for glory grow into a mad desire for worship?



The Umbra

Fathers of the Fraternity

By Nathan of the Fraternity
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The Fathers of the Fraternity of Shadows are known collectively as the Umbra; this is also their most formal individual title, although it is rarely used except on ceremonial occasions. They are among the most powerful and well-informed beings in the Land of Mists, and only one or two of the oldest and best-informed darklords understand the workings of the Demiplane better than they do. The goal of the Fathers of the Fraternity is to wrest control of the Demiplane from the Dark Powers, recreating the Demiplane in their own image, and they may be closer to their goal than anyone-even they themselves-would have thought possible.

The Fathers of the Fraternity are in regular communication with each other, although they meet only rarely. Lord de Castele and Malcolm Scottmater use their crystal balls as communications hubs for their colleagues.

Formally, all of the Fathers are equal in status, but practically speaking Count von Lovenhorst and Lord de Castele manage the affairs of the Fraternity; they have the most interest in doing so and the most diplomatic aptitude.

Tarnos Shadowcloak is the oldest member of the Umbra and is actually one of the original five members of the Fraternity of Shadows; he is respected and even feared by the other Fathers of the Fraternity, but he emerges from seclusion only rarely. Malcolm Scott is content to manipulate events from behind the scenes, and Jan Mikkelson is still too newly risen to his office to have acquired the power and influence of the other Fathers.

Knowledge (Ravenloft) and the Fraternity of Shadows Prestige Class

According to the Ravenloft Player's Handbook, Knowledge (Ravenloft) is considered a cross-class skill for all classes, and Knowledge (Ravenloft) and Knowledge (the planes) are considered identical skills for Ravenloft natives. Because advancing in this skill is the point of the Fraternity of Shadows prestige class, Knowledge (Ravenloft) is considered a class skill for this class.

To enter the Fraternity of Shadows prestige class the character must spend 8 skill points (4 ranks) on the Knowledge (Ravenloft) skill; this should be considered an "official" erratum to the requirements for the prestige class given in the Undead Sea Scrolls 2002 and Quoth the Raven X.

Dread Possibility: Lazarus Risen

Lazarus Ikonnas (rank four ghost, Ill7/FoS10/Arm5), founder of the Fraternity of Shadows, was a man of tremendous will, and death itself was not sufficient to prevent him from pursuing his goal of deciphering the nature of the Demiplane of Dread. After his execution by Azalin Rex he rose as a ghost and fled Darkon, eventually making himself known to the surviving Fathers of the Fraternity (Tarnos Shadowcloak and Count Wilhelm von Lovenhorst) and directing their efforts to regroup the Fraternity. He now "haunts" Schloss Lovenhorst in southeastern Lamordia, acting as a "Father in Shadow" to the other Umbra. His existence is a closely guarded secret; anyone learning of it will certainly be hunted down and killed by the Fathers of the Fraternity as soon as possible, before it can be divulged to others.

List of the Fathers of the Fraternity

- Lazarus Ikonnas: Founder of the Fraternity of Shadows; killed in Azalin's purge of the Fraternity after the first Dead Man's Campaign, 700.
- Jerubaa Iskway: Original member of the Fraternity; disappeared while exploring Castle Tristennoira and presumed dead, 678.
- Mercator Melanchthon: Original member of the Fraternity; lost in the Mists, 652.
- Adame Nicht: Original member of the Fraternity; killed by the lich Phantom's Bane, 680.
- Tarnos Senma, now called Tarnos Shadowcloak: Original member of the Fraternity.
- Feynman Ikonnas: Nephew of Lazarus Ikonnas. Raised to the Umbra in 652; killed in Azalin's purge of the Fraternity after the first Dead Man's Campaign, 700.
- Wilhelm von Lovenhorst: Raised to the Umbra in 679.
- Mazer Tam: Raised to the Umbra in 680; killed in Azalin's purge of the Fraternity after the first Dead Man's Campaign, 700.
- John Diamante: Raised to the Umbra in 704; disappeared in 709.
- Joachim ApMorte: Raised to the Umbra in 704; lost in the Mists, 722.
- Hammar Hammarson: Raised to the Umbra in 704; found murdered in his home, 736.
- Helvaar Whitehand: Raised to the Umbra in 710. Lost in the Mists, 752. (Possibly killed in Pharazia; a mage answering to his description was crucified by Diamabel in 755).
- Balfour de Casteelle: Raised to the Umbra in 724.
- Malcolm Scott: Raised to the Umbra in 736.
- Jan Mikkelson: Raised to the Umbra in 754.

The U mbra

Tarnos Shadowcloak

Male human Ill10/FoS10; CR 20; Medium humanoid (human); HD 20d4+40; hp 92; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +10; Grap +10; Atk +12 melee (1d4+2, +2 dagger of wounding); Full attack +12 melee (1d4+2, +2 dagger of wounding); SA spells; SQ slippery mind, shadowform, shadowmaster; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +11, Will +21; Str 11 Dex 12 Con 14 Int 28 Wis 13 Cha 8. OR 3.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +25, Knowledge (arcana) +32, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +17, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +17, Knowledge (history) +19, Knowledge (nature) +24, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +32, Knowledge (religion) +19, Listen +13, Search +14, Spellcraft +34, Spot +13; alertness, extend spell, forge ring, improved familiar, quicken spell, scribe scroll, silent spell, spell focus (illusion), greater spell focus (illusion), spell mastery (detect magic, silent image, blur, greater invisibility, major image, shadow conjuration), spell mastery (dominate person, programmed image, project image, shadow walk, screen, greater shadow evocation, shades, weird), still spell, widen spell.

Spells/day (one additional spell from Illusion, no spells from Necromancy or Transmutation): 4+1/7+1/6+1/6+1/6+1/5+1/5+1/5+1/5+1

Spellbook: All non-necromancy, non-transmutation EXCEPT gate, wish

Signature Possessions: ring of the Fraternity of Shadows, ring of regeneration, cloak of resistance +4, bracers of armor +4, headband of intellect +2, dagger +2 of wounding, rod of quicken metamagic, (scroll of wish used to raise Intelligence by 1 point)

Dread Possibility: The Fate of John Diamante

Several former Fathers have been lost in the Mists, never been heard from again-but rumors persist that the famous scholar and courtier John Diamante (Ill6/FoS10) still lives in a far-off island of the Mists. These rumors are accurate; after only a few years as a Father of the Fraternity John Diamante tempted Fate once too often and was drawn into a domain of his own-an island in the Mists known as Scarebraech (SCAR-eh-braych).

He himself is a mysterious and ominous figure called the White Harlequin by the inhabitants of the domain, which is a vehemently-in fact, a violently-backward place, the land itself having been devastated in the recent past by the abuse of arcane magic. In reaction, the inhabitants of the land have launched an inquisition intended to kill all mages and destroy all writing; Diamante spends his days in a largely frustrated attempt to preserve the awesome magical knowledge once available in that place. He is extremely eager to regain contact with the Fraternity, as he believes certain books in his possession could be instrumental to the Fraternity's quest to dominate the Demiplane, but up to the present his attempts have been in vain. He remains undaunted, however, and would certainly be happy to richly reward any adventurers brave-or foolish-enough to make sure some of his recently compiled library reaches the Core.

Terror track: Shadowmaster

Shadowcloak: Tarnos may cloak himself in shadows once per day, as the spell invisibility. Treat this ability as a supernatural ability. Tarnos' skin has taken on an unsightly mottled pattern, as if from heavy bruising.

Shadowsight: Darkvision 60 feet. Tarnos' eyes are pitch black, without white or iris. This disfigurement cannot be hidden by any magical means of disguise (whether illusion, polymorph, or whatever). This gives him OR +1.

Shadowstep: As the shadow jump ability of a shadowdancer. Tarnos may travel up to 40 feet per day in this manner, with the same limitations as the shadowdancer ability. The mottling below Tarnos' skin slowly coalesces and disperses, giving him OR +2 (total OR rating 3).

Shadowfriend: Tarnos' dread familiar is a shadow (see the monster manual for statistics on the base creature). This creature is a creation of shadowstuff, rather than being undead, and has the (Native Outsider, Mists) creature type, rather than the Undead creature type. Exposure to direct sunlight is extremely painful to Tarnos and causes 1 point of subdual damage per minute of exposure.

Tarnos Shadowcloak is of medium height and rather thin; at first glance he would probably be taken for a man in his mid-thirties. He has sharp features, a long, straight nose, and a pinched, thin-lipped mouth, but by far his most striking feature are his eyes: they are pitch black, without white or iris. He wears smoked glasses at all times to cover this deformity, but someone talking to him face to face will note them almost immediately. His skin is an unhealthy pallid grey, and black marks like old bruises continually coalesce and separate beneath his skin. He wears his straight black hair to his shoulders. Generally speaking he wears a broad-brimmed black hat, a long black cloak, and a dark gray shirt and pantaloons. He wears the sigil ring of the Fraternity on the middle finger of his right hand and a heavy silver ring (a ring of regeneration) on the thumb of the same hand.

Background

Most of Tarnos Shadowcloak's background is obscure, partly because he is very, very old and partly because he has destroyed much of the documentation relating to it. Fraternity records indicate that he was the youngest of the five original members of the Fraternity. Probably because of his youth he was initially one of the less-influential members of the Umbra; in addition, Shadowcloak was then and is now more interested in philosophy than in administration, and he has never been deeply involved in managing Fraternity affairs. However, his philosophical and practical contributions have been very important; for example, he was among the first to study the Plane of Shadow, and the rings which identify each member of the Fraternity are forged to specifications originally laid down by Shadowcloak. (He still makes a fair number of them himself, preparing them to receive enchantment and laying preliminary spells which are then made specific to the ring's bearer in the Fraternity's initiation ceremony.)

Current sketch

Tarnos Shadowcloak has spent the last several years in Vechor, using the unusual mutability of that land as a setting for a long-running series of experiments into the natural of reality and how it may be influenced by mental effort. In pursuit of this goal he occasionally visits Easan the Mad, whom he seems to consider a sort of kindred spirit. He attend official Fraternity functions only sporadically, but always seems to know of what goes on at them.

Even within the rarefied atmosphere of the Fraternity, Tarnos Shadowcloak is considered not only a brilliant thinker, but a profound one. Unfortunately, he is also intensely paranoid, and he devotes a

considerable portion of his intellectual energy to engineering the destruction of anyone whom he believes threatens him. A passing remark which would go unnoticed by anyone else may provide fodder for years of analysis by the Shadowcloak, ending in the death of the "plotter" long after he has forgotten what he said. Many of the most important members of the Fraternity of Shadows owe their success to the patronage of the Shadowcloak, but many others of his erstwhile proteges have made one fatal misstep and been destroyed by their former mentor.

Unlike most members of the Fraternity, Tarnos Shadowcloak has no particular respect for the traditions of the Fraternity; after all, they all post-date him. He has been known to support the admission of bards, non-humans, and even women, provided they meet his own criteria--whatever those might be.

Count Wilhelm von Lovenhorst

Male human Ari3/Ill7/FoS10; CR 19; Medium humanoid (human); HD 3d6+17d4+20; hp 75; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +10; Grap +9; Atk +13 melee (1d6+1, +2 rapier) or +11 ranged (1d8, pistol); Full attack +13/+8 melee (1d6+1, +2 rapier) or +11/+6 ranged (1d8, pistol); SA spells; SQ slippery mind, shadowform; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +19; Str 9 Dex 12 Con 12 Int 24 Wis 17 Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +9, Concentration +24, Diplomacy +13, Gather Information +7, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +30, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (nature) +10, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +30, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +30, Knowledge (religion) +11, Listen +9, Ride +8, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +32, Spot

+9; craft wand, extend spell, iron will, quicken spell, scribe scroll, silent spell, spell focus (illusion), greater spell focus (illusion), spell mastery (magic missile, invisibility, alter self, major image), spell mastery (greater invisibility, phantasmal killer, dream, permanent image, shadow walk, project image), spell penetration, still spell, weapon finesse, widen spell.

Spells/day (one additional spell from Illusion, no spells from Conjuraton or Necromancy): 4+1/6+1/6+1/6+1/5+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/2+1/1+1

Spellbook: 0-4th level: all non-conjuraton, non-necromancy

5th: *break enchantment, Mordenkainen's private sanctum, prying eyes, Rary's telepathic bond, dominate person, feeblemind, hold monster, mind fog, symbol of sleep, sending, wall of force, all illusion, baleful polymorph, passwall, permanency.*

6th: *greater dispel magic, globe of invulnerability, repulsion, analyze dweomer, legend lore, true seeing, geas, mass suggestion, symbol of persuasion, chain lightning, contingency, all illusion, disintegrate.*

7th: *sequester, spell turning, greater arcane sight, greater scrying vision, mass hold person, insanity, power word blind, symbol of stunning, forcecage, prismatic spray, all illusion, limited wish.*

8th: *dimensional lock, mind blank, prismatic wall, protection from spells, greater prying eyes, mass charm monster, demand, Otto's irresistible dance, power word stun, sunburst, all illusion, polymorph any object.*

9th: *prismatic sphere, dominate monster, power word kill, shades, weird.*

Signature possessions: rapier +2, ring of the Fraternity of Shadows, ring of protection +4, tunic of armor +4, wand of fireball (10th), wand of hold person (heightened,

4th), wand of wall of ice, rod of absorption (all wands and rod at full charges), medallion of detect thoughts, portable hole, boots of teleportation

Count Wilhelm von Lovenhorst appears to be a man in his mid-fifties, balding and silver haired but otherwise very well preserved, with a wiry physique that would do credit to a much younger man. He wears a carefully-trimmed mustache and a sharply pointed goatee, and still affects the clothing of a bygone generation, preferring to wear a black silk doublet, short baggy pantaloons gathered above the knee, and black hose. He always carries a rapier at his side and wears a medallion of a stylized sunburst on a broad gold chain--the insignia of the house of Lovenhorst.

Background

Count Wilhelm von Lovernhorst was introduced to the Fraternity while a student at the University of Il Aluk, as many were in the days before the Fraternity was exiled from Darkon. His noble title and incisive mind caused him to advance rapidly through the ranks of the Fraternity, but he was stymied in his progress for almost two decades before the fortuitous disappearance of Jerubaa Iskway opened a place for him among the Umbra. It was well-known that von Lovenhorst intended to get a place among the Umbra by fair means or foul, but Iskway's disappearance could was never traced to any action of the Count's.

When the Fraternity of Shadows was expelled from Darkon Count von Lovenhorst and Tarnos Shadowcloak were the only two Umbra to survive Azalin's purge; between them they managed to preserve the Fraternity, helping the fleeing Fraternity members find homes outside of Darkon and directing the counter-campaign against the

Kargat agents sent to other domains to destroy the Fraternity root and branch. The Count settled in southern Lamordia, where he still spends his summers; winters he prefers to spend in gentler climes, often wintering in Port-a-Lucine.

Current Sketch

Count Wilhelm von Lovenhorst is probably the most important Father of the Fraternity; the philosophies and practices of the Fraternity have been largely defined by his philosophical treatises, most importantly *The Oathes and Compacts of the Fraternity of Shadows*.

The Count has one daughter, Karla von Lovenhorst, who has actually succeeded in following in her father's footsteps and becoming a member of the Fraternity. It is quite certain she would not have gained entrance if not for the support both of her father and of Tarnos Shadowcloak, but with her example other female scholars have been emboldened to apply for membership in the Fraternity. It is not yet certain whether the Fraternity's policy on admitting women will now change, however slowly, or if the Countess is destined to remain a footnote--a historical anomaly in the Fraternity's history.

In 742 the Count went missing; no explanation for his disappearance was ever determined by legal authority, and none was ever offered to the Fraternity at large. In 755 he reappeared, entirely without fanfare, and resumed his accustomed role in actively directing the Fraternity's affairs. Presumably the Umbra knew something of his location during this time, as there was no movement to elect any Exalted Brother to take his place, but the reasons behind the Count's disappearance and reappearance have never been made known to the body of the Fraternity.

Lord Balfour de Casteelle

Male human Ill8/FoS10; CR 18; Medium humanoid (human); HD 18d4+18; hp 67; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +9; Grap +8; Atk +8 melee (1d4-1, claws) or +9 melee (1d4 crit 19-20 x 2 plus poison 1/day, dagger of venom) or +9 melee (1d4 crit x3, straight razor +1); Full attack +8 melee (1d4-1, claws) or +9/+4 melee (1d4 crit 19-20 x 2 plus poison 1/day, dagger of venom) or +9/+4 melee (1d4 crit x3, straight razor +1); SA spells; SQ owl familiar, slippery mind, shadowform, taint of the owl; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +16; Str 9 Dex 14 Con 12 Int 19 Wis 16 Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +7, Concentration +11, Craft (alchemy) +12, Diplomacy +12, Gather Information +6, Hypnosis +10, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +25, Knowledge (history) +16, Knowledge (nature) +15, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +25, Knowledge (religion) +16, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Search +5, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +14, Spot +5; brew potion, craft magic arms and armor, craft staff, craft wondrous item, empower spell, extend spell, heighten spell, quicken spell, scribe scroll, silent spell, spell focus (illusion), spell mastery (greater invisibility, major image, sleet storm, wall of ice), spell mastery (cone of cold, ice storm, persistent image, shadow walk).

Spells/day (one additional spell from Illusion, no spells from Abjuration or Necromancy): 4+1/5+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/4+1/3+1/3+1/2+1

Spellbook: 0-3rd level: all non-abjuration, non-necromancy

4th: All non-abjuration, non-necromancy except *fire shield*, *wall of fire*, *stone shape*.

Dread Possibility: The Cuckoo's Egg

By 740 BC it had become apparent to the Umbra that Count von Lovenhorst had attracted the attention of the Watchers in Shadow; after long discussion of what to do about the situation, the Umbra agreed that they should attempt to cause the Count to become Darklord of his own domain, in the hope that his new status would give them critical information on the formation of domains and the nature of the Demiplane. Accordingly, the Count retired to an isolated and little-known island in the Mists, where he performed a long series of experiments designed to trigger the controlled creation of a domain around him.

The culmination of these experiments was bizarre, at least according to prior expectations—the Count was restored to his original condition, as if he had never received any "boons" from the Watchers in Shadow, and he is now apparently entirely immune to powers checks. In 755 the Fathers of the Fraternity decided to end the experiment, believing that the Watchers in Shadow had detected their intent and had resolved to ignore Count von Lovenhorst. The truth is far more disturbing. The Count has become a puppet of the Dark Powers, sent to subtly interfere with the workings of the Fraternity.

The degree to which Count von Lovenhorst is aware of his status as a "cuckoo's egg" is left to the discretion of the Dungeon Master; at one extreme he could be entirely unaware of it, while at the other "he" could be a literal puppet, a physical avatar of the Dark Powers. In his role as an insider saboteur of Fraternity operations he might very well hire adventurers to interfere with selected Fraternity ventures. As the player characters become aware of whom they're interfering with and who their employer is, they're presented with a mystery—why would a Father of the Fraternity be working against the interests of his own secret society?

5th: *cloudkill, major creation, Mordenkainen's faithful hound, teleport, contact other plane, prying eyes, Rary's telepathic bond, dominate person, feeblemind, hold monster, mind fog, symbol of sleep, cone of cold, sending, wall of force, dream, false vision, nightmare, persistent image, seeming, shadow evocation, animal growth, baleful polymorph, fabricate, telekinesis, permanency.*

6th: *acid fog, wall of iron, analyze dweomer, legend lore, true seeing, geas, mass suggestion, symbol of persuasion, chain lightning, contingency, Otiluke's freezing sphere, mislead, permanent image, programmed image, shadow walk, veil, disintegrate, flesh to stone.*

7th: *Drawmij's instant summons, greater scrying, vision, insanity, power word blind, symbol of stunning, mass invisibility, project image, simulacrum, control weather, ethereal jaunt, limited wish*

8th: *trap the soul, discern location, binding, mass charm monster, power word stun, symbol of insanity, polar ray, scintillating pattern, screen, greater shadow evocation.*

9th: *dominate monster, power word kill, etherealness, shapechange, shades, weird.*

Signature possessions: cane of the snow owl (as 20th level staff of frost, plus shapechange (to giant snow owl form only) 3/day), ring of the Fraternity of Shadows, hood of the Fraternity of Shadows, ring of improved mind shielding, pince-nez of seeing, doctor's robe of holding, crystal ball with telepathy, dagger of venom, +1 straight razor, servant candle

Terror track:

Taint of the Owl I: Can rotate head 360 degrees as a free action. OR +1 to anyone observing this action.

Taint of the Owl II: Eyes are large and golden; darkvision 250 feet, OR +1 (cumulative with I).

Taint of the Owl III: Can transform hands into owl talons, giving a natural claw attack (as above). Must consume 5 live mice per day or take 1 Con damage/day.

Further information on Lord Balfour de Casteelle can be found in Van Richten's Arsenal.

Malcolm Scott

Male fey-touched (fir) human Ill6/FoS10; CR 17; Medium humanoid (human); HD 16d4; hp 42; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +8; Grap +7; Atk +7 melee (1d4, +1 dagger of venom) or +11 ranged (1d10x3, masterwork pistol); Full attack +7/+2 melee (1d4, +1 dagger of venom); SA spells, spell-like abilities; SQ luck, slippery mind, shadowform, sunlight vulnerability; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +21; Str 7 Dex 14 Con 10 Int 23 Wis 17 Cha 16. OR 2.

Skills and Feats: Craft (locksmithing) +15, Craft (watchmaking) +15, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +7, Hypnosis +15, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +14, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (nature) +13, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +24, Spellcraft +26; craft magic arms and armor, craft rod, craft staff, craft wondrous item, extend spell, forge ring, quicken spell, scribe scroll, silent spell, spell focus (illusion), spell mastery (charm person, major image, greater invisibility, fabricate, shadow evocation, shadow walk), still spell.

Spell-like abilities: 1/day: dancing lights, daze, ghost sound, charm person

Spells/day (one additional spell from Illusion, no spells from Evocation or Necromancy): 4+1/6+1/6+1/5+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1

Spellbook: 0-3rd level: all non-evocation, non-necromancy

4th: *dimensional anchor, fire trap, lesser globe of invulnerability, remove curse, stonewall, dimension door, arcane eye, detect scrying, locate creature, scrying, charm monster, confusion, crushing despair, lesser geas, wall of fire, wall of ice, all illusion, mass enlarge/reduce person, polymorph, stone shape.*

5th: *break enchantment, Mordenkainen's private sanctum, cloudkill, Leomund's secret chest, major creation, teleport, prying eyes, Rary's telepathic bond, dominate person, feeblemind, hold monster, mind fog, symbol of sleep, all illusion, baleful polymorph, fabricate, passwall, telekinesis, permanency.*

6th: *antimagic field, greater dispel magic, globe of invulnerability, guards and wards, repulsion, acid fog, wall of iron, analyze dweomer, legend lore, true seeing, geas, mass suggestion, all illusion, disintegrate, flesh to stone, move earth, stone to flesh.*

7th: *sequester, spell turning, Drawmij's instant summons, phase door, greater teleport, teleport object, greater arcane sight, greater scrying, vision, mass hold person, insanity, power word blind, symbol of stunning, all illusion, control weather, ethereal jaunt, reverse gravity, limited wish.*

8th: *dimensional lock, mind blank, protection from spells, maze, discern location, moment of prescience, greater prying eyes, antipathy, mass charm monster, demand, power word stun, symbol of insanity, sympathy, all illusion, polymorph any object.*

9th*: *power word kill, weird, etherealness, time stop.*

Signature possessions: ring of the Fraternity of Shadows, ring of protection +3, amulet of resistance +4 (as cloak), +1 alchemical silver stiletto, rod of negation, staff of illusion (12 charges), crystal ball, two masterwork pistols

Terror track: Webspinner

Webspinner I: Scott gets a +3 competence bonus to all Diplomacy checks made in written communication with his correspondents. Strangely, his body and head have become even rounder, while his limbs have become more thin and sticklike. The overall effect gives some observers the queasy impression of a large, urbane spider.

Webspinner II: In reading his correspondence Scott may make an Intelligence check to learn about local conditions his correspondent doesn't mention; treat this as a Gather Information check using Scott's Intelligence modifier and a +3 competence bonus. Scott has been afflicted by a mild form of agoraphobia and takes a -4 to all fear, horror and madness checks he must make outside his own home.

Malcolm Scott is short and round-bodied, with a skim of short white-blonde hair atop a boyish, rosy-cheeked face with a button nose. His eyes are a very pale blue-gray; he almost always wears a gold pince-nez. His most striking feature is his hands, which are long-fingered and elegant; he dresses in the latest Dementlieuse fashions, favoring blue and gold.

Background

Malcolm Scott claims he can trace his ancestry back to a collateral branch of the Scottmatter family of Mordent, the noted artisans who came to a tragic end at the hands of a vengeful fey. Scott usually hints that not all the family was destroyed-a

friendly fir, admiring the craftsmanship of one Brian Scottmatter, intervened, claiming Brian and his descendants for its own. The family relocated to northeastern Mordent and changed its name to Scott, where it has maintained a manor to the present day. Malcolm Scott is the only surviving bearer of the name; as he has no children, it may well die with him.

Current sketch

Regardless of his claims, there is little doubt among his neighbors that Scott is fey-touched. His round face, round figure, thin, wispy hair, and delicate fingers all hint at a fey nature, and he is fascinated by the crafting of mechanisms and clockworks-the more intricate the better. He is well known for making pocket-watches and locks with his own hands, and anything well-made delights him-whether it be a weapon, clothing, a carriage, or a piece of china.

Most of all he delights in the intricacies of the mind-in philosophical and psychological subtleties and in how manipulation of the senses can lead to alterations in behavior. He has learned something of the arts of mesmerism and enjoys using this, in combination with enchantment and illusion, to implant ideas and in others.

Scott is rather sedentary and rarely leaves his home in Mordent; usually the other members of the Umbra come to visit him when meeting is necessary. He maintains a voluminous correspondence with Fraternity members and others throughout the Core, and is famous for his intricate plots and schemes.

Jan Mikkelson

Male human Wiz6/FoS10; CR 16; Medium humanoid (human); HD 16d4+32; hp 74; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +8; Grap +9; Atk +9 melee (1d4+2, +1 adamantine dagger); Full attack +9/+4 melee (1d4+2, +1 adamantine dagger); SA spells; SQ angel of nightmares, slippery mind, shadowform; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +14; Str 12 Dex 15 Con 14 Int 22 Wis 11 Cha 19. OR 2* (see below)

Skills and Feats: Concentration +21, Diplomacy +9, Decipher Script +15, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +25, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +11, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +12, Knowledge (geography) +15, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (nature) +15, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +25, Listen +5, Search +11, Spellcraft +27, Spot +5; empower spell, eschew materials, extend spell, improved initiative, iron will, quicken spell, scribe scroll, silent spell, spell focus (illusion), spell mastery (shocking grasp, detect thoughts, blur, fly, major image), spell mastery (greater invisibility, phantasmal killer, dream, nightmare, shadow walk, persistent image), still spell.

Spells/day: 4/10/6/5/5/5/4/3/2

Spellbook: 0-3rd level: all

4th: dimensional anchor, lesser globe of invulnerability, remove curse, stonewalk, dimension door, dimension door, Evard's black tentacles, Leomund's secure shelter, solid fog, arcane eye, detect scrying, locate creature, scrying, charm monster, confusion, lesser geas, fire shield, ice storm, shout, all illusion, animate dead, enervation, polymorph, Rary's mnemonic enhancer, stone shape.

5th: *break enchantment, cloudkill, major creation, teleport, wall of stone, prying eyes, Rary's telepathic bond, dominate person, feeblemind, hold monster, mind fog, cone of cold, sending, wall of force, all illusion, magic jar, waves of fatigue, baleful polymorph, fabricate, passwall, permanency.*

6th: *antimagic field, greater dispel magic, globe of invulnerability, repulsion, acid fog, wall of iron, analyze dweomer, true seeing, geas, mass suggestion, chain lightning, contingency, Otiluke's freezing sphere, all illusion, circle of death, create undead, eyebite, disintegrate, flesh to stone, stone to flesh, Tenser's transformation.*

7th: *sequester, spell turning, Drawmij's instant summons, phase door, greater teleport, teleport object, greater scrying, mass hold person, insanity, power word blind, forcecage, prismatic spray, all illusion, limited wish, control undead, finger of death, ethereal jaunt, statue.*

8th: *mind blank, protection from spells, incendiary cloud, maze, trap the soul, discern location, demand, Otto's irresistible dance, power word stun, polar ray, greater shout, sunburst, all illusion, horrid wilting, iron body, polymorph any object.*

9th*: *power word kill, shades, weird.*

Signature possessions: ring of the Fraternity of Shadows, ring of wizardry I, adamantine dagger +1, amulet of natural armor +3, vestment of armor +3, rod of maximize metamagic (lesser)

Terror track: Angel of Nightmare

Uncanny Presence: Jan Mikkelson gets a +2 circumstance bonus to Intimidate checks; his face, although handsome, is subtly disturbing to look at, and his expressions and words often give those talking to him an eerie, dark feeling.

Nightmare Beauty: Mikkelson has a +2 profane bonus to his Charisma score, but

those who meet him have nightmares in which he figures prominently the next time they go to sleep. Because of these uncanny dreams Mikkelson has OR 2 in all further interactions with those who have met him at least once, and who are capable of dreaming. Elves and other creatures who meditate instead of sleeping will find thoughts of Mikkelson interrupting their meditation, with the same effect as given above.

The Diplomacy and Intimidate modifiers given above assume that Mikkelson has OR 2; for an initial meeting, use Diplomacy +11 and Intimidate +10.

Jan Mikkelson is a relatively young man by Fraternity standards, apparently in his mid-thirties; he is tall and very handsome, with his coffee-colored skin, black hair, and amber eyes instantly marking him as Valachani and a slight hint in his exotic face of his elvish heritage. He is vain, quick-tempered, and a notorious womanizer

Background

Jan Mikkelson was born in backwoods Valachan, near the Sithican border, to a human father and half-elven mother. Even as a child he was precocious, intensely secretive, manipulative, and obsessed with power.

When Mikkelson discovered his grandfather was actually an important elvish noble of Har-Thelen, he blackmailed him into arranging for his (Mikkelson's) entry into the Art Colegiu of Invidia. Mikkelson was less interested in art than in books, and much less than in books as in arcane power. Realizing that neither of these things was in great supply in Karina, he continued north, finally settling at the University of Richemulot.

Dread Possibility: Bait

Although a very intelligent man, Jan Mikkelson is not as clever as he thinks he is. The other Fathers of the Fraternity know that he practices necromancy and that he is not a true illusionist; they have made him a Father of the Fraternity for their own purposes. Having tried and failed to confer darklordship on a willing person (see The Cuckoo's Egg), the other Umbra have decided to cause an unwilling person to become a darklord under controlled conditions. Jan Mikkelson is their selected test subject.

Adventurers might become involved at two critical points of this experiment—first, the series of rituals leading up to the impending conferral of darklordship, and second, the aftermath of a failed (or successful!) attempt. In the first scenario the player characters become aware of the Fraternity's plan and attempt to prevent it; presumably, the last thing the Demiplane needs is another darklord, not to mention that allowing the Fraternity to succeed might give them vital information that would be very, very damaging in their hands. In the second the Fraternity might call on adventurers to remove the evidence of their failed experiment by revealing enough information about Mikkelson to make him the target of monster hunters. Should the experiment succeed, on the other hand, Mikkelson's first act as a darklord might well be to strike back at his former colleagues by revealing as much as possible about the intentions and capabilities of the Fraternity to do-gooders.

There he became a member of the Fraternity almost immediately and made a meteoric rise through the ranks; with the space of two decades his intense energy, charisma, and intellect had already made him a Father of the Fraternity, despite rumors that his arcane pursuits were not entirely...orthodox.

Current sketch

Jan Mikkelson is an enfant terrible in a group of eminences grises; he is intellectually brilliant and extremely arrogant. Arrogance is, of course, the defining vice of a Father of the Fraternity of Shadows, but Mikkelson's high opinion of his own abilities is much more overt than that of the other Fathers; while they are content to presume their superiority in silence, he prefers to declare it loudly and frequently. His opinion of his own intelligence is only enhanced by the fact that he has apparently pulled the wool over the eyes of even the other Fathers of the Fraternity; he is not an illusionist and he has not foresworn the practice of necromancy.

Magic of the Fraternity

Glossary of Terms:

Shadowstuff: the material of which the Plane of Shadow is made. Anything brought from the Plane of Shadow into the Prime Material Plane (or a quasi-Prime Material Plane such as Ravenloft) is considered shadowstuff, inanimate objects and living things alike.

Shadow-creatures: Undead shadows, creatures from the Plane of Shadows, and creatures from the Plane of Dreams (ennui, dream morphs, etc.). This does NOT include other incorporeal undead such as ghosts.

New Spells

Deeper Darkness

Illusion

Level: Sor/Wiz 3

All members of the Fraternity of Shadows can cast this spell as a 3rd level sorcerer/wizard spell from their sigil rings. It is otherwise exactly equivalent to the cleric spell of the same name.

Hide Shadow

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S

Casting time: 1 action

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

Target: One person

Duration: 1 day/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell causes the shadow of the target creature to "disappear" (it has actually been disguised by illusion); it has no other adverse effect per se, but a person without a shadow has OR 3 until his shadow returns. Certain members of the Umbra (Tarnos Shadowcloak and Malcolm Scott in particular) like to use this spell to confuse, inconvenience, or intimidate, often claiming that the caster is now in possession of the affected person's soul and will destroy it unless the spell's victim does what he is told.

Sever Shadow

Level: Sor/Wiz 6

Components: V, S, F

Casting time: One action

Range: Touch

Target: One person

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

When casting this spell, the wizard imbues a leaden dagger with the ability to cut a person's shadow away from his physical body. This requires a successful touch attack; if the attack succeeds and the target fails his saving throw, the shadow is separated from its erstwhile "owner". This deals 1d6 points of Wisdom, Intelligence, and Charisma damage; in addition, the person becomes fatigued, his natural healing (including healing of ability damage) proceeds at only one-half the normal rate, and he has OR 3.

The effects of the spell can be reversed by break enchantment, greater dispel magic (on a successful dispel check), or similar spells of higher level.

The affected person's shadow becomes a shadow, as described in the Monster Manual, of the person's own alignment. It may follow its former owner and attempt to interact positively with him or her, but it cannot speak (and speak with dead has no effect, since it is not actually "dead.") If not combined with its "host" within a week, it must make a Will saving throw at DC (12 + the number of weeks separated) using the "host's" Will saving throw modifier), or shift in alignment one step toward chaotic evil. When it become chaotic evil it will attempt to kill its former host. (If the shadow is destroyed and then the spell is broken some time afterward, the person gets a new shadow regardless-whether he wants one or not.)

Arcane focus: A dagger with a blade of lead.

Control Shadow

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz 8

Components: V, S, M

Casting time: 1 action

Range: Medium (100 ft. +10 ft./level)

Target: Up to 2 HD of shadows/level, no two of which can be more than 30 feet apart

Duration: 10 minute/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

The Fathers of the Fraternity of Shadows often use spells such as shades and shadow conjuration, which create semi-material creatures from shadowstuff. At times this shadowstuff becomes self-willed and refuses to depart the Demiplane of Dread when the spell controlling it expires. This spell offers a simple and extremely useful way to turn this potential liability into an asset; it offers the casting wizard control over the shadows so created, albeit for a limited time. Unlike the spell control undead, this spell does give the caster the option of telepathic command over its subjects. This spell works **ONLY** on shadows created directly from shadowstuff, and not on undead shadows. Because it is not a necromantic spell and does not directly manipulate life force, casting this spell does not call for a powers check.

Material component: A small piece of black felt.

Shadowself

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: 8

Components: V, S, M

Casting time: 10 minutes

Range: None

Target: Self

Duration: 1 day/level (dismissable)

Saving throw: None

Spell resistance: No

Upon casting this spell, the caster creates a "double" from shadowstuff, imbuing it with a small part of his life-force. This double looks exactly like the caster, except that it casts no shadow; it is incorporeal and gains a fly speed of 30 feet with good maneuverability in addition to the caster's normal mode(s) of movement and has the caster's ability scores except for Constitution-as a construct, of course, it has no Constitution score. Although intelligent, the shadowself is not free willed; it will obey any instruction the caster gives it in both letter and spirit. The shadowself has one-half its master's hit points, **NOT** including its master's Constitution bonus, if any; it has no equipment and base armor class 10.

At the time of casting, the caster may imbue his shadowself with up to 10 levels of spells, none of which may be higher than 4th level (he immediately loses these spells himself), which the shadowself may use as spell-like abilities. The shadowself's effective caster level is one-half its creator's.

The shadowself may be sent to perform reconnaissance, meet with someone the caster thinks untrustworthy, or any other task the caster deems appropriate; importantly, there is no telepathic link between the caster and the shadowself and the caster will **NOT** know what the shadowself is doing until it returns and communicates with him. The

caster may dismiss the spell at any time, which causes the shadowself to return to him and re-incorporate itself into his personality; at that time the caster will remember everything experienced by the shadowself as if it had happened to him (which may be cause for fear, horror, or madness checks which the shadowself, as a construct, did not have to take itself).

Like all shadow spells cast in Ravenloft, the shadowself may potentially become a free-willed shadow when the spell duration ends or the spell is dismissed; if this occurs, the shadowself will always be determined to destroy its former master, and it gets whatever spells he may have imbued it with as spell-like abilities usable once per day in addition to the normal abilities of a shadow.

Material component: A small silver mirror (which must be broken if the spell is to be dismissed) and a black pearl of at least 500 gp value, which must be dissolved in vinegar and drunk while the spell is being cast.

Create Umbrucha

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: 9

Components: V, S, M, F

Casting time: 10 minutes

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

Target: One person

Duration: Permanent

Saving throw: None

Spell resistance: No

This spell is actually a magical ritual performed by the Umbra to punish members of the Fraternity of Shadows who break the Fraternity's laws. The erring member is brought to the Fathers of the Fraternity after being possessed by an umbrucha (see USS 2002 for details on this creature), and the

Fathers of the Fraternity then strip the life-force from the erstwhile brother's body and bind it to his shadow, leaving the body a lifeless husk. The resulting abomination is a new umbrucha, a creature without any will of its own, who exists only to serve the Fathers of the Fraternity. The spell requires that at least three Fathers of the Fraternity cast this spell in concert (only one of the participants must be able to cast ninth-level spells). Casting this spell requires a powers check; a failed check will affect only one of the participants in the ritual, determined randomly.

An umbrucha should be considered a construct rather than an undead creature, although it has many similarities to the undead. It cannot be turned, and holy water has no effect on it. However, spells which use light to deal damage (searing light, sunbeam, sunburst) deal damage to an umbrucha as if it were an undead creature.

Material Component: The ring of the Fraternity of Shadows belonging to the former member.

Arcane Focus: At least three sculpted obsidian rods (500 gp value), one for each Father participating in the spell.

Shadow Trap

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz 9

Components: V, S, F

Casting time: 1 action

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

Target: 1 shadow or shadow-creature/level, no two of which can be more than 30 feet apart

Duration: Permanent

Saving throw: Will negates

Spell resistance: Yes

Quoth the Raven

When this spell is cast, ordinary creatures with shadows and all shadow-creatures targeted by the spellcaster must make a Will saving throw or have their shadows (if ordinary, corporeal creatures) or their selves (in the case of shadow-creatures) imprisoned in a large mirror. For shadow-creatures, this is exactly similar to being trapped in a mirror of life trapping; ordinary creatures suffer the effects of losing their shadow described in sever shadow above.

The mirror may be re-used; breaking the mirror releases all shadows within it and, in the case of ordinary creatures, ends the effect of the spell on them. The affected creatures do NOT need to see the mirror to be affected by it, but the mirror must be within the spell range for the spell to take effect.

This spell can be made permanent with permanency and is used by several of the Umbra as part of their home-defense system.

Arcane focus: A silver mirror, at least 2 feet by 2 feet and of masterwork quality.



Sorcery and Shadows

Complete Arcane for Ravenloft

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Basic Classes

Warlock

Warlocks in Ravenloft are part of the reason that many spellcasters in the Demiplane get a bad reputation. Though these practitioners are somewhat rare in comparison to Wizards and Sorcerers, they are even deadlier, and almost always evil.

As Complete Arcane suggests, most Warlocks have ancestors who made a pact with an ancient evil deity or demonic power to gain their abilities. In Ravenloft, suitable deities would be Arawn, Erlin, the Eternal Order, Kali, the Lawgiver, Math Mathonwy, Morrigan, Set, the Wolf God, or Zhakata. Of course, almost any demonic power is also suitable, and if the DM allows, the demon may very well be one still trapped in the Demiplane, such as Elsepeth or Drigor.

Warmage

Traditionally, Warmages are trained in academies. In Ravenloft, such institutions are rare at best. It wouldn't be out of character to have a small college in Falkovnia, training Warmages fanatically loyal to Drakov. Or, perhaps one of the surrounding domains, Borca, Dementlieu, or Richemulot could have a college for training these spellcasters in case of an incursion by Falkovnia.

Either way, the way that arcane spellcasting is looked upon in the Demiplane colors the attitudes of the locals and prohibits any large-scale efforts to train these mystics.

Wu Jen

As one would assume, the Wu Jen is the spellcaster from Rokushima Taiyoo, and often more common in that domain than the standard Sorcerer or Wizard. The xenophobic tendencies of the commoners in Ravenloft encourage the isolationist habits

that most Wu Jen form, and inadvertently aid the formation of more of the members of this class.

Alterations

Taboos: If a Wu Jen violates a Taboo, in addition to losing her spellcasting ability for that day, she must also make a Powers Check as though she were breaking a tenet of her own faith (which in a way, she is). This check carries a 5% chance of failure, as described in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Prestige Classes

Acolyte of the Skin

The Acolytes of the Skin are rare in the Demiplane, no matter what domain is in question. Such horrid spellcasters may first be hailed as heroes, for they hunt demons. When it's discovered that they are using the demons' powers for their own horrid ends however, they are just as quickly reviled as the monsters they truly are.

Fiendish Glare (Su): As a fear effect, anything that provides protection against Fear saves (such as the Courage feat) also helps resist this ability.

Skin Adaptation (Su): At 5th-level the Outcast Rating of the Acolyte increases by +4.

Summon Fiend (Sp): An Outsider summoned by this ability gets the standard Will save with a -2 penalty (DC 10 + half the Acolyte's arcane spellcasting levels + his charisma modifier) to break free of control when it arrives. Regardless of whether they escape or not, the Outsider cannot return to its home plane. Unless the Acolyte can cow them, they may very likely retaliate in a hostile fashion against the Acolyte.

Fiendish Symbiosis (Ex): At 10th-level the Outcast Rating of the Acolyte increases by +8; this replaces the Outcast Penalty of +4 gained at 5th-level. If the Acolyte has an evil alignment, then he gains a Reality Wrinkle with an initial radius of 1,000 feet per character level. If the Acolyte fails any Powers Checks, consider them failed Power Rituals; each failed check adds 1d4 corruption points to the Acolyte's total and halves the wrinkle's radius. See Fiends in chapter five of the Ravenloft Player's Handbook for more information.

Alienist

Much like the Acolytes of the Skin, the Alienists of Ravenloft are not limited to any specific domain. Their studies are not common in any land in the Demiplane. These mad spellcasters arise from different circumstances. Most commonly, an elder Alienist will teach a willing apprentice who seeks her out. Much less commonly, an apprentice will actually have a peaceful encounter with a pseudonatural creature; such abominations are not unheard of in the blasted realm of Bluetspur. Also, it has been reported that some Alienists have learned their knowledge through instances of being struck with madness from one source or another. How such spellcasters learn these traditions through their own mental maladies is up to debate, however.

Very rarely, Alienists have arisen from escapees from the experimentation facilities in Bluetspur. Such victims are mad beyond the ability to cure, but in their madness they embrace their captor's nature, and somehow develop the abilities of the Alienist.

Alterations

Requirements: The requirement of Knowledge (The Planes) 8 ranks is changed in Ravenloft; instead the Alienist may substitute 8 ranks in Knowledge

(Dungeoneering), which covers knowledge of aberrations. As well, the Alienist need not make peaceful contact with an Alienist or pseudonatural creature, but she must still make contact nevertheless.

Summon Alien: This ability is not curtailed by the Dark Powers of Ravenloft. The Alienist may summon pseudonatural creatures as normal. However, they still receive the standard Will save with a -2 penalty to resist control when summoned.

Metamagic Secret: Whenever this ability is gained, the Alienist must also make a Madness save (DC 10 + $\frac{1}{2}$ the Alienist's class level + the Alienist's Charisma modifier).

Alien Transcendence (Su): The Alienist does not develop a Reality Wrinkle when becoming an Outsider through this ability, because the Alienist does not also gain an alignment descriptor. At this time, the Alienist's Outcast Rating increases by +3.

Argent Savant

Those whose studies involve force itself often hail from Hazlan or the Shadow Rift. Only in these two places is the study of the arcane common enough that the specialists known as the Argent Savants can be found.

This is one of the safer paths of learning for arcane spellcasters in Ravenloft, as force itself is neither inherently good nor evil. Still, those who would use their spells without care can find themselves quickly falling down the path of corruption.

Blood Magus

The Blood Magi in Ravenloft hail from a number of different realms. In Hazlan & Nova Vassa they are arcane spellcasters who have been brought back to life by the Lawgiver or Hala, and often serve either the monarchy or the church.

Forlorn & Tepest have Blood Magi as well. Often these are red-haired individuals who have kept their arcane spellcasting ability a secret, and were brought back to life by the druids or clerics of Belenus.

Barovia has its share of Blood Magi; some of these beings have joined together to form a cult dedicated to vampirism. Often, these cults have true vampiric patrons who guide their sinister actions.

Finally, the tough lands of Falkovnia and Lamordia have Blood Magi present. In Falkovnia, they are almost always in the service of the military, and some were even killed by the Talons themselves. Lamordia on the other hand has Blood Magi who combine scientific advancements with arcane practices to work their power. Often these Blood Magi look and have more in common with scientists than wizards or sorcerers.

Alterations

Blood Component (Su): The use of this ability involves life force, and thus any spell enhanced by this effect requires a powers check as though the spell were a necromantic one.

Scarification (Ex): When the Blood Magus has any spells scribed upon him; he gains +1 penalty to his OR, as long as the scar is visible at all.

Death Knell (Sp): This ability is affected as the spell of the same name as described in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Homunculus (Su): The creature made with this ability is a Dread Companion.

Bloodseeking Spell (Su): The use of this ability involves life force, and thus any spell enhanced by this effect requires a powers check as though the spell were a necromantic one.

Awaken Blood (Su): This ability requires a powers check with a 10% chance of failure.

Bloodwalk (Su): This ability requires a powers check with a 10% chance of failure.

Effigy Master

Those spellcasters who create constructs to serve them are most commonly found in the southern baked land of Hazlan. Such creatures made in that domain often take the form of magical beasts, monstrous humanoids, and vermin. They are most often made of creaking leather, some supple, others baked hard. The material fares well in the hotter climate of Hazlan and the skill is common in the domain.

Other lands that have Effigy Masters are Darkon, Lamordia, the Shadow Rift, and Sithicus. In the magic-rich land of Darkon the constructs may be in the form of dragons, humanoids, magical beasts, and monstrous humanoids, and they are more often constructed of metal (by the Dwarves) or even made of complex clockworks (by the Gnomes).

The land of Lamordia has few Effigy Masters in comparison; the lack of arcane spellcasters prevents their formation. But those who do pursue the arcane are well suited to this path, and Lamordia shows the most variation in its creation of Effigies with the constructs being made of clockworks, leather, metal, and wood. This is in part due to the craftsmen nature of the domain. Effigies in Lamordia are often in the form of animals, humanoids, or vermin.

In the Shadow Rift the breed of Arak known as the Fir often become Effigy Masters, and they create their fantastical constructs almost exclusively from complex clockworks. They often take the shapes of aberrations, animals, dragons, giants, humanoids, magical beasts, or monstrous humanoids.

Finally, some of the elves of Sithicus have become Effigy Masters, and these beings often create sylvan constructs made of natural leather and wood to serve them in the deep forests. These beings are often made in the likeness of animals, humanoids, magical beasts, and vermin.

Alterations

Craft Effigy (Su): If the Effigy Master wishes, he may create an Effigy from desire, rather than expending XP. Such a creature has the Dread Golem template applied to it, as described in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook. Effigies created through the normal means are unchanged.

Effigy Link (Su): The Scrying and Status portions of this ability are affected as the spells of the same name as described in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Elemental Savant

The Elemental Savants are rare in the Demiplane; they only appear with any frequency in the Shadow Rift. In that lightless chasm they are most often sorcerers multi-classed with druids or rangers, and often mix their arcane abilities with a devotion to the natural world. The exception to this would be the Gwytune, who may become Elemental Savants if they choose a prestige class at all.

Elemental Savants must always be cautious. The natural elements of Ravenloft are often corrupted, and the Elemental Savant risks falling into the same fate if she isn't careful.

Alterations

Elemental Perfection: Being an elemental and not an Outsider, the Elemental Savant does not gain a reality wrinkle. However, if the Elemental Savant is of an evil alignment, or later adopts an evil alignment, the DM

may award additional abilities to the Savant. These abilities should be drawn from those gained by a Corrupted Elemental, as presented in the "New Ravenloft Monsters" article by John Mangrum, available on the Fraternity of Shadows website. Thus, an evil earth elemental savant might gain the special attack of "The Earth Will Not Have You" and the special quality of "Bones of the Earth." The Elemental Savant's appearance should change to more closely resemble a corrupted elemental as well. Finally, this ability increases the Outcast Rating of the Elemental Savant by +3.

Enlightened Fist

Enlightened Fists in Ravenloft came naturally about in two lands at first; Hazlan & Sri Raji. In the former land they are most often Mulan who have blended their arcane training with the rare monastic culture in the land. In Sri Raji, the arts of the monk are more openly practiced, and those who train as wizards as well often take up this prestige class.

Otherwise this class is found with a somewhat less regularity in the lands where spellcasting and monastic ability combine. Paridon's adherents to the Divinity of Mankind sometimes experiment with arcane magic, becoming Enlightened Fists. Rokushima Taiyoo has its Wu Jens, and those that follow both the arcane and monk abilities are well-suited for this class. The Shadow Rift has some Enlightened Fists who fight against the Twilight, mostly in the form of Brag Arak who also focus on their arcane abilities. Finally, the southern land of Sithicus has monks, and the elves also are highly adept at the arcane arts, causing this class to be known there as well.

Fatespinner

Fatespinners are not found with any frequency in the Demiplane of Dread. The

combinations of gambler and arcane talent are not found in any single domain, but this has not stopped the occasional Fatespinner from rising to prominence despite the odds. They just simply do not have a predisposition to any single land.

Alterations

Fickle Finger of Fate (Ex): The Fatespinner cannot affect a Powers Check with this ability; no mortal power can modify these checks.

Resist Fate (Ex): The Fatespinner cannot affect a Powers Check with this ability; no mortal power can modify these checks.

Geometer

The class of the Geometer is most commonly found in Lamordia, however there are very few practitioners of its art in that domain. Arcane spellcasters are rare in the extreme in the frigid land of logic and science, but those who do pursue the arcane path find that the Geometer fits well with their views.

Other lands that have Geometers are the Slain City of Necropolis and the Shadow Rift. Necropolis was known for its great universities and magical learning before the Requiem, and those who studied the path of the Geometer before dwell there still. In the lightless chasm of the Shadow Rift, the Arak who dwell within sometimes follow this branch of magic. The Gwytune are known for their practice at the art, in particular.

Green Star Adept

The comet Alhazarde is seen even in the Demiplane of Dread. It's not know how this stellar body comes into the Demiplane, but it still seems to, and it drops pieces of it's starmetal to the ground which arcane spellcasters still seek out.

Most commonly, Green Star Adepts are found within the lands of Lamordia and the

Shadow Rift. Lamordia has a popular astronomy group, and a few of those who study this field also dabble in arcane mysticism, though the number is very small. As well, pieces of starmetal have been found in the Shadow Rift, though it is confusing as to how the pieces fell through the shroud that covers the chasm. Magically inclined Arak like the Gwytune have sought out the pieces and experimented with them, becoming Green Star Adepts. However, after enough time of such practice, they are often shunned from normal Arak society for their changing forms, becoming more and more of a construct and less like fey.

Otherwise, Green Star Adepts have also been found in Hazlan, where arcane practices are common. There is evidence in the ruins that the comet Alhazarde played an important role in the history of the land, and Green Star Adepts are almost as much archaeologists are much as anything else.

Alterations

Emerald Perfection (Ex): Upon gaining this ability the Outcast Rating of the Green Star Adept increases by +3.

Initiate of the Sevenfold Veil

Unsurprisingly as with most magical paths in Ravenloft, the Initiates of the Sevenfold Veil are most commonly found within the Shadow Rift. Although one might be puzzled by this at first, it must be remembered that the Arak disdain sunlight, not color. In fact, many Arak love colors of all types; examples of this would be the Alven and their vibrant gardens.

Otherwise, the Initiates are found most commonly in Hazlan, where magical study is encouraged. After this land, they may be found in Barovia, Lamordia, Necropolis, Sithicus, Souragne, and Vechor. All of these lands share a capacity for learning, either of

the arcane or the natural world, both of which the Initiate studies.

Mage of the Arcane Order

Mages of the Arcane Order are rare in Ravenloft, and not common in any land. The reasons for this are two-fold. The first is the relative rarity of arcane spellcasters in Ravenloft. The second reason though, is because of the persecution that wizards face in the Demiplane. Domains such as Tepest often burn wizards at the stake, and other lands aren't always much more forgiving. Plus, many dark-hearted wizards have no compunctions about killing their own kind in an effort to gain more arcane knowledge.

Despite this fact, many of the domains that have wizards often have secretive Spellpools set up in hidden locations, which mages throughout the domain who are part of the guild can draw upon. Due to the planar nature of Ravenloft however, there are some special restrictions to the way these Spellpools work in the Demiplane.

A member with the token for the Spellpool is free to draw and return spells to it while in the same domain as the Spellpool. As well, as long as the borders between domains remain open, Spellpool access is unrestricted. If the borders are closed however, access to the Spellpool is also cut off.

There are multiple Spellpools in Ravenloft, most notably in Darkon, Har'Akir, Hazlan, and Sri Raji. However, each Spellpool is part of a separate Order and requires a different guild focus. Some Orders don't mind if a member is part of multiple Orders (and thus has access to multiple Spellpools, such as Sri Rajian Order) and others demand that their members be part of only their Order and no other (such as the Hazlani Order). In any case, having access to multiple Spellpools doesn't give the Mage any special abilities beyond the norm for the

class; it just ensures that if the borders are closed on a domain, the Mage may still retain access to a Spellpool.

Master Transmogrifist

Those who follow the path of the Master Transmogrifist often hail from two domains where their powers fit well into society: Dementlieu and Richemulot. Both domains are filled with intrigue and deception. Although changing into monstrous shapes often only helps in dangerous situations, Master Transmogrifists often choose animal and plant shapes as well, to better aid in any espionage encounters they may be part of.

Alterations

The transformations that the Master Transmogrifist undergoes on a regular basis may provoke horrors in those witnessing them, if the form chosen is particularly monstrous.

Mindbender

The arcane spellcasters who follow the path of the Mindbender are most commonly found in the domains of Borca, Hazlan, & Richemulot. They are most often Bards and Wizards, with some few being Sorcerers (mostly hailing from Hazlan). The tastes for manipulation and control fit well into many of Ravenloft's societies, and the Mindbenders are often able to hide their true nature well. Only in Hazlan may a Mindbender be known for what he truly is, and even in that land, only if the Mindbender is exceptionally powerful or has the patronage of powerful personas.

Otherwise, Mindbenders may also be found in Dementlieu, G'Henna, Invidia, Nidala, and Pharazia. Mindbenders would normally be even more plentiful in the land of Dementlieu, except that those who have gone to that land don't often fair as well as would be expected. It's suspected that there

may already be a powerful Mindbender or two in the land, who hold a firm grip on the populace and resent any intrusions. In the land of G'Henna, arcane magic is outlawed by the clergy of Zhakata, but this doesn't stop the practice of it in the underground. The class of the Mindbender is popular here, and those who practice it secretly sometimes try to take over church priests in order to gain more food and supplies. These attempts have all ended in failure so far however, as the Mindbenders were discovered by church inquisitors and have all suffered horrible fates. The land of Invidia holds Bards and Sorcerers who sometimes take up the mantle of the Mindbender, often working in secret, and almost always only in the larger settlements of the land. A few have rumored to have found employment in the service of Malocchio Aderre, serving no doubt nefarious ends.

Nidala has a few Mindbenders. Arcane magic is not outlawed in this land, though those who practice it must do so carefully, lest they anger the clergy of Belenus. Those who do practice the arcane arts often find the Mindbender an appealing choice; their abilities to control others sometimes allow them to avoid the church of Belenus, at least for a time.

Finally, in the land of Pharazia, the Mindbenders are Wizards who often serve the edicts of Diamabel. They are called into service when citizens are found who will not rescind their heretical thoughts. When the victims cannot be converted of their own accord, the Mindbenders are requested to work their magic in Diamabel's will, to break their heresy and bind them to righteousness.

Alterations

Telepathy (Su): This ability is affected as under "Mind-Affecting" in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Push the Weak Mind (Sp): This ability is affected as the spell Suggestion in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Mindread (Sp): This ability is affected as under "Mind-Affecting" in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Eternal Charm (Sp): This ability is affected as the spell "Charm Monster" in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Dominate (Sp): This ability is affected as the spell "Dominate Monster" in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Seeker of the Song

Seekers of the Song can be found with most frequency within the depths of the Shadow Rift. The Shee Arak and Half-Arak who dwell within that chasm often follow the path of the Bard, and some of these fey catch a glimpse of the Primal Music. Such a glimpse inspires an obsession, even in the fey, and often the Seekers of the Song suffer from the Obsession Madness effect.

Otherwise the Seekers of the Song may be found in Darkon & Necropolis, where some of the most famous Bardic colleges reside. The land of Kartakass also has a number of Seekers of the Song, with the Bardic profession being so prevalent in that domain. In the exotic land of Sri Raji, the Rajians have a Bardic tradition as well, and Seekers of the Song are present within that sweltering land. Finally the land of Souragne has its share of Seekers of the Song, even though Bards are relatively rare within that land. Often their explorations take them into the swamps looking for more and more examples of the Primal Music, which they hope to find in nature itself.

Sublime Chord

As with many magical prestige classes, the Sublime Chord is most commonly found in the depths of the Shadow Rift. The Shee

Arak and Half-Arak are often drawn to this class, with the combination of magical power and bardic ability being a lure few can resist. A few rare Gwytune are also drawn to this class.

Otherwise, Sublime Chords can still be found within Necropolis, though few enter this class since the Requiem. Most were Sublime Chords before the disaster, and still hang on to their former lives and callings. The Bardic colleges that trained in the city often set students onto this path.

Finally, Sublime Chords may be found in Darkon, Tepest, and Sri Raji, all of which have bardic traditions and the foundations necessary for the class. Curiously, there are also a few domains where Bards are rare, but those who do follow the calling are also often Sublime Chords. These are the lands of Hazlan, Sithicus, and Souragne.

Darkonian Sublime Chords often come from the Bardic Colleges that still survive in the domain, and magic is no stranger to these practitioners. Tepestani Sublime Chords are almost the opposite, with the local Bard in the village teaching his pupils the art in a much closer student-teacher relationship. Finally, Sri Raji has a mix of the two. Although the domain doesn't have any formal colleges for Bards, the temples of Tvashtri often teach the skills for this class, and elder Chords will teach their students as well as the temples themselves.

Hazlani Chords are those sorcerers or wizards whose tastes have run a bit more exotic, and are exploring arcane magic in a different vein. Sithican Chords are elves who often lament their fallen status and lost connection with nature, and supplement their ability with their natural bond with magic. Finally, Souragnian Chords are those rare people who follow the Bard's path and are looking to learn more powerful necromantic magic, through the secrets of the First Song.

Arcanamach (Suel Arcanamach)

In the Demiplane, the traditions of the Arcanamach originated in the magic-shrouded land of Hazlan, and to this day they are still practiced in that domain. The first Arcanamachs were actually Rashemi servants of Mulan families. These Rashemi demonstrated such a devotion to their masters that they were taught the arcane arts to better protect their charges. Since then some Mulan have also followed the calling, but many consider it to be a "dirty" trade, and prefer the noble life or the pursuit of arcane magic in and of itself.

When the Shadow Rift was formed, and the Arak began to explore outwards into the other domains around them, a few found their way to Hazlan. There, they discovered the Arcanamachs and stole some back to their dark Rift. There they learned the secrets of the Arcanamach, and a number of Muryan have since taken up the class, finding it a natural extension of their combat and magical abilities. Some of these Muryan even hire themselves out as spies and assassins, but of course they never break the Law of Arak and only attack their rival's charges.

Finally, a few elves who have been to Hazlan have taken the culture of the Arcanamach back to Sithicus. Although the calling is still rare in that forested land, a small house has dedicated itself to training these warrior-mages, and they are often regarded as elite members of their trades.

Alterations

Requirements: The language requirement of this prestige class is changed to Vassi. Vassi itself hasn't changed much in its history, although there are differences in dialects. The Grimoire Arcanamacha also exists in the Demiplane; it is written in the Vassi tongue. Whether this is a copy of the original from

Greyhawk and converted or an original creation of the Mists, none can say.

Wayfarer Guide

The Wayfarer Union does not exist in the Demiplane. There is simply not enough Wayfarer Guides present or organized enough to create such a group. Plus, the natural intolerance for magic that many residents of the Demiplane also curtails this effort. Wayfarer Guides do not exist commonly in any domain. The limitations on teleportation magic in Ravenloft often dissuade arcane spellcasters from relying on them overly. Still occasionally the odd sorcerer or wizard will take up this mantle, and take up residence in a more magic-tolerant city. There, they will quietly advertise their services for awhile. Often however, it seems the Guides attract too much attention and one day they teleport somewhere and just never return.

Alterations

All restrictions on the teleportation magic in Ravenloft still apply to the Wayfarer Guide.

Wild Mage

Wild Magic is known commonly in the Demiplane only in the Shadow Rift. There, the more chaotic breeds of Arak sometimes practice this magic, along with some Half-Arak and Feytouched beings. Of the Nine Breeds of Arak, the Alven are the most likely to become Wild Mages, assuming of course they decide not to follow a more nature-oriented path. In truth, many Alven view Wild Magic as the most "pure" form of magic, citing that its randomness reflects the wiles of nature itself.

Alterations

Chaotic Mind (Su): This power does not protect against Madness saves provoked by normal means; it only grants immunity to the Confusion and Insanity spells themselves.

Feats

Draconic Feats

These feats in Ravenloft are not often linked directly with dragons. Although the feats themselves do not change, most view these in a more demonic light (thus, the names of the feats might be changed to Demonic Claw, instead of Draconic Claw for example). This is due to the superstitions that Sorcerers labor under, with their powers often believed to have originated from demonic or devilish influences. The monstrous aspects of these feats should be played up more mysteriously in the Demiplane; it should never be clear exactly where the Sorcerer's power comes from, or if it's a good thing.

Lord of the Uttercold: Enhancing a spell with this feat changes the spell to dealing with life force, and as such causes the spell to become subject to a Powers Check when cast. Treat the spell as a Necromancy spell of ½ the level of the spell (minimum 1st) to determine the severity of the check.

Necropolis Born: These powers carry the normal chances for Powers Checks as the spells of the same name.

Obtain Familiar: The familiar gained through this feat is a Dread Companion, as detailed in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Soul of the North: The Chill Touch power this spell grants requires a Powers Check when used as the spell normally would when cast.

Magics

Spells

Arrow of Bone: As the spell Slay Living. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Blackfire: Those slain by this spell rise as some form of spectral undead, such as an Effigy (see Monster Manual II), Rushlight, or a Specter. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check. As well, even those who successfully save against the spell are sickened each round, even if they make three saves in a row. This sickened condition lasts the full duration of the spell.

Blink, Greater: See Ethereal.

Burning Blood: As Finger of Death except that the victim may rise as an acidic or fire-related undead, such as a Giant Skeleton. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Fiendform: See Transmutation. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check. Although this spell changes the caster's type to Outsider, it does not give him an alignment subtype, and thus does not grant a Reality Wrinkle.

Flensing: Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Ghostform: If the caster is killed while the spell is in effect, they will rise as a Ghost.

Heart of Stone: While this spell is in effect the caster also gains immunity to exhaustion, fatigue, nausea, sickening, and stunning. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Heart Ripper: Every creature the caster kills with this spell provides him with HP equal to the creature's HD. These bonus HP can take the caster over his normal total, but they disappear one hour later. These HP are not lost first; they disappear at the end of an hour regardless of the damage the caster has taken (possibly killing the caster if he is low on HP). Any creature killed by this spell may very well animate as a free-willed

zombie. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Kiss of the Toad: The Constitution damage caused by this spell is increased to 1d6+1 in each instance of damage. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Metal Skin: See Transmutation.

Pain: Add +1 to your effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Programmed Amnesia: See Enchantment.

Reanimation: As Raise Dead.

Shadow Binding: See Illusion (Shadow).

Snake Darts: See Transmutation.

Spirit Binding: As Lesser Planar Binding. See Conjunction (Calling). If used to call an evil creature the spell requires a Powers Check.

Spirit Binding, Lesser: As Lesser Planar Binding. See Conjunction (Calling). If used to call an evil creature the spell requires a Powers Check.

Spirit Binding, Greater: As Lesser Planar Binding. See Conjunction (Calling). If used to call an evil creature the spell requires a Powers Check.

Spirit Self: If the caster is killed while this spell is in effect, he will rise as an incorporeal undead of some kind. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Spiritwall: Any creature killed by the Spiritwall has its soul join the creation, and cannot be brought back to life by any spell other than a Miracle or Wish while the spell is in effect. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Summon Elemental Monolith: See Conjunction (Summoning).

Sword of Darkness: Add +1 to your effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Wall of Gloom: See Illusion (Shadow).

Withering Palm: For every 3 points damaged, the caster gains 5 temporary HP. These HP are lost first, or disappear after one hour if not used up before then. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Warlock Invocations

Baleful Utterance: Invoking this invocation requires a Powers Check.

Charm: See Enchantment.

Curse of Despair: As Bestow Curse.

Dark Discorporation: If the Warlock is killed in this form he will rise as a Shadow.

The Dead Walk: As Animate Dead.

Enervating Shadow: Those who fail the Fortitude save because of proximity to this invocation are also sickened for 5 rounds. Invoking this invocation requires a Powers Check.

Hungry Darkness: This invocation can only be used in domains with Full ecologies.

Path of Shadow: As Shadow Walk.

Summon Swarm: See Conjunction (Summoning).

Tenacious Plague: See Conjunction (Summoning).

Utterdark Blast: As Enervation. Invoking this invocation requires a Powers Check.

Wall of Gloom: See Illusion (Shadow).

Word of Changing: Invoking this invocation requires a Powers Check.

Magic Items

Staves

Ethereal Action: See Ethereal in the "Altered Spells" section of the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Fiendish Darkness: See Conjunction (Summoning). See Animate Dead.

Mastery: See Enchantment.

Night: See Conjunction (Summoning).

Skulls: See Animate Dead & Inflict Critical Wounds.

Transportation: See Teleportation.

Wondrous Items

Aroma of Curdled Death: Using this item requires a Powers Check.

Book of Blood: See Conjunction (Summoning). See Finger of Death. Using this item's Finger of Death or summoning powers (if possible) requires a Powers Check.

Instruments of the Bards, Canaith Mandolin: See Conjunction (Summoning).

Instruments of the Bards, Ollamh Harp: See Eyebite.

Arcane Monsters

Effigy Creature: Effigy Creatures can be created from desire rather than the expenditure of XP. This results in the Effigy Creature having the Dread Construct template applied to it.

Elemental Grue: See Conjunction (Summoning). Grues can be summoned in Ravenloft, but they may very well take on the Corrupted Elemental abilities, as outlined in John Mangrum's "New Ravenloft Monsters" article, available on the Fraternity of Shadows website. Summoning a Grue requires a Powers Check.

Pseudonatural Creature: Using the Alternate Form ability that Pseudonatural creatures have often provokes a Horror save in onlookers.

Arcane Organizations

The Arcane Order

The Arcane Order operates primarily in the lands of Darkon, Har'Akir, Hazlan, and Sri Raji in Ravenloft. Despite this, only in Hazlan does it advertise its presence. While in the lands of Darkon, Har'Akir, and Sri Raji the Order doesn't hide per se, it tries not to draw any undue attention to its whereabouts or activities. Instead, it relies on its members to promote membership and the Order's interests.

The aforementioned domains however are only the lands where the headquarters of the Order and Spellpools are based. Small cells of the Order can be found throughout Ravenloft, although such cells do not have established Spellpools within that domain and must rely on a Spellpool from another domain.

The Arcane Order is one group, but has fractured into four factions, each corresponding to one of the four domains of Darkon, Har'Akir, Hazlan, and Sri Raji. Each group has an overarching alignment which most of the members follow, although this is not a requirement. The Darkonian branch is Neutral Evil, the Akiri branch is Neutral Good. The Hazlani branch is Lawful Evil, and the Rajian branch is Chaotic Good. Again, these are not set restrictions, just generalizations of the average outlook of a member of the particular branches. Discrepancies from this generalization are not unknown.

Seekers of the Song

As many Seekers of the Song are found within the depths of the Shadow Rift, the first organization of this group occurred in that dim chasm. The Shee originated the practice, and the Half-Arak of their nature

followed. The Shee are too chaotic to form an organized group however, and the Seekers of the Song within the Shadow Rift are a loose confederation at best. Often they will meet by chance in travels, and share what knowledge they have gained in their time. In this way, the practice survives within the Rift.

In the lands above, the Seekers have bases in the lands of Darkon, Kartakass, Necropolis, Souragne, & Sri Raji. Darkon, Kartakass, and Necropolis all have bardic colleges that teach aspiring students, and while not all colleges are connected to the Seekers, there are at least a few that maintain ties and can point prospective students in the right direction. The land of Sri Raji in the Verdurous Lands cluster teaches its members of the Seekers of the Song at the great University of Tvashti, passing along the traditions and secrets through books. Finally, in the land of Souragne, Seekers of the Song arise through self-discovery and experimentation, or through the teachings of a single mentor. There is no great presence of the Seekers within the swampy domain, though travelers may pass through from time to time, searching for the Primal Music within the strange music present in the domain.





Races of the Mists

The Fey

By David "of the Fraternity" Gibson

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Introduction

Oh, my Esteemed Brothers, it has been a long and trying series of months. I spent the waning weeks of autumn moving through the woods and hills of Hazland and Kartakass before finding myself at the edge of the great forest, the sparsely populated yet expansive wood that covers much of the Southwestern lands.

I moved slowly through Sithicus, at first along the Merchant's Way road and then through the various trails and paths. It was a mistake to begin my quest so late in the year as I soon found myself trudging through snow and frosty underbrush for days at a time. I have never been a rural person preferring the sights and sounds of a decently sized city, so spending the winter months miles from the smallest city is as close to hell as I can imagine.

Currently, I have managed to survive my ordeal and have stationed myself in the small Valachan town of Rotwald for the time being. How ironic is the situation when I

consider Valachan to be civilization? But after months of no company but the subhuman Fey, I am quite relieved to find myself surrounded again by humans.

I have been researching the elven people since Darkon where I spent several pleasant weeks touring the Eastern half of that land. I have seen far fewer of the Fair Folk since I left the North, but still encountered the occasional traveler. The homeland of the elves, the enchanted wood of Sithicus, proved the climax of my research and I can now begin writing. I have pages and pages of notes on elves and fey which I can now compile quickly into this report you now hold in your hands.

My journeying is close to over. For this, I am thankful. I have felt cut-off for ages; the damned wood is almost another world. I hope I have missed nothing of importance in Richemulot since I departed last year. I must simply journey North through Valachan and finish my notes on gnomes before returning home to cap off my work with the information on half-breeds.

Folklore

As always, I begin with the common knowledge on my subjects. The debatable facts swapped by firesides and liberally sprinkled into tavern tales.

The Fair Folk are commonly agreed to be nature spirits, the embodiment of trees and woods that have taken human form. They may look and act mortal but they are not, requiring neither food nor sleep. They merely imitate humanity, miming our behavior.

As spirits, they are immortal and live forever -or as long as their woods survive. They cannot be slain or destroyed, just sent back to their lairs. They do not grow old and are immune to all disease and poisons.

The peoples of the Core often have differing myths regarding sub-humans but curiously this isn't the case for elves. Most lands view the fey quite similarly. While some of the minor details vary, most agree that elves are tied to the natural world. Borcan and my native Richemulot both agree that elves eat petals and drink dew while Barovia believes that elves are mischievous creatures that bring cause disease to livestock and feast on suffering. The folk of Tempest have views similar to Barovia and relate elves to evil spirits and the minions of witches. The folk of Mordent have a particularly romantic version where they believe the Fey are idealized humans, men who did not fall from grace or become removed from nature.

Dementlieu is an odd exception as they believe that real elves are less than a foot tall and have butterfly-like wings. Although, I suspect this was the result of some decade-old language confusion.

Both Darkon and the Southwestern Core have few legends of note, likely due to their proximity to true elves. There are many Kartakan songs involving elves and forest

spirits that take artistic liberties, but most are unique and hardly universal beliefs in the land.

Almost universally, elves dress themselves in leaves and bark with vines as belts and garlands of holly as jewelry. Many claim they never wear furs, leather or cloth harvested from animals and that any animal goods are abhorrent to them. They walk barefoot although some tales say elves employ halflings and shoemakers.

Elven homes vary from hollowed stumps to villages hidden in the boughs of trees while some more fanciful tales speak of whole cities built around the trunks of trees, hundreds of feet above the ground. I also met a Dementlieu gentleman who insisted that elves live in giant mushrooms and that rings of the fungi can be used as gateways to their land.

The fey are said to live in another world, one removed from our own; it is another land entirely that is reachable through hidden doorways and entrances. In this magical Otherworld time travels differently and visiting mortals become ensorcelled or enraptured. One common tale speaks of a traveler who stumbled into the Faerie world and tarries there for several months before returning home, only to find decades have past and his children had all grown up.

Along the Western Coast it is believed that wizards can summon fey from this Otherworld. Powerful mages often have several faerie servants who act as butlers or retainers and sometimes as assistants in magical rites. There are few better instructors of magic than the fey. Others expand this into the belief that fey can be summoned to perform magical acts the summoned cannot do themselves.

The elves are said to be masterful shots and fey archers are feared by all warriors. Legends claim they are unerring marksmen and some more outlandish tales say they can

shot a man's soul from his body separating the two. Elven bows are also uniformly enchanted and cannot be fired by anyone save their owner.

Another common legend tells that fey kidnap infants from their crib and replace them with Changeling babes, faux infants whom quickly die. Parents, oblivious to the swap, assume their child has died leaving the real infant to the mercies of the fey.

Other general legends attribute many supernatural abilities to the fey: they can become invisible at will, they cannot be tracked and leave no footsteps in the wilderness, they have no shadows, they are all insane and unpredictable and are incapable of emotion.

Elves are often given magical powers and abilities, natural gifts that allow them to shape nature or summon animals. These powers are different from sorcery or magecraft and are innate talents possessed by all.

The Truth

Easily the biggest cause of confusion about the nature of elves is the Shadow Fey. The legends of these fey have become blurred and mingled with that of the more mundane woodland fey. Likewise, the myriad of sylvan creatures of legend and fact have all been associated with these two races including such diverse creatures as leprechauns, halflings, dryads, nymphs, and more. However, there is more than a little overlap between the Arak and other fey and I am left wondering how different they truly are.

Elves are magical beings, that is quite true. The few fey I have encountered have an eerie and unnatural grace, their movements are fluid and deliberate as if every motion has a purpose. They seem to glow with an unearthly radiance, not a literal light but an

invisible aura as if they alone are walking in sunlight while the rest of us slink about in the shadows. Light breezes seem to follow them, continually playing with their cloaks and tussling their hair.

On the surface they are human in appearance, only with flawless skin and perfect features. Their ears come to a graceful point and are slightly elongated but easily concealed by clothing or hair. Elven eyes are also unusually: oddly shaped and angled with unnatural hues. Most unnervingly, the eyes of the fey catch and reflect light like an animal's, often giving the impression their eyes are glowing in the dark. Curiously, elves have little body hair. No elf is able to grow a beard or mustache but neither have I seen a balding elf. Deformity and disfiguration are almost unknown to the fey and even wounds seldom leave scars.

It is quite easy to mistake a fey for a mortal, especially if they are disguised. They are human in stature, if a little short and slender, but only slightly below the norm. They stand out more when compared to burlier folk such as the Falkovnians than the gentry of Dementlieu. Of all the sub-human races, elves have the easiest time moving through human lands. While other races are feared less, such as the halflings and gnomes, the fey have ease veiling their natures. However, it is very rare for them to go unnoticed entirely.

The daily requirements of elves are less fantastic than one is lead to believe. They need both food and drink to survive, although they need less than humans. They are also not immune to poison or disease and, with their frailer constitutions, actually more susceptible to both. Curiously, I have a number of first-hand accounts that suggest that a fey's tie to the land may aid them against disease and the like, but I have never witnessed this myself.

Elven Biology

Elves able to eat fresh fruit and vegetables (including berries, nuts and most grains) require only half as much food per day to function. In game terms, they require only half a pound of food to avoid starvation effects.

However, if required to subsist on preserved food and/or fresh animal products (meat, dairy) they require the standard amount of food. Elves forced to live on preserved or aged animal products need twice the normal food to function.

Elves also have a tie to the land of their birth; this increases their recuperative powers and heightens their endurance. In their home domain elves heal faster: for each day of rest and natural healing they recover an extra hit point. This bonus is doubled for complete bed rest.

Elves very close of their actual birthplace have this bond strengthened. While within the ten-mile radius they receive a +2 racial bonus to Fortitude saving throws against poison and disease.

Sithican elves have a much weaker tie to the land; on some level they know it is not their true home. Elves that were not born in Sithicus (those under forty years old or born before 720 BC) have the above benefits halved.

While they are trancing and not truly sleeping elves are still required to make a Listen check to wake themselves (see the Ravenloft Dungeon Masters Guide). However, once awoken they are instantly alert and aware of their surroundings. Interestingly, elves that enter their trance in Ravenloft mentally touch the Dreamplane like all slumbering beings and are just as vulnerable to the predation of the Nightmare Court! Outlander elves are even more vulnerable as they are not used to the foreign dreams and are tempting targets for the Court.

I was tempted to poison a few to witness this firsthand but, as the only outsider, I decided to avoid suspicion.

Curiously, elves do not sleep. They have need of rest but they do not sleep. Instead they enter a meditative trance for four hours, during which they rest their mind and body. While similar to sleep, there are differences. Elves can awaken suddenly and without any disorientation but they are just as difficult to arouse as typical sleepers. The Fair Folk have a superstition against violently and suddenly rousing elves as they fear the soul and mind may be too spread out for all of it to return in time.

Meditating elves also dream. These dreams are similar to the dreams of other races but far more lucid and easily recalled. The fey believe these dreams are often prophetic, heralding things to come. Others believe they enter another realm while dreaming where illusions and phantoms are encountered.

While not the fantastic beings of legend, fey are blessed with some supernatural gifts. They can see easily in dim lighting and some can even total darkness. In fact, all elven senses are heightened. Because of these senses elves are prematurely skilled at spotting hidden passages and concealed doors. Some claim this ability is supernatural or a result of superior elven aesthetics (where they are so skilled at art and design they can 'see' where a door should be but isn't) but I believe this ability is strictly mundane. Sensitive skin feels the flow of air while impressive eyes spot the cracks of the portal.

As the tales, elves are typically natural archers. From a young age they are educated with bows and most elves have some rough skill with the weapon. There is nothing supernatural about this; they simply have much practice with the weaponry.

I should be clear at this point that I am not implying there is nothing magical about the fey. I am merely pointing out where the legends have diverged from reality and into speculative fiction. The fey are clearly inhuman, supernatural creatures.

Magic and the mystic arts come naturally to the fey. Many learn a few simple spells and there is no ignorant taboo on the arcane. Magic is seen simply a manipulation of natural forces and viewed in the same light as such mundane activities as gardening or crafting. While much of their aptitude and talent for magic could be the result of its openness and formal training, elves still inarguably possess an innate talent for the magical.

The fey also do not spring fully-grown from trees or the Mists but are born much the same as any creature. They age slower than men, perhaps at half the rate, reaching physical maturity around the age of forty. Their mental development is much slower, most likely because they are taught and educated in sporadic bursts. I also think the adolescent elves themselves are unwilling to quickly grow up as they see no rush or benefit.

One myth I have been unable to confirm nor deny is the ability of mages to summon a fey through magic. While my own limited attempts have failed, summoning is not my school of expertise. It would be easy to ignore the tales of summoned fey but they are too numerous to be entirely fiction. However, I have my doubts that fey can easily be as coerced into becoming servants as the stories suggest.

Elves are immortal. They cannot die of old age and exist for centuries, remaining youthful in appearance for most of those days. After two or three hundred years some elves develop wrinkles and have lightly lined faces, but this merely seems to accentuate their personalities, often scholarly and

Summoning Fey and Immortal Servitude

Elves can be summoned by the spells *Summon Monster* or *Summon Nature's Ally* at the will of the DM. The elf in question must be in a region currently near the Mists and have Hit Dice numbering less than or equal to the level of the spell. The chances of the spell summoning a fey is 10% per spell level. Thus, a mage casting *Summon Monster* IV could summon a 4th level elf 40% of the time.

Elves have a choice whether or not to answering a summons; they are not forced or snatched through the Mists. A particular individual or elf cannot be selected as the target of a summons, the choice is random (or up to the Dark Powers). Elves cannot be summoned across a closed domain border.

The summoning spell essentially creates a two-way Mistway of excellent reliability between where the elf is and the summoner. The elf instinctively knows the duration of the spell and can return through the Mistway before it expires. An elf who delays too long or chooses not to return is not automatically returned as other summoned beings. However, if the summoner dismisses the spell prematurely the elf may become trapped.

Elves are under no magical obligation to aid or assist their summoner. Many help out of curiosity or as entertainment. Immortals such as elves have few qualms about spending a few months or years pretending to be a human or feigning servitude, often just to try something new. Cunning mages might still use other means to enchant or manipulate an elf into compliance. However, while many elves might not object to playing butler all take offence at being forced to do anything and will take often take great offence and seek revenge.

educated or in positions of authority, occupations where age and wisdom are assets. Even at extreme age (the oldest I have found on record, an impressive 750 years old, almost pre-dating the founding of Barovia!) elves still have some youthful appearance even if their hair is thinning and their muscles are weak.

As stated above, elves do not die of old age. Elven gravesites are entirely populated by those who died of accident or disease or violence. Those Fair Folk who believe they have grown too old, usually three or four centuries in age, simply walk out into the Mists. Legends abound as to the reasons for this activity. Some say the elves are becoming one with the Mists or are journeying to the land of their ancestors. Others claim there is a land still hidden in the Mists, one travelers cannot find and entirely populated by fey. One rumour of note I should pass along to my Esteemed Brothers is that the fey leave to join with the forces that control our land, they become the enigmatic Watchers in the Shadows. While likely a fanciful legend it still bears investigation.

Society

The society of the Fair Folk is often difficult for mere mortals such as my self to understand. The intricacies of daily life when that day is but one of hundreds of thousands are often subtle. I could only spend a few scant months studying the elven folk. To presume to be an expert is akin to spending a couple weeks in Mordent and claiming to know everything on their way of life. One might never see dishes being done or visit on laundry day but that would not mean the people are slovenly or do not engage in such activities. Still, I believe I have been thorough enough in my research for it to not be completely dismissed.

For all their snobbish, superior attitudes and unnatural auras, the fey are very similar to humans. They eat and rest, laugh and love, all that makes us human. All that truly separates them for humanity is their immortality, and that is a large difference. For what drives us more in life than the knowledge that one day it will end? Immortality is the crux of the fey; everything revolves around this single difference.

People tend not to fixate on our mortality, but neither do we ignore it. Time is too short to be entirely wasted. We may squander days, sometimes even weeks, but it is unlikely we will procrastinate for entire years. A fey thinks nothing of spending a year perfecting a song, a decade working in a garden or generation practicing their craft. Time is meaningless for the Fair Folk.

While much has been made of immortality being granted or gained by mortals -the lengthy discussions in the Darkonian Doctor's works on lichdom or vampirism for example- things differ with those who have never known mortality. Those who work to become immortal know well how short life is and those granted eternal life knew the sting of death, but the fey know neither.

The average fey knows only a few people who have died, typically from accidents or of those few 'lesser races' that live in elven lands. At best they have an academic or detached view of death. They are never taught to worry about finishing something and are seldom given deadlines. Elves do not understand the need to rush; instead, they believe that anything worth doing must take time. In fact, with the causes of most premature deaths being accidents or violence many elves are overly cautious in avoiding mishap. They take pains to avoid incident becoming even less efficient and productive.

Occasionally elves are motivated to finish some task, oftentimes through an imposed deadline. Ironically, the best way to get an elf

to do something is tell them not to do it. A challenge or restriction will sometimes be a surprisingly effective motivator. This should be used with caution. A fey who is prevented from doing something or hindered in some activity will often feel incredibly slighted. Even if the activity was trivial its denial will be a grievous insult.

Apathy and procrastination are the cornerstones of elven society, an entire way of life. Darkonian elves lean towards procrastination and caution. They are slow and methodical but prone to distraction leaving things half-finished. In contrast, Sithican elves feel removed from their land and feel little need to even start projects! However, in other lands, elves may have found a balance between their longevity and the need to accomplish something, but this is not the case in the Land of the Mists. Something else was at work, something that took me months of research.

There is much more going on in the minds of the Fair Folk than mere detachment and apathy. Elves have long lives and even longer memories. They are in touch with the world in a way mortal men are not. They have learned that something is coming, that were are on the eve of a great change. They can feel it in the earth, hear it in the wind and see it in the stars. For us mortals this event is still decades away, not worth becoming overly preoccupied about. Who knows what will happen between now and then? For the elves, a few decades is a short span of time and they wonder why they should start anything -do anything- if the end is so near. Many have yet to accept this openly but it nags at their minds beneath the surface, poisoning their deeds. The atmosphere of fatalism and inevitability is contagious and quickly becoming epidemic.

Vendetta!

On rare occasions an elf will swear revenge on someone over an insult or slight. Accidental mishaps are quickly warped and twisted into deliberate and highly personal insults -a result of elves' selfish natures. A simple apology or restitution is not enough for the elf; revenge becomes a matter of pride.

As a long-lived people, elves think nothing of devoting a year or even decade towards revenge. With months to seethe even minor insults are magnified and grow in the mind of the elf into unforgivable trespasses and elaborate punishments are concocted.

Punishments are often grandiose and layered, frequently confusingly so. Sometimes it is a multitude of small indignities over years while other times it is a single, massive event. Poetic justice is preferred and revenge seldom ends in death as the elf wishes the victim to suffer or squirm.

Lifestyle

Elven homes are built to be in harmony with nature. While they like trees to play an integral role in their homes, they do not build massive cities in comically large boughs. Instead, homes are typically built around trees using the trunks as pillars or part of the frame. Often small groves are used to support all four walls in an elven home.

Elven architecture varies between lands. Darkonian elves use local stone for foundations then build walls out of wood that is then plastered or mudded for insulation and décor. Small vines, bushes or pleasing mosses are sometimes planted along the foundations and allowed to creep across the walls. These vines are rather eye-

catching in the spring when the entire cottage seems to bloom. Cautious or paranoid elves replace these vines with thorny bushes giving the impression their home is in the middle of a thicket. Houses are slowly improved over centuries with the walls strengthened, adornments added and the general aesthetic improved. The Darkonian cities have been around for generations and the buildings are masterfully constructed.

Sithican elves prefer a much more fanciful construction building slender towers out of wood, stone and crystal. The land's mines and quarries have all but been depleted of this rosy quartz; old buildings are often torn down for new ones can be constructed. It is therefore a good that the population is slowly dwindling. It should be noted that these once slender and graceful buildings are in desperate need of repair. Walls crumble and floors creak with age and wear, vines and thistles along the walls have been allowed to grow rampantly and the roots often worm their way into the foundations threatening whole buildings. It is often a miracle that whole villages have not collapsed into ruin.

Stylistically, elven homes feature graceful curves and mimic natural forms. Beams that hold up a roof could be carved to mimic a tree canopy with the ceiling painted a light green or a broad cloth hanging in a doorway might appear to be dangling leaves. Elven homes have a uniform design, opening into a single common room. Occasionally there are smaller side rooms for storage or personal possessions, but these are too small to live in and resemble something in-between closets and display rooms.

These structures do not have bedrooms or even beds, elves have no need of them. For those driven inside by weather or danger a single woven mat on the floor suffices for the night. Furniture is rare, often only a few chairs and a single table or desk. Shelving is

common although much of this is built directly into the walls. The homes themselves are small as fey seldom spend time indoors. The structures themselves are strictly used for storage of perishables, that which cannot survive centuries of exposure. Meals are often taken outside and many a fey spends their nightly trances under the stars.

Again, Sithican elves have a different style. These towers, like all fey habitats, are more extensive storage space than living quarters. For Sithicans this is advantageous. I cannot imagine how the full contents of a home could be compressed and built into a slender tower. The lowest levels of the towers are typically a common space, a comfortable sitting area for entertaining company. These rooms are typically built for acoustics. Staircases or elaborate ramps then spiral upward to the higher floors where the personal possessions are kept, in addition to small kitchens and pantries. Walls and other separations of space are unknown in Sithican towers; even the graceful ramps do not have railings. I felt a strong touch of vertigo ascending to the upper floors.

Parks and gardens always dominate Elven communities; nature is integral to their layout. Elven villages and cities are typically built as concentric circles, often with rings of trees separating neighbourhoods. Trees are typically used in place of walls or fortifications but some towns still have stone wrought defenses.

Elven communities are usually disguised or at least hard to find. Entrances are tucked away in groves of trees and whole villages are strategically placed to be overlooked. I suspect elven magic also plays some part in the hidden nature of these homes. While not as xenophobic as halflings, the fey enjoy their privacy and respect the dangers of man.

Fruit trees, berry patches and small vegetable gardens are interspersed throughout communities as shared sources of

food. These meandering orchards are often magically coaxed to grow more produce. Orchard are seldom separate and instead allowed to grow free. The fey refuse to have their trees penned up in small groves or forced to grow only in certain areas. The entire village and surrounding lands are their farms and gardens. Common produce includes cabbage, turnips and some varieties of wild oats in addition to grapes and fruit.

Animals are seldom kept and almost never as livestock. When the fey feel the urge for meat, they just simply hunt. Some elves keep small pets, often rabbits or other small herbivores, but dogs and cats are unusual. Some elven communities do have small pastures where animals are raised, but this is primarily for trade with other communities rather than personal use.

While elves are excellent cooks and knowledgeable in a diverse number of spices they prefer quick and simple meals, most would rather get the necessities -such as eating- over and done with, to return to activities that actually interest them. Elven chefs on the other hand, are master cooks who have spent decades perfecting each and every recipe. Meals can be fanciful and elaborate affairs if the fey wish it, delicate and seemingly impossible dishes painstakingly crafted over the course of whole nights with dozens of courses and precise flavors. Or they can be bland soup quickly thrown together so the cook can spend time perfecting other recipes.

It is a shame there are so few practicing elven chefs. My meals in Darkon and Sithicus were some of the best since I left home. I have even purchased a few vials of spice for my own chef to employ.

The work of artisans is similar to that of chef. Elves are capable of elegant and beautiful works that are works of art and still working items. I have seen hammers and knives delicately sculpted and engraved with

perfect balance. However, most elves are more interesting in producing a quickly made item that is barely functional so they can return to whatever really interests them.

Elven craftsmen typically work with wood, sculpting and carving their goods. Furniture is a rarity but some carpenters fashion wonderfully engraved stools and desks. Metalworking is rare among the elves but they have an unexpected affinity for it. Fey armourers know how to craft an impossibly light set of chain mail from a rare dwarven ore, this elven chain is effortless to wear and remarkably sturdy. However, dwarves seldom surrender the precious ore so this remarkable armour is highly rare. It matters not as elven craftsmen seldom find the time to bother with such projects.

Fey traders typically barter their goods and food for other supplies, typically leather, wools and ore. These exchanges occur on the elves timetable, when they need or desire something, and those who seek out fey for trade are often turned away empty-handed. Commissioned work is even rarer and woe to the poor fool that hires an elf to craft something. Stories abound of rich collectors, enchanted by elven masterworks, who hire one of the Fair Folk to design and build something, only to have years pass before the fey gets around to finishing it. The fabled Baron of Maykle is an example of this, a collector of swords he desired an elven blade to finish his collection and hired a smith in Nevuchar Springs to craft the blade. On the man's deathbed, thirty years later, the fey arrived bearing the weapon.

There are three predominantly elven communities in Darkon, and Nevuchar Springs is but one. Other cities that claim to have elven residents typically only have small sub-communities located on the outskirts of the town, close to the woods or surrounding farmlands. Other times, elven neighbourhoods were located on the edge of

the town before the city grew and engulfed the small fey homes. Typical fey neighbourhoods are only marginally connected to the towns, instead being surrounded by parkland and natural orchards.

Karg is an example of a town only tentatively connected to its elven population who, like the shepherds and farmers, live outside the imposing walls of the town proper. Maykle is the opposite, having subsumed a small elven settlement in the nearby hills.

Nevuchar Springs is predominance of fey and has the strongest inhuman feeling of any elven town. Elves vastly outnumber the other races in the city proper. The folk there avoid trade and contact with outsiders, and have made no effort to have the highway extended to them. The unveiling of the Nocturnal Sea was devastating for them as it exposed their town to foreigners and greatly increased trade. As people with long memories and lives, elves do not enjoy sudden change and becoming the largest western port is certainly that.

The Springs itself is a pleasant enough town with an emphasis on hedges over trees. Since they were miles away from other settlements, they felt little need to hide their small town completely and instead planted fruit bushes and other light shrubbery. As the Springs area is sparsely wooded the fey settled around a large copse of trees. The town itself quickly outgrew the small grove and they resorted to strategically planting new trees. All this lends a curiously artificial feel to an elven village despite the large and wild hedges and meandering bushes, all the trees have been precisely planted.

Sadly, my visit to Nevuchar Springs took place in the early fall; the town must be stunningly beautiful in the spring. The entire city must become alive with new growth and small flowers.

Sidnar is another isolated town, hidden in a wooded dale amongst some choppy hills. The single road meanders about the hill so the town is perpetually out of sight, many a traveler will give up on the town, returning in the direction they came. While Nevuchar Springs is the most predominantly elven town, Sidnar is archetypal of elven design and style.

Sidnar is not a town where trees grown but a large grove where a town was built. Here nature is not controlled or sculpted, it is given free reign in beautiful chaos, the way of the Darkonian elves. The houses blend imperceptively into the thick woods with wild gardens woven between the homes. Cobblestone streets weave through the hills and serve as a main thoroughfare for carts and traders but the elves themselves move through hidden paths in the underbrush.

There are only a handful of obvious buildings, ones built in a human style. The first is the inn overlooking the river and the trading outpost is another. However, the most well known is the Collegium Caelestis, a school for the study of the natural sciences. The Collegium and its students, faculty and alumni make up a large percentage of the human population in this elven community. The campus almost functions independently of the town. The fey tolerate this because they feel it is their duty to educate those seeking knowledge of nature and the world we live in.

The town is also home to one of the largest astrological guilds, the Omen Watchers, who maintain the telescopes and small observatories of the Star Spire. The fey are dedicated astrologers; something I believe has to do with the permanence of the stars. When one lives for centuries there are few constants, the stars are one. The fey have grown skilled at prognostication and may even rival the Vistani at stargazing, although

elven horoscopes tend to be vague, especially concerning mundane details.

While elves specialize in prophecy and visions of the future the Omen Watchers specialize in horoscopes, a more recent art. Astrological prophecy is much more impersonal, focusing instead on events and times while horoscopes are much more tailored to individual destinies. However, some more traditional elven seers -typically Sithican- dismiss the Omen Watchers entirely.

The final Darkonian city is Neblus which, despite having both human and elven inhabitants, has a distinctly elven air. The other residents have adopted elven fashions and mannerisms, often peppering their speech with elvish words and phrases. The elves respond to this but lapsing into tradition and conservative behavior to differentiate themselves and maintain their group identity.

The buildings are a mixture of elven and human design, especially given their construction from stone. There are few woods in the region; Neblus is uncomfortably close to the damp Boglands for most trees. Neither hedges nor bushes grown as the Mists themselves obscure the town from sight. Ivy and other creeping vines are still common, winding their way up the recycled rock walls of the town. The sun and wind worn stone, paired with these vines, makes the town seem ancient beyond its years, appropriate for the fey.

The Misty Border almost permanently enshrouds this town. While most Darkonians (and the inhabitants of other lands for that matter) situate the elven lands in the ethereal region of Darkon known as the Mistlands, only Neblus is actually still beside the pale borders, sea and mountains having supplanted the Mists near other towns. However, the reputation of the Mistlands remains. The endless expanse of white that is

Neblus' northern horizon certainly adds an unearthly air to the town; thick wisps of fog often shroud whole neighbourhoods.

The surrounding borders have had an effect on folk's perceptions of the elves. Some Darkonians even believe they are the sprits of the dead given how near they live to the Mists. I need not retell the curious properties of these Mists and how time pass strangely within them. For a period I was convinced it was the Mists that spawned legends of people losing track of the days when in the lands of the fey. I was not even surprised when I wandered into Nova Vassa and found the date not what I had expected. However, my time in Sithicus taught me otherwise.

There are three major settlements in Sithicus, all eerily similar to each other. They are built in a concentric circle style, strictly according to elven designs. While other elven settlements roughly follow this design of circles expanding outward, non-Sithican settlements are far less rigid in the application.

As I ventured inward from Kartakass, the first 'city' I encountered was the capital, Har-Thelen. The city, little more than a large village by human standards, is walled with light stone that is choked with thick vines. Weeds and other unwanted vegetation worms its way through any available crack rendering these walls weak and crumbling. The village itself would be invisible in the dense underbrush if not for the traveled road leading towards it. The bordering Musarde also exposes the city as the river valley reveals the walls.

The buildings of Har-Thelen are typical Sithican buildings. Instead of small, squat houses they have built elegant towers of brilliant marble and rose quartz stretch towards the sky. They must have been breathtaking at their prime but not reek of

decay and a lack of maintenance. Many seem unstable and on the verge of collapse.

Located at the edge of the rings is the Musarde River, recently constructed docks and buildings house most of the non-elven population of Har-Thelen. Much of this is built in a style mimicking human architecture, as if the laborers were advised by outsiders. The towers are squat with several adjacent rooms for sleeping and eating, although the space is still cramped.

Har-Thelen has a tense air that was palpable even during my short stay. The myriad people of mixing races do not like each other despite living as neighbors. The elves are both fearful and distrusting of the humans who are in turn superstitious and paranoid. So far common prosperity has held the animosity in check but I fear what could happen if the situation changed.

It is not an easy trek overland through Sithicus. The woods and supernatural aura of the land make travel near impossible, even for residents. Most rely on the rivers and paths that move between the waterways, but this still leaves the largest settlement in Sithicus isolated and almost cut-off. Moving west through the dense woodland I stumbled across Hroth almost by accident. A single fern-covered road leads to the town from the north, eventually ending a few hundred yards from the main gate.

Hroth itself is walled with the typical quartz barrier accentuated with briars and bushes with a single vaulting archway leading into the town, twinned by several sculpted trees. They do nothing to draw attention to the gate and the entire settlement remains almost totally hidden in the woods.

Hroth reminded me much of Har-Thelen, and not simply because of the land's affect on my faculties. The architecture is so similar that many of the buildings could be twins. The aristocratic core of the cities are almost mirror images and it is only the lower

castes' outer rings that differ, and even then only in size. The scale of the individual buildings did not vary, there simply many more in Hroth.

The parks of Hroth are large and expansive, separating each of the ringed districts. Parkland serves to demonstrate a key difference between Sithican and Darkonian fey. While latter are happy to simply live amongst nature, in harmony if you will, Sithicans prefer to shape nature into an idealized form. A Darkonian fey will allow trees and bushes to grow wild and freely and never attempt to impose their will on nature. Sithicans plant trees in precise aesthetic locations and sculpt bushes and hedges into pleasing yet otherwise impossible forms. An entire caste, the greenshapers, has responsibility over this activity.

However, even the Sithican's art of shaping plant life could not compete with their apathy and the once grand parks have fallen into disrepair. Hroth, as the largest city with the most dominant parks, is the prominent example of this; the wilds on nature have retaken control. Few now enter these wooded areas save for the well-trod thoroughfares, the wilder sections are rumoured to have become twisted over the years. Centuries of magiks in the plants have made them something more than natural and they can often be dangerous.

Venturing north, I came to Mal-Erek, a decent sized village that is the most visible of the three fey settlements. It is cut in twain by road leading south to Hroth and northwest into Valachan. A wide river plain to the north exposes the northern half of the town where the path lead from the settlement to the riverbanks' rotting docks.

Mal-Erek is isolated, seeing few visitors. Despite its exposed layout, few folk come down into the Fey Woods from Valachan. Invidians are also much more likely to

frequent Har-Thelen through the shared rivers than they are to wander through the woods to Mal-Erek. Once, long ago, the Fair Folk made religious pilgrimages to Mal-Erek but as the people grew detached most lost faith in higher powers.

Mal-Erek was once a key locale of the fey cults; several large churches were housed here and continue to exist in varying states of disrepair. Curiously, the largest temples have all be defiled and the icons utterly destroyed. Even more curiously, the damage appears to be natural, as if the temples were hammered by lightning strikes. Most have been pillaged of relics and valuables but local legends tell of unopened tombs and sprawling catacombs. The tales do inspire curiosity and I wonder what wonders of elven magic one might discover beneath, perhaps even something to aid us in our mission. Currently only one church still sees any visitors, the elven dragon-god whom I shall detail later.

Other elven settlements are not limited to single lands but are scattered across the entire Core. Small villages tucked away in woods dismissed by humans as haunted or hidden in forgotten valleys. These small hamlets conform to the standard elven styles and are almost miniature representations of the larger towns of Sithicus and Darkon. The homes of the noble caste or other authority figures are located in the centre with all other homes radiating outward. Most are protected by hedges or imposing briar patches or simply hidden in-between the trees.

The entire southern woods of the Core have often been called the Fey Woods, the giant forest that stretches from southern Richemulot and Borca to the lower Mists. These woods engulf four entire lands and they teem with life. Verbrek -even when it was Arkandale and the Misted Woods- was believed to be the source of all wolves in the Core. Likewise, Sithicus was the heart and source of all fey. They spread outward from

their enchanted wood, miles from civilization. Now that they border the Mists, they are believed to be even more haunted as the grey fog spreads endlessly through the trees like a specter.

The Fey Woods themselves have a reputation for magic and enchantment, one which I discovered to be quite true. One may wander the Mistlands of Darkon with some confusion, but the land is still human, albeit with a subhuman populace, but Sithicus is very clearly not the domain of men. One may wander for days there, lost on the straightest of roads. Memory quickly clouds and grows erratic and dreamlike. Even the most mundane of landmarks conjures up forgotten memories from childhood and every bend in the road seems implacably familiar. This effect is unnerving at worst but still an inconvenience, I have had to rely on my notebooks more heavily than I would like.

Most unnerving was my exit from Sithicus into Valachan. I had spent well over half a year in the woods, much of it living amongst the fey and recording their activities, but when I emerged from the woods into Valanchan I discovered only four months had passed. I assumed Valachan was suffering a long winter as I journeyed to Rotwald, only to discover spring was months yet away. Somehow I lost complete track of time in the Fey Woods. And I am not alone; I have heard many tales of people who spent only a few weeks in Sithicus only to find months had passed. A furrier swore he had spent three years in Har-Thelen and fathered a young halfbreed child only to return to Harmonia to find a single year had passed.

The effect is not constant as is the case in the land of the Arak. It is unpredictable and seemingly random; time is simply fluid in the southern woods and fey lands. While less pronounced in the Darkonian Mistlands or small fey settlements throughout the Core it is still universal. I had noticed a similar

effect after I left Sidnar but attributed it to the Mists. I believe it is the Fair Folk themselves whom cause this, unintentionally of course.

It has been theorized that the land responds to personalities, to force of will and personality. The Watchers in the Shadows have absolute control but other forces such as powerful demons can usurp the land. I believe the fey, with their immortality and tie to the land, have a similar effect. As time has little meaning to the ageless elves so does time flutter in their lands for people. But, again, this is just a theory.

What is most frustrating is that I am not entirely sure time changed. There was no

Time of the Fey

Time does not pass uniformly in the lands of the fey. This altered passage of minutes is all but imperceptible. Individuals typically do not notice the change; it is subtle and dreamlike and accentuated by the already inhuman surroundings. Time passes at identical speeds for groups, all members of a party experience the same shift. In theory everyone in the domain or region experiences the same shift but there may be pockets of altered time.

There is no set cause for this effect. The default assumption is that elves unwittingly affect the Mists around them shifting the passage of time around them. Individual elves have no noticeable effect only groups, especially stationary ones. The larger a population of elves the more time is affected. Sithicus and the Mistlands, with their already ethereal nature, are the most subject to this influence.

This affect is strictly atmospheric, designed to add an unearthly quality to fey lands. There are no hard rules or in-game bonuses and the application is up to the Dungeon Master. Whether time actually changes or if it is the dream-like nature of the fey lands clouding mortal minds is a decision for individual Dungeon Masters.

abrupt shift. It was if I lost track of my moments, as if I were so distracted that I could no longer notice the passage of days. My memories are unfocused and blurry that I cannot rightly recall how much time I spent in each city. It was if I stepped into a dream, unsure of what was real and what was my imagination.

The lifestyle of the Fair Folk, at least in theory, is dominated by music and the arts with even the most bland and functional of items designed to be aesthetically pleasing. For immortals, everything can be painstakingly crafted and stylized. In practice most elves would rather get the boring and mundane over and done with. Where once items as common as a saw or hammer would be masterwork items of more beauty than a Chateaufaux sculpture and everything was a celebration of the fey now there is only decadence.

Music and art are still present in the elven homes, with songs bursting from all corners and in the public squares a cacophony of sonnets and soliloquies fill the air. However, where once all art was a celebration of the people as a whole, the glory of the fey race, now there is only selfish desire. There is a distinctly hedonistic element to the elves with their pursuit of beauty and pleasure. As they believe there is little time left before the end the fey are no longer concerned with providing a lasting legacy.

Self-indulgence colours most elven artistic ventures. Plays are written for the satisfaction of the performers, often for them to showboat around. Songs favour certain instrumentalists or vocalists often excluding others leading to a one-sided sound.

Long instrumental songs are favoured among the Fair Folk. Songs are written to inspire emotions and convey feelings rather than tell a narrative or story. Vocal accompaniment in songs is non-verbal and is

instead an arrangement of tone and pitch designed to compliment the instruments. Elven songs are delicate works and haunting. There is an indescribable element to the works that mortal musicians cannot replicate.

Other forms of elven art include long poems that are incomprehensible due to the level of imagery and flowery language. There are a few gifted elven poets whose works are breathtaking but there are many more poets, hundreds really, also producing works of lesser quality. Recitals and performances are quite common and should be avoided at all costs. Painting is experiencing a resurgence amongst the elves, although these artists are practicing experimental styles and techniques that are both pretentious and ugly. Sculptures were once common but have become unfashionable over the past couple decades and there are many unfinished works littering homes, alleyways and parks. This is the inevitable fate of the paintings and poems as the artists grow bored and distracted moving on to their next project ignoring the current one.

Elves have few other pastimes believing most games to be juvenile and dismissing sports as uncivilized. Scholastic pursuits are sometimes engaged in and most elves of high castes can read several languages. However, there are precious few elven writers and foreign tomes are dismissed so precious little reading is done for relaxation.

Fey Songs

Groups of skilled elves can Fascinate creatures through their songs as per Bards. Each elf must have Perform ranks in the instrument being played and performing the same song, or at least playing complementary tunes.

The group acts a single Bard of a level equal to the total number of elves playing. A minimum of three elves must be present for the Fascination effect to occur. Specific individuals cannot be targeted, the effect is random. Neither can the Fascination effect be turned on or off, it is simply a side-effect of elven song.

One of the few popular games are challenges, tests of skill akin to competitions of gentleman's wagers. A few elves participate in games of fantasy, shared storytelling or role-playing with elaborate behaviour and rules. Curiously, these games sometimes go on for so long the participants forget they are playing a game and the fantasy all but becomes real. I believe the Mists or other forces may become involved in these events, but I have no proof.

Elaborate balls are also popular social events with fey of all castes and standings gathering to socialize. These are usually held out of doors near a host's home and attended by dozens of fey. Unnecessary amounts of food are brought in and musicians play endlessly. The gowns and decorations are always magnificent and the music and dancing elaborate.



My first time at a grand ball was unlike anything I have seen before and since. However, the pleasure is muted by the repetition and frequency. Balls are held nightly with only the host and venue changing. The same music is played and the same dances are danced and the same dresses are worn. It is almost a forced revelry, a centuries old habit. This is not to say the dances are identical. Variety comes from the fey's hedonism as they look for new ways to entertain themselves or shock the other revelers. However, after centuries everything has been tried at least once.

Recently, a new pastime was introduced to the fey from the East and has quickly spread throughout the more adventurous youth of Sithicus' communities. Hazlan has found a new and willing market for its intoxicants and drugs. Opium dens can be found in all three communities and several small villages have begun trading for the drugs. However, the price of addiction is growing. Hazlani wizards are known for their desire to study and experiment on sub-humans, which might easily lead to tragedy for Sithicus. Furthermore, the land's dwarven lord strongly disapproves of his workers in a stupor or funneling money into other markets. I shudder at the events that will occur if he clamps down on the border.

Typical fey have two names: a family name and a chosen name. Family names are combinations of two or more words in elven and often have some significance to the family. When translated they are names such as Greenleaf, Moondancer, Brightstar and the like. Many involve nature or the weather and very few are martial or violent. Most elves prefer the elven versions of their names, in this case Glaislen, Lloerdawyr and Eiriaren as they find translations into Mordentish or Balok ugly.

Elven children are given a short name when they are first born; this is their child-name. When an elf feels they are an adult they make up their own name reflecting their interests and dreams. Most elves choose this name after their first century of life when they are considered adults by fey society but some choose it earlier. After a name has been chosen, it is considered improper and poor taste to change it.

Family

The elves have a rigid caste structure that separates families and dictates behavior. Whom one can marry, address, work with and more are controlled by this elaborate system. Unlike other caste systems I have seen there is no distinct and overt hierarchy to the elven castes. Some are obviously higher in status than others, but many overlap in rank and privilege.

The six castes are the aristocrats, the religious scholars, the farmers, the artisans, the soldiers and the wizards. To the fey these are colorfully known as House Noble, House Watcher, House Greenshaper, House Crafter, House Ranger and House Arcane. Additionally, there is an unnamed caste of classless fey who are simply the servants. Non-elves and foreigners are associated with that caste.

House Noble is the third smallest of the castes -larger only than the religious and

magical castes- and could better be described as House Spoiled or House Bureaucracy. The various rulers of towns and nations are drawn from these extended families who are reputed to have a lineage that stretched back to the dawn of civilization. Fey of house noble are invariably rich and haughty, even more so than other elves. They hold a monopoly on the communities, running and collecting duties from the various guilds or tributes from the other houses. While the leaders of the individual towns are likely busy individuals who actually work hard, most members of House Noble spend their time in idle pursuits and drive the artistic endeavors of the region.

House Noble is divided into various lesser positions in an elaborate courtly system. Position varies through finances and current status with the various nobles vying for positions and favour. There is an endless waltz of betray and alliances as the families seek to change their status in what is at best a cosmetic manner.

House Watcher is the smallest of the castes with most of its members fallen in status becoming servants. These elves used to maintain the many temples of the heathen fey gods and their various associated cults. Now, with the shattering of elven faiths across the Core, they simply watch the sky for signs and portents. Fatalistic, members of House Watcher firmly believe the end is coming and await its coming. Many have launched themselves into grand displays of debauchery while others have fallen into deep melancholy.

House Greenshaper is responsible for growing food, maintaining the thorny defenses around the towns and shaping the towns' parkland. Over the decades they have grown lax and complacent allowing the defenses to grow wild, enchantments to slip and parklands to spread untamed. Meanwhile crops are no longer magically

coaxed from the surroundings but instead produced from the sweat and toil of the servants. While arguably the second largest caste most of House Greenshaper knows little of their duties and heritage. Some still hear the songs of the trees and become druids or witches of Hala, but most are concerned with themselves and daily life. A large number of poor artists, musicians and entertainers hail from the caste as they hunt for ways to occupy their time.

The largest of the true castes is House Crafter. While the servants may outnumber the craftsmen it is quickly pointed out they do not qualify as a caste. House Crafter is responsible for everything that is built or constructed. From homes to tools it is the purvey of the Artisans. This House still maintains some of its hierarchy of old with several smaller guilds coordinating activities and assigning apprenticeships. However, this education is often lacking and halfhearted, slowly more and more secrets of the art are lost or forgotten. Of all the castes, House Crafter has fallen the furthest. Where once they were as much artists as builders now they are not much of either. Some produce a few moderate works every few decades but most only forge the simplest and blandest of items and even this takes weeks.

House Ranger, also known as House Protector, is a small martial caste that is both the police and armed forces of the fey. Less a rigid military unit and more an organized group of investigators, woodsmen and guerilla fighters. This caste still retains much of its purpose and skill, although the House is fragmented into opposing groups. Much if House Protector was swayed by the Mad Dwarf of Sithicus and follow him with dreams of power and respect. Others rebel and make up a fierce resistance against the lord of the land. The rest simply keep order in the towns and are little more than puppets of the various town's Speakers. In Darkon House Protector has found much of its

position usurped by the Kargat and Darkonian military, so many have joined those organizations. A surprising number of the Darkonian House has gone underground in Falkovnia to free captured brothers who live as slaves and overthrow the enemy of their land.

The final House is House Arcane, the mystic practitioners and scholars. While small, the numbers whom are actual mages is smaller still. Most are scholarly researchers with no talent in the Art. Those few that have any magical gifts often go untutored and learn only the simplest of magics. The former purpose of House Arcane was the regulate and control magic in addition to teaching it to members of the other castes. At one point in the past every fey knew a few simple incantations or cantrips. While a much larger proportion knows magic than in human cities, the majority of fey do not. This situation is further complicated in Sithicus by Azrael's fear of magic, he knows powerful mages could easily threaten him and he does his best to keep House Arcane scattered and frightened.

Lastly is the servant caste, the unofficial House that is not recognized by the fey. All non-elves are lumped into this caste and treated equally shabbily. Easily the largest of the castes the servant are the only fey who do hard labour. They work endlessly in the gardens, fields and orchards to feed whole communities, and what little repairs and maintenance done is also by the servants. However, most of the ruling castes would rather have their servants catering to their whims and thus most toil elsewhere.

The two types of elves treat the caste system differently. For the rigid Sithicans, the caste system is a vital and living distinction and one's caste is as important as one's family. Inter-caste mingling either socially or martially is taboo for Sithicans and dealings are to be conducted in a

business-like manner. Castes are a subject of birth and ones station cannot be changed anymore than one's race. The Darkonian fey are more liberal in that members of the lower castes (Houses Greenshaper, Ranger and Crafter) are able to change castes. Thus, people with natural talent can move to the caste best suited for them. Likewise, those in Houses Noble, Arcane and Watcher can move between the three or, rarely, move down to the lower castes. Servants, of course, can never change their station.

Marriage is a sacred union to the fey and one used to unite families, form alliances and repay debts. To the Sithicans, marriages are arranged between families, often before the bride and groom are even of the age of majority. Darkonians tend to be more relaxed allowing the couple to at least meet each other before the marriage. All elven marriages are formal affairs and entirely devoid of love and passion. Marriages must be between families of the same caste and even in the more relaxed Darkon inter-caste relationships are rare although the lower castes are allowed to marry amongst themselves.

Affairs are common. These romantic trysts tend to last as long as one party is interested and typically dissolve once boredom sets in. These dalliances are seldom the cause of martial strife as it is expected partners will seek amusement and emotional attachment elsewhere, but they are still kept discreet as it is the height of tackiness to flaunt one's infidelity. Half-elves are typically the result of these brief unions as few elves, even of the servant caste, would ever deem to marry a lowly mortal.

These affairs are typical of the elven mindset. Two fey find themselves mutually attracted to each other and launch into a romantic courtship where they find excuses to spend time together and compose poetry and sonnets for each other and profess

undying love. Of course, neither partner truly believes their grand claims of love and each is simply using the other to fulfill emotional and physical desires. It is all just a grand show in the quest for pleasure.

Government

The fey respect local governments, pay homage to lords and kings and obey all domestic laws. However, this does not mean they truly believe in the authority of secular figures.

The fey believe all authority is derived from divine figures and that only through a mandate of heaven can a leader rule. They are content to follow the will of the Rex or pay Azrael a token tribute but they do not believe in or respect their position.

The highest non-divine authority is the Lord Speaker, also known as the Speaker to the Stars. While a quasi-religious position - as they interpret the divine will- the Lord Speaker is typically of the Noble caste and is only advised by House Watcher. It is assumed that while House Watcher is charged with interpreting the celestial portents and interpreting the holy writ it is House Noble that must act on said knowledge. The Speaker serves as a combination of mayor and lord presiding over all local affairs.

The nobles of each city elect a small group of aristocrats to serve as a city council. All members of the House Noble and House Watcher have a say in this council, although this say is typically approving or disapproving of the council's choice. The council chooses and elects the Lord Speaker from the number, typically of pure noble blood. At one point there was an extended royal family but this has since declined and House Royal has been amalgamated by the nobles. Similarly, once there was a single Lord Speaker for all elven people but when House Royal vanished, squabbling led to

current state with each community having its own Speaker.

The choice in Lord Speaker is not entirely in the hands of the nobles and is subject to the will of others. In Darkon the title of Lord Speaker has been cosmetically rechristened 'Baron' in deference to the Rex. The wizarding likewise influences the Speaker's appointment. However, this is accepted as the Rex is assumed to be a fey himself. This is not an entirely baseless claim due to Azalin's long life and magical prowess. In Sithicus the appointment of a new Speaker must be approved by Azrael. Recently, the Mad Dwarf has taken this one step further and has actually chosen the Lord Speaker and all but forced the nobles to approve.

While each city has its own Speaker there are a large number of lesser lords. Many are simply landowners of squatters in abandoned keeps or castles that have elevated themselves to dominion over their lands. These lesser lords put on a grand display of leadership, collecting taxes and holding elaborate courtly events. There are often state visits and formal gala balls.

Much of these smaller lords feel like elves playing games, young fey who have made a game of courtly manners and politics and decided to find a place of their own. However, most take their game seriously and grow very upset when their silliness is pointed out.

The Rex tolerates these lesser figures to an extent, mostly because they pay large than necessary tributes to show off their wealth and because they keep the peace in their land.

Fashion

There is a stark difference between the fashions of the Sithican and Darkonian elves. Sithican elves prefer long flowing robes and cloaks woven out of fine local silks while

Darkonains prefer utilitarian clothing made from wools and other natural cloths.

Sithican robes are light and breezy and yet surprisingly strong. Most are of masterwork construction and delicately embroidered. The robes are tight and form-fitting with long sleeves with broad, open cuffs. They are typically accented by knotted belts and wide sashes. During the colder months, multiple layers of open-fronted robes are worn with thicker cloaks thrown overtop. The colours are the same year round: drab and muted shades with many greys and metallic hues. Silver and platinum are favour with pale gold as a highlight.

Darkonian men clad themselves in sturdy breeches and loose blouses or shirts, often paired with thick vests. Women clad themselves similar clothing, sometimes swapping the pants for ankle-length skirts or long dresses, often accompanied with a bodice or corset. Despite their clothing being made from wool, the cloth is surprisingly thin and resilient. The embroidery is delicate and precise and blends invisibly with the seams.

Darkonians have an odd flair for dressing with the seasons. During the spring the clad themselves in a myriad of bright colours which are gradually replaced by light greens and blues during the summer. In autumn then move to reds, oranges and yellows and finally adopt greys, white and black during the bleak days of winter.

This is just the day-to-day fashions, that worn by workers or those going about routines. The noble caste and other elites dress far more fancily during their balls and gatherings. Foreign styles and other exotic appearances are adopted, often paired with minor bits of magic. I have seen gowns made of leaves, one of still living vines that writhed about the dancer and once a woman whose white dress seemed to shimmer with its own radiance. The more elaborate the

fashions the more entertained the revelers are supposed to be.

Jewelry is quite popular with the fey and there is a wide range of accessories. Swooping curves and thin, carefully sculpted pieces are the most appreciated. Leaf and other natural motifs are also common. Fey jewelry tends to be elaborate and ornate while still being graceful and elegant. Jewelry that is bulky, clumsy or large is dismissed as tacky or outright ugly. Dangling jewelry such as large bracelets or earrings are also unpopular with close-fitting pieces crafted for the individual much preferred. However, light necklaces and pendants are common, especially ones ending in precious stones.

Elven hairstyles vary between the regions. Women typically have long uncut tresses, always neatly trimmed, combed and washed. Sithican prefer their hair free but combed straight back away from their face. Circlets or small combs are often employed to keep it in place. Darkonian women prefer to knot their hair or tie it back with long braids or coloured silk ribbons. Darkonian men prefer their hair short, seldom letting it grow longer than their jaw line or shoulders, and even then it is tied back tightly. Sithican men allow their hair to grow long, but not quite as long as the women's. It is always brushed back but seldom tied or bound.

Face paints and other decorative colours are occasionally worn on fancy occasions. Elves enjoy painting small images of living things onto their faces and bodies, most often flowers or birds. Abstract and colourful displays are also common but vary in popularity. Sharp geometric designs are universally seen as unnatural and ugly. However, despite this enjoyment of body artistry, tattoos are very rare given their permanence.

Defense

House Ranger serves as both the army and police force for the fey. This martial caste operates more as small guerilla squads and less as a cohesive whole. There is no hierarchy beyond caste rankings so members invariably follow whatever skilled or charismatic leader assumes command.

Magic is always the first line of defense for the fey. Illusions and enchantments surround their villages, misleading and confusing travelers and raiders. Magically grown hedges act as barriers prevent access to otherwise undefended settlements. When all else fails, the fey fall back to spells and summon fire from the heaven or let loose missiles of pure magical force. Fey, like the lich or vampires, have centuries to develop creative and often non-lethal methods of defending themselves.

Many raiders, mercenaries and religious fanatics who have taken it upon themselves to attack or ravage elven communities have been found wandering aimlessly through the woods in a daze, often days or weeks later. None have any memory but faint dream-like images and none wishes to try again.

Weaponry varies little amongst the fey. Light armour is preferred, typically leather or hide, and often dyed to resemble regional underbrush. Despite the limited protection offered by this light armour the fey remain deadly threats as the armour hinders neither their movement nor the ability to hide. It also seldom impacts their spellcasting talents allowing them to ensorcell opponents between arrow volleys.

All of the Fair Folk are skilled with some martial weaponry. Archery is common despite the distaste elves have of hunting animals, it is perceived as meditative and an extension of the body. Likewise, swordplay is taught through dance and graceful movements. While not the most efficient fighters, the fey are marvels to watch.

Language

Elves speak elven although there are two distinct variants of the tongue: Sithican elven and Darkonian elven. Each considers their language to be the pure, unadulterated version of the tongue and dismisses the other as a lesser pidgin language. Curiously, both languages share an alphabet and grammatical rules yet have vastly different vocabularies.

Elven Phrasebook

Blodyn - Flower
Caileadair - Stargazer
Coeden - Wood, forest
Dewiniaeth - Magic
Do - Yes
Dim - No
Dyd - Day
Gerddi - Garden
Noson - Night
Reul - Star
Seun - Magic

Sithican Phrasebook

Bleujenn - Flower
Druaights - Magic
Dydh - Day
Ie - Yes
Koes - Wood, forest
Lledrith - Magic
Lowarth - Garden
Na - No
Nos - Night
Rolt - Star
Rollageydhagh - Stargazer

Typically, Darkonian elven is considered 'true' elven, primarily because that land predates Sithicus' emergence from the Mists. Also, a larger proportion of Outlander elves speak a tongue similar to Darkonian elven so most scholars believe it to be the 'true' elven dialect.

Both languages tend to be musical and complicated with numerous subtleties related to enunciation and emphasis. Words and whole phrases tend to run together and it took me months of agonizing studying to discern individual words from the myriad of tenses, prefixes and suffixes. Spoken elven has a melodic feel and lends itself well to poetry, verse and song. The complexity of the language almost requires a lifespan of centuries to learn. Mere mortals such as myself and even most half-elves only learn an inelegant and poorly accented version of the speech resembling the poor linguistic skills of a young child.

Written elven is endlessly complex with little punctuation with sentences broken by structure and suffixes. Capitalization is dictated by rhythm and metre rather than subject although caste-related titles tend to be capitalized, as do religious names or terms. The elven alphabet is composed of fluid, curved letters that are related to celestial positions and bear similarities to the magical tongue, draconic. While most wizards write their books in the arcane tongue, elven is a passable substitute.

Variants

So far, I have mentioned only Sithican and Darkonian fey but they are not the only Fair Folk to grace the hidden corners of our land. There is a third breed that also hails from the Faerie Woods of the Southern Core, the savage Wild-elves. All three share the same basic physical traits: one associates with the fey: long life, pointed

ears, curious eyes, ageless appearance and an unearthly aura. However, there are small differences between all three.

Darkonian elves have dark hair, typically brown or black, and vibrant coloured eyes that range from brilliant shades of blue and green to deep violet. They are pale of skin but tan readily if in the sun for prolonged periods.

Sithicans have white or silver hair with the occasional rare child born with pale blonde locks. Their eyes are universally amber and even more unnerving than typical elven orbs. Their skin is so pale as to be white giving them a ghostly appearance. Sithicans never tan although some burn if caught in the heat for too long, but this quickly heals.

In contrast, wild-elves are dark haired and skinned with eyes so black it is impossible to distinguish the iris from the pupil. They are savage and feral having a wild and untamed air about them.

Their lifestyle is so different from typical elves I can barely begin the description. Wild-elves live in the deepest woods of Sithicus, far from the major rivers and trade routes and as far from other elven settlements as possible. They live nomadically in moveable huts or small caves, seldom staying in one location for more than a season or two. Unclean, they have mane-like hair and their filthy bodies are often covered in tattoos, paint and ritual scars. This scarring first occurs at a young age and increases after each successful rite of passage.

What little else I know can be described as speculation at best, my attempts to mingle with wild-elves were rebuffed (occasionally violently) and they have proved to be a secretive and reclusive folk. They are rumoured to partake in cannibalism, at least in a ritual sense, and believe they can absorb the power of an individual through

devouring his corpse. Wild-elves dress in furs or hide and use simple weaponry such as spears and bows. They have no written language but are reputed to be skilled at natural magiks, such as sorcery or even druidic skills.

Despite the wide disparity of culture, wild-elves believe they live as true fey and the Sithicans have lost touch with themselves and the land. The two sub-species do not mingle and never get along without harsh words and violence.

History

The records of the Fair Folk are intertwined with religious texts and records of celestial omens, where stars were and when. Elves are concerned primarily with the present and what the future holds. Actual history books are typically recitals of events paired with their prediction often summarizing various prophecies. Often the same key prophecies are highlighted again and again for multiple events over decades. The books themselves are in abysmal state, often having decayed through inattention for centuries, finding anything in fey records is a daunting task.

According to the mythological elven histories, their tale begins at the dawns of time when the dragon-gods created the fey out of the divine light of stars. The fey believe themselves to have been the first race created, a perfection not improved upon since despite numerous attempts. The elves lived in harmony with nature since the beginning, taming the savage animals and lesser beast-races through natural skill and loving discipline. The only creatures to spurn them were the dragons, magical beasts that are little more than forces of nature.

Dragons are the direct children of the gods, bastard offspring without the design of the fey. Theirs is the power of magic and they delight in destruction and ruin. For millennia

the fey warred with the beasts in an endless stalemate until the elves learned to harness the same magic the dragons wielded, only with discipline and skill rather than raw fury: this was the birth of wizardry. Armed with magic the fey drove back the beasts and all but eradicated them. However, being cunning predators, they continued to menace the fey through surprise attacks and subtly. Dragons were known to shapeshift into pleasing elven forms and mate with pure-blooded fey producing lines of bastards. The natural, wild draconic magic spread through this tainted blood and gave rise to the sorcerers.

Elves believe that dragons were not wiped out after this but continue to live and hide. Many retreated to far away lands where they lord over lesser beings while others have spent so long in mortal guise they have forgotten their true natures. Some slumber beneath the Earth and rivers awaiting the time to awake when they arise from centuries of sleep.

A fanciful legend if I had ever read one, full of fantastic and impossible creatures -but no more than other creation myths I have read. It serves as a justification for elven haughtiness and disdain for 'lesser' races; after all, they are the First Born. It also serves to illuminate the strong elven dislike of sorcery and other forms of magic that rely on force of personality over knowledge and skill.

Elves are fond of stories, tales of individuals and their lives, which are preserved through song and verse. However, the historical use of these tales is dubious as the songs are invariably romanticized and exaggerated. However, certain key moments have been preserved as a rough understanding of events can be gleaned from them.

At one point the elves lived nomadically, until their Great King founded the first elven

kingdom. The glorious leader also established the caste system and founded the first elven school of magic and was instrumental in defeating the dragons. Probably an exaggerated resume but a much beloved racial figure. The period following is believed to be the peak of elven culture, the 'Golden Age' that ended slowly over thousands of years.

Another legend is the fall of the Platinum Dragon. Elves believe in a number of pagan gods with the primary being the two dragon-gods. The first is a glorious silver beast (whose name translates as either Adamantine or Platinum) who is the embodiment of all that is good and noble. Its partner was the Dragon Queen, a jealous creature of pure spite and evil. They warred over the hearts and souls of the Fair Folk, an endless circling war in the sky. At last the dark one triumphed tearing the fleshy body asunder, forever severing the Platinum Dragon from its people. No longer able to walk among them, now it may only talk through the stars, tiny fragments of its body.

A noteworthy Sithican legend is the Corruption, a time just over fifty years ago when the land grew cold and dark and nature no long loved the elves. It is believed the Black Rose was the cause of this fouling of the land; that his vile nature poisoned the world to the elves but this is hardly a universal belief. Other Sithican factions believe that they were the ones corrupted so the land rejected them while a third group believe this land is not their own and they have been removed from their true home. A curious but telling legend.

Beliefs

The elves believe the future is written in the stars, that the divine spirit of their fallen dragon-god communicates through them. Elves use the stars to predict what is coming

so they can better prepare for fate. However, the fey now believe the end is coming, they recognize similar omens to what they observed before the Great Upheaval only now the signs are grimmer. They firmly believe the end is coming and it is inevitable.

The Fair Folk have always been more concerned with the present over anything else. The future is fated and will attend to itself and the past has already occurred. Fey live for the moment more than anyone else I have encountered. Now that the end is nearing they are even more concern with themselves and personal satisfaction.

There is a range of response to the imminent end. Most fey have fallen into hedonism with renewed vigor while a few rare heroic fey are determined to prevent the catastrophe and even more desperately search for ways to save themselves.

Elven values have always been curious and alien to mortals, the mindset of eternal is a hard one to grasp. Many researchers have simply dismissed the fey as insane, devoid of any and all logic. This is not an entirely invalid opinion, the fey see patterns in the stars and think in terms of magics not earthly and mundane logic. To say nothing of the dream-like nature of fey lands where the simplest of rational thoughts are alien and their mindset begins to make sense. Add to this centuries of association and memories and what may be a simple mental step for an elf seems like a wild and fantastic leap of logic for mere humans. Elven beliefs are the epitome of this, personal and so bizarre that to even try to understand them gives me a headache.

Personally, I have had the most success relating the mindset of fey to that of almost senile old men, eccentrics with a staggeringly self-centered worldview. Logic and reasoning are lost on them while emotions and feelings are intense but subject to rapid change.

Religion

As mentioned earlier, the fey have an entire pantheon of gods represented amongst the stars. Most of these have been forgotten even by the long-lived fey and only two are still recognized: the Platinum Dragon and the Dragon Queen. In Darkon they are typically called "Bahamut" and "Taimat" while Sithicans prefer to only address them with lengthy titles (such as the Adamantium Wyrms and the Many-Headed Devourer) rather than by name.

The Dragon Queen is not worshiped so much as appeased with small tributes offered to her at shrines or on certain days. The Many-Headed Devourer is associated with fire and general destruction and is seen as a vengeful being who delights in suffering of others. The Dragon Queen is also believed to be the god of dragons themselves and openly worshipping her is taboo for elves. Her followers tend to be social outcasts and rebel sorcerers, or those who long for the power of the dragons. These fey often seek to earn her favor by tormenting or dominating the 'lesser races' or committing acts of wonton destruction.

Recently I have encountered a few human cults of the Dragon Queen. Horrific individuals twisted by the foulest magics, often into half-reptilian forms. I have no idea how us mortals learned of the Many-Headed Devourer but I shudder to think of a disguised wyrm at the head of these cults. While I give little credence to the elven legends my time in the Faerie Woods has made me more willing to believe in the impossible...

Bahamut is worshiped with reverence as he is a peaceful god of purity, reason and light. He is a cold god of rational thought and restraint and his teachings emphasize forgiveness and aid to others but with an element of independence. It is often not

The Elven Gods

Players wishing to use the Elven Gods in their game for divine patrons for their clerics or simply religious characters can reference a number of sources. Firstly, the book *Deities and Demigods* provides a number of gods in the default D&D pantheon including the two referenced here: Bahamut and Taimat. These can be interchanged with deities found in the *Player's Handbook* including Corellon Larethian or Pelor and Wee Jas or Erythnul.

Players of Sithican elves have more options and can reference the many Dragonlance products for information on the pantheon there including the *Dragonlance Campaign Setting* and *Holy Orders of the Stars*.

enough to simply help someone; you must help them help themselves. All elves respect the Platinum Dragon in some form or another but he has fallen out of favor, especially his teachings on moderation and restraint. Quiet and solemn prayer is the preferred form of worship, typically in a church or upon holy ground. Large services are rare as religion is deeply personal.

Churches were once regularly constructed in elven villages, but are now sparse - especially in Sithicus where all have been destroyed or defiled. In Darkon a few churches remain and are seeing an increase in attendance as the end nears. Churches have similar designs in both lands: four slender towers or trees at the cardinal compass points forming a centre square. The

points are often connected by walls, hedges or arching bridges forming a boundary of the church. In the middle of the open-air structure is a large circle set into the ground and carved with elaborate star charts. Ceilings or roofs are never included in the design as they prevent stargazing and full appreciations of the heavens.

Human religions have yet to find many followers in elven lands. The Darkonian fey have somewhat accepted Ezra into their communities but few Sithicans deign to follow a 'human deity'. This is their loss as the Home Faith is exactly what the elves need to provide them with hope. Likewise, Hala has found few followers amongst the fey who dismiss the witches as naive and limited. The Lawbringer receives the sparsest attention as the Eastern faith is dismissed as laughably restrictive and punishing.

Cults however, are also springing up throughout elven lands. Small sects promising life hereafter or a way to escape the coming darkness. Most last for only a short time or revolve around a single charismatic leader, while other have been in existence for decades.

The largest is the Serellefarwr, a group that reveres the prophecies of the elven seer, Serellefar. A fifth century seer, his works include a hundred rhymed quartos predicting the final centuries of the world. The numbers increasing slowly for the past three centuries and increase sharply with each subsequent catastrophe. The prophecies of Serellefar have also found a following in human lands and many copies of the quartos are being published in the Western lands.

Another growing movement is the Brotherhood of the Eye, a small secretive sect that spread out of Kartakass. Its followers tattoo two small triangles onto the palm of one hand as a symbol of their membership. The leaders of the cult preach message of expanding ones mind and the

Brotherhood of the Eye

This cult was founded in Kartakass shortly after the Grand Conjunction. The secret behind the organization is that its founder is an inhuman creature that escaped from the land of Bluetspur before it vanished. It has gathered together human followers to protect itself, supply food and worship it as a god.

The current status of the creature is unknown. It could still be the willing head of the organization but there are whispers it is now the prisoner and slave of the humans it once dominated. There are also rumours that something else is using the organization and is directing its moments into the elven lands.



power of the soul. The Brotherhood believes that once the surface of the world has been laid bare in the coming disaster people will need the psychic abilities they can teach merely to survive. While the Brotherhood sounds unremarkable, they have left a trail of bodies in their wake, some still breathing but comatose or violently insane.

Race Relations

Elven scholars are remarkably well versed in the lore of races and most fey have a smattering of knowledge regarding other people. They have a uniform opinion of all

other races, one of disdain and intolerance. The Fair Folk truly believe themselves to be superior to all other races, even despite their residence in a dwindling, backwater realm.

Humans

All humans regardless of race or land of origins are considered identical. Many fey have problems distinguishing between humans. Given their limited contact with humans, the Sithicans consider every human they meet to be from Kartakass. I have encountered fey who firmly believed that Mordentshire was right beside Skald or that Nova Vassa was the region between forests. Darkonian elves tend to be more informed but no less snobbish.

Humans are funny creatures to the fey: short-lived and clumsy beings who are quite foolish. We, apparently, make for great sport and many fey enjoy thinking up inventive torments. These range from inconvenient to outright cruel. Many fey are curious about us and ask endless questions, we are oddities they can not understand anymore than we can grasp them.

Many fey enjoy pretending to be humans. It is often a game for them to move to a human land and masquerade as one of us, enjoying the confused reactions to their behaviour. They also enjoy the curious human trait of growing all wrinkled for no reason, rapidly getting weaker and frailer and then suddenly dropping dead. It is something they just cannot understand and find morbidly amusing.

Caliban

Curiosities that are regarded as little more than ugly humans or, more accurately, uglier humans. They often slow and irrational calibans are more frequent targets of amusement than regular humans and more often ignored socially for their

unseemliness. Few elves wish to have dealings with anyone so unappealing.

The few elves who bother to learn the origins of the mongrel race find the idea of magically degenerated humans fascinating. The concept is not entirely unknown to them - there are apparently elven calibans (whom they refuse to discuss) - but the difference between humans and calibans surprises them. A few elven mages seem a little too interested in this information and I worry they may begin attempts to produce calibans. While I have few qualms on experimenting on humans, I see little use on doing so just to satisfy one's curiosity. However, should they learn something they may be worth interviewing later.

Dwarves

Dwarves will rant incessantly about elves and their laziness and flightiness but elves can seldom be coaxed into uttering more than a sentence about dwarves. Their entire opinion can be summed up in a single line: boring and far too serious. Elves cannot abide dwarves. They respect the short sub-humans for their skills but find them dreadful company.

Gnomes

Elves like gnomes; they find them amusing and unexpected surprises. They enjoy their morbid sense of humour, grim pranks and erratic behaviour, at least for short periods. The cheery elves often find gnomes depressing after long periods and eventually find their many eccentricities tiring.

Elves often have difficulty understanding the philosophies and discourses of the gnomes, especially since these rely so much on reasoning and logic which are not traits of the fey. The elves quickly grow confused by the talk and dismiss it as another gnomish prank, albeit a strange one. Elves also cannot

understand the gnomish fascination with machinery and technology; it goes against the magical and natural worlds of the fey. Likewise gnomes are entirely confounded by the elven reliance on magic. While the gnomes understand and use magic they view them as one tool out of many.

Halflings

The Fair Folk enjoy the company of the Little People and find their wide-eyed astonishment on elven life a refreshing change. They view Halflings as superior to humans as the wee folk hold elves in high regard with the proper amount of respect. Elves adore the attention and praise they receive from Halflings and vainly feed on the excitement. Many rich elves have a Halfling around as a sort of pet, a small kept thing that serves as a sort of emotional servant.

Few elves ever learn enough of individual Halflings to hold them in any sort of respect or even treat them as individuals. Elves find the lives of the Little People mundane and boring and instead revel in their reactions.

The humble Halflings have difficulty grasping the eternal and selfish natures of the fey. They are initially fearful but quickly awed by the grandeur, fearlessness and magical splendor of elven lives.

Conclusion

As the Fair Folk begin what could be their final and grandest celebration, the one winding down their immortal lives and attempting to compress an eternity of hedonism into a few scant decades I cannot help but feel a pang of loss. Not for the elves, but for the wasted years. Immortals with no concept of what other do for the gift they have been given, the sacrifices others make to live just a few moments more. However, this is something they will quickly learn.

Humans will lie, cheat and steal for the smallest things and few would not kill for a few more years of awkward life. What would an eternal do? If the end truly is coming then the lives of the fey will truly becoming interesting -perhaps for the first time. When the signs that the end is truly inevitable and near then what will immortals do to stave off death, even for a while? I shudder to think and grin at the possibilities. This is a situation begging to be exploited.

Until that time they are a disappointing waste, so much potential squandered. A race of magical beings with a perspective unlike any other yet cursed with apathy and lost in selfishness and insanity. Some might call the elves a warning, that with magic comes irrationality and a loss of perspective... but that is not true. It just cannot.

Now that a purely magical race has proven unenlightening, perhaps one that is a mixture of magic and reason might prove informative. Perhaps the gnomes and their strange philosophies will offer a glimpse of enlightenment, but not likely. I grow jaded from my journeys and long to return home to Richemulot.

Ah, speak of the Devil and you smell brimstone. This morning's post has just arrived and a messenger has brought with my missives. I must finish this quickly so I can have him quickly deliver this to Ste. Ronges and the Manoir. I wonder what good news you have sent me today...

Respectfully as always,

Jonothan Lochspeare

Use In Games

Elves have a long history in both fables and popular fantasy fiction. Fairy tales are even named after the magical elves. However, the elves of fantasy have little in common with their folk tale roots. Given the human-centric

nature of the Ravenloft campaign setting, and given its use of elements from tradition folk and faerie tale many Dungeon Masters have difficulty using the demihumans of fantasy fiction. Below is optional advice and rules for the using and playing elves in a Ravenloft campaign.

Role of Elves

The original faeries and elves were lesser gods in Norse mythology or nature spirits in other European tales. The appearance and powers of elves vary wildly from one country to the next. Sometimes they were small, tiny creatures and other times they were similar in stature and appearance. They were commonly associated with nature and magic, being wild and unpredictable creatures that were as liable to help people as they were to hinder them. In contrast, elves were made angelic figures in early modern Fantasy. They were akin to pre-fall Man in Christian mythology.

Dungeon Masters wishing to use elves in the role of mysterious fey have a number of options. They can be replaced entirely with Shadow Fey and other sylvan creatures such as dryads or nymphs. Similarly, they can be given a number of templates (such as the one in the Guide to the Shadow Fey) or number of magical powers. For game purposes it is easy to assign elves a number of sorcerer or wizard levels for easy game-balance. The adept NPC-class is also useful for low-powered games.

DMs wishing to ignore demihumans altogether have a greater challenge using elves and the elf-dominated cities and lands. One option is to suggest they are human with a culture that emphasizes magic over science. Another is to suggest they are humans mutated or granted power by the Mists. Van Richten's Guide to the Mists is a useful supplement in this case for empowering and/or modifying elves.

A canon-campaign with fantasy-fiction elves is the easiest method requiring the least amount of modifications or changes. However, using elves directly as they are presented in the Dungeons and Dragons core books can still prove tricky. Unless carefully used, elves can easily break a mood of gothic horror and reduce a game to stereotypical fantasy. While there is nothing wrong with fantasy it is not always the intent of the DM.

Running Elves

The following are some ideas for playing elf PCs and NPCs, but their use is up to individual DMs. There are no hard rules and requirements for running elves in Ravenloft any more than there are rules for playing them in Greyhawk. What works in one campaign induces shrugs or -even worse- laughter in another.

There are a number of things Dungeon Masters and players who wish to use elves in a game can do to preserve and even accentuate the mood. Like all monsters or encounters, using game-terms and names quickly removes all mystery. Referring to elves only as such reduces them from mysterious and unknown faerie to Legolases (Legolas?) and the like.

Elves, as magical beings, should be associated with odd or unusual occurrences. DMs are encouraged to add minor unexplainable events, small bits of minor magic that do little but establish the mood. Elves are not mortal and the world should react differently to them. Animals may respond differently to them, people may feel odd when they look at them. Small things make a difference, such as trail-dust not covering the elf even after days of hard riding, or a couple stray birds chirping constantly overhead.

A common element to fey in folktales is a lack of definition and description. Dungeon Masters should try to be evocative but

succinct, describing elves emotionally or atmospherically and less physically. Details can blur together or be forgotten, seemingly changing when looking away. This should not have attention drawn to it but appear to be a slip-of-the-tongue or minor mistake.

Elves should also not react as expected; they are not human and should not behave as such. Their reasoning and rationales are affected by both their magical natures and long lives. This does not mean all elves are raving madmen, acting and responding crazily. Instead they may be surprised by mundane things, find the most ordinary activities curious or amusing while reacting to the strange and bizarre as if it were the most bland thing imaginable.

While long-lived, elves should seldom appear or act old or aged; instead they should be ageless and timeless. Elves are neither bound by nor defined by time. A century has as much meaning to them as a second, it is all the same. Some might have an understanding of how time is perceived while others have no concept of it beyond the obvious difference of day and night which, considering elves do not even sleep, is of lesser importance.

Elf Variants

There are two common types of elf in the Land of the Mists: the Darkonians and the Sithicans, which are equitable to the High and Grey elves of other worlds. Additionally, there are a small number of elven sub-races but these are far rarer and of smaller numbers than their Sithican or Darkonian brethren. All elven sub-races can interbreed freely with Sithican and Darkonian traits being dominant in the children. Those few elves who share Sithican and Darkonian blood tend to reflect their homeland or the traits of their father.

Darkonian

Darkonian elves come from the land of Azalin and have dark hair and light hued eyes. They are the default elves found in the Player's Handbook. There are almost no differences between the two elves save environment and experiences.

Personality: Darkonians are elves and act as such. They are emotional but seldom strongly so, and bear the mindset hundreds of years of life brings. Often detached and calm they appear haughty, aloof and self-centered to humans -and often rightly so. Darkonian elves are more likely to enjoy amusing and humorous entertainment and diversions. They respect tradition but do not feel bound by it.

Racial Traits: Darkonian elves possess all of the racial traits described in the Player's Handbook.

Mist-elf

Elves are tied to the land of their birth; they have an innate bond to the very soul of the earth. But elves conceived or born in the midst of the Misty border find they lack this direct connection. It is not the soil they are bound to.

Mist-elves have a pale-grey appearance, similar to that of Sithicans only duller and far less silvery. Their skin is often pale grey growing ashen when exposed to the sun while their hair is dusky and muted. Their eyes seem to shift in colour, alternating from a pale white to a sooty hue.

Often quiet and reserved, mist-elves project a feeling calmness but without the aura of arrogance or haughtiness common to Sithicans. There always seems to be something hidden about mist-elves, as if they are silently plotting something.

Personality: Mist-elves are typically cool and unemotional, they are slow to anger and even slower to laugh. They are often serene

and subtle, seldom speaking more than they have to.

Racial Traits: Mist-elves possess all of the racial traits described in the Player's Handbook with the following exceptions:

- Mist-elves only receive the special bonuses presented earlier in this book when inside the Misty Border or within proximity to it. Mists from closed borders, including the Shadow Rift, count for this benefit.
- +2 Dex, -2 Con, -2 Cha: Mist-elves have the typical elven grace and agility with slender, frail frames. Additionally, there is something disconcerting about mist-elves that puts other ill at ease.
- +2 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. Mist-elves are quiet and stealthy.
- -2 racial penalty on Sense Motive checks. Mist-elves are not particularly empathic and have difficulty assessing and discerning the emotions of others.
- +2 racial bonus Bluff checks. Mist-elves are hard to 'read' with muted body language and expression.
- +1 racial penalty to Outcast Rating. Mist-elves are unnerving and even less trusted than typical fey.

Outlander

Outlander elves are those rare travelers that have been snatched up by the Mists and taken away from the homeland. Because the Dread Realms are not their home their mind and soul reject at the land, tearing away at the unreality that must be. The most tragic of these are the few summoned by magic from outside the demiplane and now forever trapped in a world not their own.

Outlander elves vary wildly in appearance, dress and mannerism and come from any number of lands. Some appear almost identical to the elves of Darkon and Sithicus

while other can barely make themselves understood through thick, foreign accents.

Personality: Outlanders are still elves with the inherent grace and poise but they vary markedly from expectations. They have a tendency towards distraction and varying degrees of shock: some react angrily and violently to the change while others grow contemplative and silent. Some would do anything to be returned to the homes while others simply wish to live in peace. Unfortunately, being cut off from their lands, many fall into depression and insanity.

Racial Traits: Outlander elves possess all of the racial traits described in the Player's Handbook with the following exceptions:

- Outlander elves possess none of the extraordinary abilities of elves presented earlier in the book. In fact, even some physical traits change, their eyes seem dull and they constantly appear to be standing in the shade.
- +2 Dex, -2 Con, -2 Wis: Outlanders are graceful but frail as are other elves. However, Outlanders are continually distracted by the silence of the trees, the coldness of the earth and the wrongness of the air.
- +4 racial saving throw bonus against illusions and enchantment spells or effects. Outlander elves subtly reject the world and find it easier to resist false images and the wills of others. This replaces the standard +2 bonus against enchantments.
- +3 racial saving throw bonus against fear and horror spells and effects. As Outlanders reject the world they also feel they have less to fear from it. This detachment leaves them less vulnerable to disturbing sights and images. This bonus stacks with the previous bonus to illusions and enchantments.

- -2 racial saving throw penalty against madness spells and effects. Outlander elves already have a tenuous grip on reality, one which already differs from what they see and hear, and succumb easier to dementia.

Sithican

Sithican elves are an arrogant and reserved sub-race that is burdened by a tenuous and artificial tie to the Land. It is unknown if this is because Darkonians were created by the Mists and not stolen from their home, if Azalin knew more about elves and their bond, if Soth simply wished more torment on his subjects or simply a reflection of Sithicus and its cursed nature. Sithican elves are distinguished from Darkonians by their pale appearances and drab coloured clothing.

Personality: Sithicans are cool, often unemotional and even more arrogant and aloof than other elves. They prefer serious forms of entertainment such as poetry, song and rituals. Sithicans feel a strong bond to tradition, reveling in it as much as anything to compensate for their lack of a bond to the Land. While still emotional and rational, Sithicans prefer to keep these feelings veiled, especially around non-elves.

Racial Traits: Sithican elves possess all of the racial traits described in the Player's Handbook with the following exceptions:

- +2 Dex, -2 Str, +2 Int, -2 Con: Sithicans are intelligent and skilled but not as robust or fit as other races. They are even more likely to rely on magic to do menial tasks than Darkonian elves.

Wild-elf

The wild-elves of Sithicus are savage and uncivilized but truly one with nature. They live in the untamed woods of the great forests of the Southern Core, far away from even the small cities and villages of Sithicus.

They believe they are living as the gods intended.

With dark hair and eyes and well-tanned skin these elves are easily distinguished from the pale Sithicans. Wild-elves clad themselves in furs and hide and use simple weaponry such as bows and spears. Ritual tattoos, scars and brands adorn their body in curving lines, swirls and swoops. They receive the first of these after their first successful hunt.

Nomadic hunters, wild-elves live off the land cultivating small gardens for a year or two before moving on. They live in small hide tents that are easily taken apart and moved. Wild-elves have a strong shamanistic culture and make use of totems, fetishes and primal magics.

Personality: Emotional and unpredictable, the wild-elves are unrestrained by manners or culture. They have few taboos and even fewer laws. They live on impulse and need. However, they are capable of great cunning and patience and are master hunters.

Racial Traits: Wild-elves possess all of the racial traits described in the Player's Handbook with the following exceptions:

- +2 Str, +2 Dex, -2 Int, -2 Con: Wild-elves are athletic and graceful but still possess elven frailty. They are also uneducated, wild and dull.
- **Weapon Proficiency:** Wild-elves receive the Martial Weapon Proficiency feats for the longbow (including composite longbow) and shortbow (including composite shortbow). Wild-elves do not receive the free weapon proficiency for swords; they seldom use them and have limited metalworking skills.
- +2 racial bonus to Listen and Spot checks. Wild-elves have the keen senses of all elves but lack the instinctive ability to find hidden and concealed doorways. However, regardless of class, all wild-

elves are proficient in the Search skill; it is never cross-class for them.

- +2 racial bonus to Survival skill checks. Wild-elves are skills hunters and trackers with much experience .
- Favored Class: Ranger.

Feats

Arcane Potency [Racial]

You have a natural talent for the magical arts.

Prerequisite: Elven blood, Must be taken at 1st level or prior to taking any class that grants arcane spells.

Benefit: For purposes of determining spells learnable and bonus spells treat your primary ability score (Int or Cha) as if it were two points higher than it actually is. For examples, a wizard with an Intelligence of 14 is treated as having an intelligence of 16 granting a bonus 3rd-level spell and allowing the caster to learn 6th-level spells.

Feign Mortality [Racial]

Your fey nature is muted and you are adept at hiding it.

Prerequisite: Elven blood.

Benefit: You receive a +2 bonus to Disguise skill checks to eliminate Outcast Rating or disguise yourself as a human or half-elf. Additionally, your OR is permanently reduced by 1.

Heightened Bond [Racial]

You have an unusually stronger bond with the land and woods.

Prerequisite: Elven blood, not the Outlander subrace.

Benefit: While in your home domain you receive a +1 bonus to initiative and are treated as having the Alertness feat, due to a pre-natural awareness of you surroundings.

The very trees and wind seem to whisper warnings and send signals. This feat does not stacks with the Alertness feat itself or the benefits of familiars.

Lightstep [Racial]

You are skilled at not being tracked and moving through underbrush.

Prerequisite: Elven blood.

Benefit: Movement penalties through any natural forest or woodland obstructions (such as thorns, vines, briars, heavy bushes) are halved. Additionally, the DC of attempts to track you is increased by +4.

Mystical [Racial]

You have an innate gift for magic and can cast spells even without training.

Prerequisite: Elven blood, Must be taken at character creation, Primary spell-casting ability score (Int or Cha) of 12 or higher.

Benefit: Once per day you are able to cast a single 0-level spell. Three spells may be selected from the Bard or Sorcerer/Wizard spell lists; these are the only spells usable with this feat.

If levels of a spell-casting class are taken spells learned for that class cannot be used with this feat, nor are spells learned through this feat usable through the class' daily allotment of spells.

The spells are cast as per a 1st level sorcerer

Magic

Fey Spells

Elven magic is unique with small elements of magic incorporated into life. However, this magic is rarely obtuse or blatant. Instead it is small enchantments, minor illusions and events often dismissed by bystanders.

Because of their long lives, elven wizards research and design a number of personal spells. The contents of elven spellbooks should be filled with customized and modified incantations. However, most of these are highly specialized and can only be used under select conditions. One example is a Light spell that only functions under a full moon. Another is Magic Mouth spell that only works on shields or armour.

Elves favour spells from the Illusion, Enchantment, and Transmutation schools and it is rare to find modified spells of other schools. Evocation and Necromancy are particularly rare.

The benefit of these highly-specialized spells is that they are occasionally a level lower than the otherwise unmodified spell or have high saving throws to avoid their effects.

Personalized elven spells are frequently written in a unique and individual manner, often with shorthand and mnemonic cues with tenuous connections to the stars and movement of heavenly bodies. Because of this complexity Spellcraft rolls to understand and copy spells from an elves' spellbook are made with a -5 penalty. Highly modified spells can be even more difficult and have penalties as high as -10!

Fey magic is tied to the elven homelands, much like the elves themselves. Spells seldom work as intended in other lands.

Magic Items

Elven tools, heirlooms and favoured items have a tendency to spontaneously develop magical abilities. These curious items are the subject of legends and tales for the elves and many famous examples exist.

In game terms, commonly used items acquire 'virtual experience' for encounters and situations the items are placed in. A warrior's sword, a cook's spoon, a smith's hammer and a farmer's plow all qualify

equally. For every encounter the item is used in it receives $\frac{1}{4}$ the experience of the wielder.

This virtual xp does not level up the weapon and cannot be tapped into or used by the wielder. Instead it acts as a pool of xp that can generate into magical abilities.

The item expends xp from this pool to pay off the xp cost associated with making a magic item as well as to pay the cost in gold pieces. This virtual xp is essentially exchanged for gold in a one-to-one basis. For example, a Hat of Disguise has a market price of 1,800 gp, or 72xp and 900gp for raw materials. If the hat were to spontaneously generate magical properties it would need to pay off 972xp from its pool.

Not every item can acquire virtual experience. It is the DM's discretion whether or not an item acquires a pool, or even which item receives the virtual xp. It is also up to the DM and player to decide which powers and magical abilities manifest. It is the item that generates the power, not the wielder, and there is no control over choosing and selecting the abilities.

These fey magic items do not always act as standard magic items. They are not always transferable; the powers may only work for the owner and no one else. Other items display different powers for different wielders. Also, like elven spells, these items are bound to the land and seldom function away from elven territory. Additionally, these fey items were once mundane and are seldom masterwork items and, as such, are quite vulnerable to damage. Unlike traditional magic items they are no more resilient to damage than non-magical items.

A few famous items are a belt that bucked itself, but grew too tight around anyone's waist except its owner. Another was a purse that screamed when anyone but its master took money from it. And a bow whose arrowhead's changed into whatever tip was needed at the time from silver to blunt.

Registry of Monsters

Excerpts from the Register

By Stanton F. Fink

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Ixiocraeter is a bird-like specter. From a distance, it whispers evil thoughts into the ears of its victims in order to tempt them into wickedness.

Chaalb the Infinite is a shape-shifter, sometimes known by its other name, "Meijuushako," or "Demon Beast Squilla." The Demon Beast lives for mischief, and uses its powers solely for promoting this sole interest.

Its powers of imitation are so great that it has often been mistaken for the dreadful animator spirits. Meijuushako has been observed to assuming the forms of a horse-less carriage, a man-eating ottoman, a musket ball-eating arquebus, a chair, a throne, a sofa, a fire-breathing piano, a man-eating pipe organ, a stove, and no less than 50 different kinds of bladed weapons of similarly sorcerous power.

Despite fancying itself an actor of the highest ability, it will tip its hand whenever it plots its tricks, and can never resist an opportunity to set a fire. Although it resembles a macabre shellfish, it abhors salt and water, and it will never allow itself to touch either substance, regardless of its disguise.

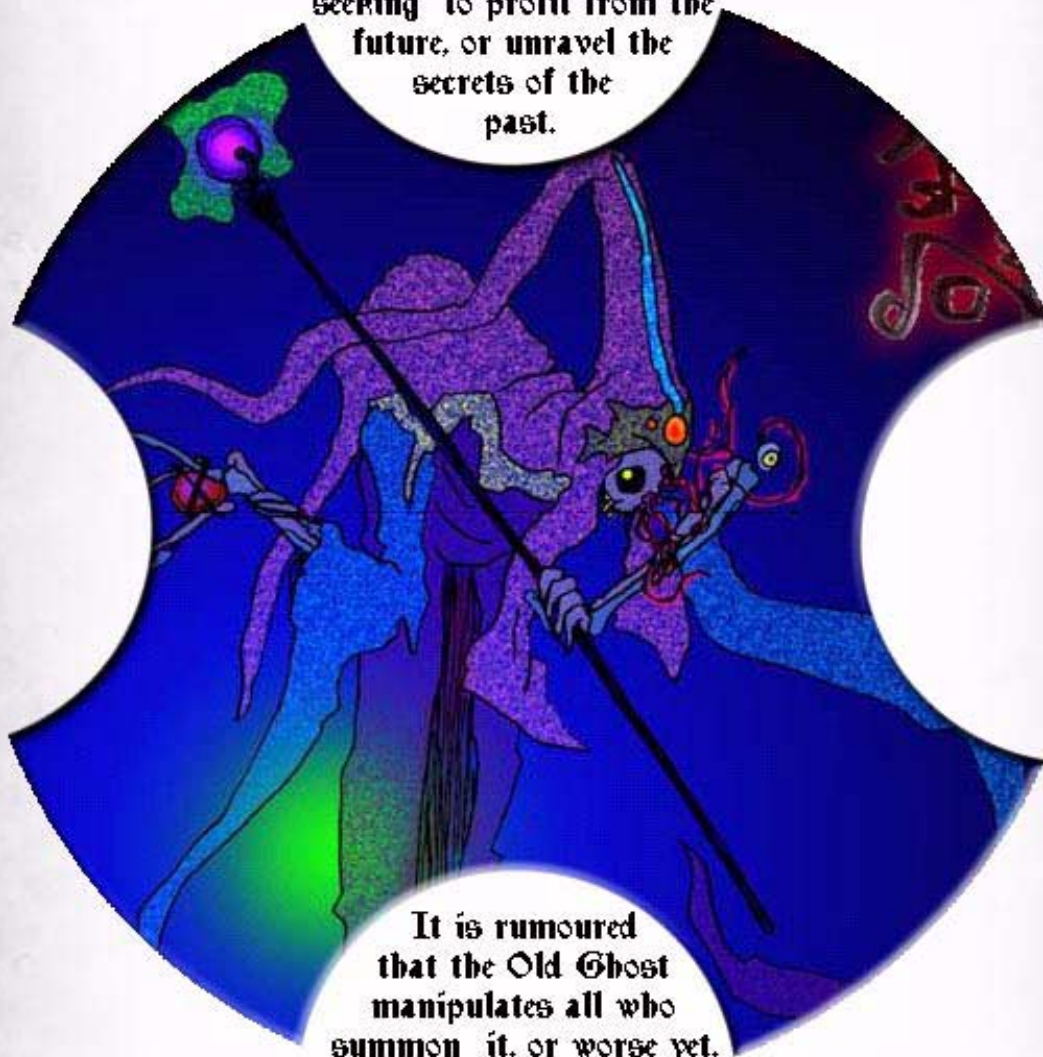




The Ishgalnera, or "Pond Dragon," is a lizard-like spirit which lairs in various stagnant ponds in forests. It is as large as a boar, and has a snarling grin on its face. It has green, stone-like plates upon its back. Its tail is longer than a tree is tall, and the tip is always kept plunged in the pond. The Ishgalnera's talons can rend steel like paper, and it delights in clawing those who irritate it. The Tepestani often try to placate the pond dragons by tying silver coins to rats, which are then drowned in their pools. If a pond dragon is angered, it can slay a farmer's wheat fields with its blighted breath, or curse a family so that no pot, cup, or spoon in their possession can hold water. If the Ishgalnera is truly enraged, they will enshroud the object of their fury with a mephitic cloud of foul brown mist.

Hags and Vistani often try to seek the pond dragon's favor. A hag will drown a victim in the Ishgalnera's pond. The Vistani prefer a less violent way, however, and offer the pond dragon bowls of fruit. On rare occasions, a hag will attempt to cajole or beg the creature into serving as a steed to carry her to her coven, while Vistani infrequently ask for permission to use its water for use in their sorceries.

This miserable being has been a guest in the House of Death since Time began. The Lao Goei is sometimes summoned by foolish magicians seeking to profit from the future, or unravel the secrets of the past.



It is rumoured that the Old Ghost manipulates all who summon it, or worse yet,

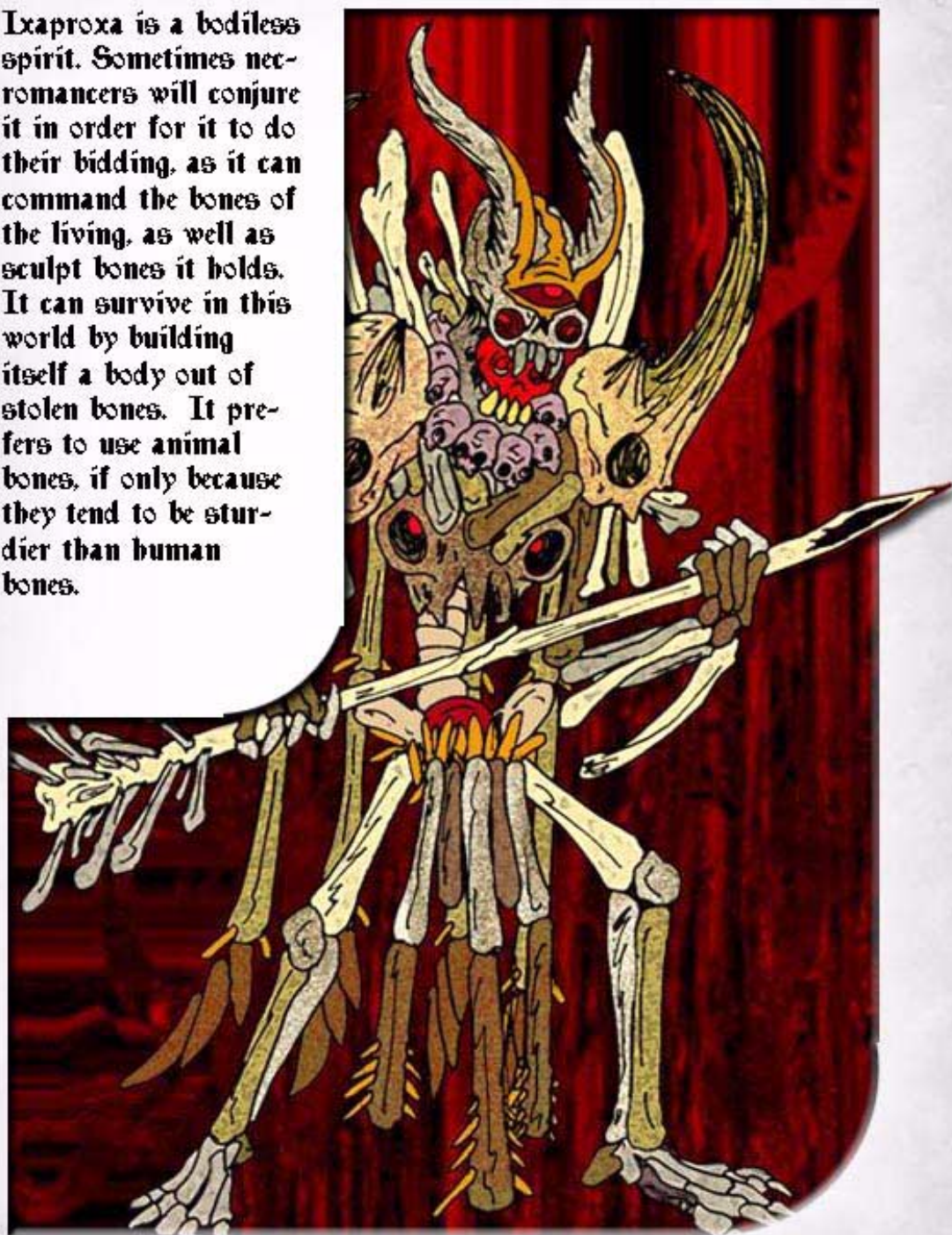
all those who so much as speak of it.

What its plans entail is unknown. Some claim that it seeks to become a god, while others think that it seeks to usurp control of the Universe. A few claim that it simply wishes to be free of the House of Death. And that, they say, is the worst possibility of all?



Gujeel the Night Devil is a tremendous slug-like beast. This toothless, clawless monstrosity is rightly feared by all, as it can swallow a horse and its rider. It lairs in marshy forests, and mimics will'o'wisps in order to lure the unwary into its slimy clutches.

Ixaproxia is a bodiless spirit. Sometimes necromancers will conjure it in order for it to do their bidding, as it can command the bones of the living, as well as sculpt bones it holds. It can survive in this world by building itself a body out of stolen bones. It prefers to use animal bones, if only because they tend to be sturdier than human bones.





An insane crone in service to the Green Empress. She fancies herself as the favorite disciple of Lady Green Bones. There is some truth in her claim, though, as she is one of the five Iron faeries. Unlike other hags, m un fa Ha loves children, and delights in "acquiring" new stuents to teach and corrupt.



Nefas Impressario is an evil spirit. Some sorcerers summon it to aid them in collecting a debt owed, or to enforce a promise made. Care must be taken when dealing with this spirit, as it will not suffer to serve under an oath-breaker.

What madness
Love spawns! The
husband Mordenheim sought
to regrow his beloved wretch of a wife
from the remnants of her essential humors. But, alas!
Husband Mordenheim's wretched son sought to deny his
father's wife's love, and so ruined his mother's new form.



Heartbroken, the wretch Mordenheim
cast out his broken wife's broken
body. But, alas! Broken it
may have been,
but it still
grew!

Gemathustra was once a healer, but now fancies himself an artist. Fools sometime conjure him, thinking that the Divine Balm will make them as strong as beasts, and as beautiful as angels. While another would charge his customers for his handiwork, Gemathustra relishes any such opportunity, and refuses payment. The fools eventually find out that that price was too high, anyhow.



The Green Empress is said to lair in a terrifying underground palace known as "Dien Diao Chun Bao," or the "Upside Down fortress." Some say that she can never leave her fortress, and instead, sends forth a double in her place to frighten her minions, and gather her victims.



Some say that she has a garden of serpents and fungus to use in her alchemies. Some say that she stores wierd magicks and frightful treasures within her fortress. They also say that the Empress may even be persuaded to trade such trinkets with the foolish and the wicked.

Khuja Kusan was a sith so wicked that even the other Hrah hated him. The Shee despised him for his wicked habit of eating the eyes of sleeping children. The Sith hated him for his sloppy mischief. Even the Powries hated him, as he delighted in eating their eyes, too. Eventually a host gathered before Loht, to ask his permission to punish this knavish fiend. To the host, he replied, "Let it be known that I know of justice: go forth, and grant Khuja Kusan the Eye Eater our judgment of the Hrah." But before the host left, Loht spoke once more, "Let it be also known that I know of mercy, as well. I grant thee permission to punish this knave, but remember that no Hrah shall be his executioner."



And so, the vengeful host sallied forth to punish Khuja Kusan. They caught him with their angry spears, and they gouged out his eyes. They tore his fingers off and pulled out the bones in his arms. When they were through, they burned him to ash. Even still, on moonless, cloudless nights, The Eye Eater still wanders about, searching for children's eyes to eat.



"Baal Shíboleth" is the lord of the hidden torrent.

"He" is a mask of the Hpokryltaros assumes to walk about Its followers with a minimum of fuss. "He" is one of Its favorite disguises, and delights in ensnaring "his" prey with "his" honeyed songs, and sugared promises.

Misty Eye is a toy made by a careless faerie. It was built to play a game, but its master forgot about his toy, and it wandered away, searching for more attentive playmates.

It is said that the Misty Eye ceases to exist when the sun rises, only to reappear after the sun sets.





Children of the Night

Conte Aerik D'Eauberville

Herman duchenne

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Erick Doberfeld was born a misbegotten bastard in a poor hamlet to a poor family of serfs in Borca. With a little help of his family he has risen to the position of Lord of the manor. Now he wants you to join his happy family for dinner, and maybe more.

Aerik D'Eauberville

Male caliban ghoul lord Com5/Exp1/Ari1

SZ M; HD 5d4+1d6+1d8+31, hp: 53; init+3, Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural); Atk+8 bite 1d6+6, 2 claws 1d4+6 or +5 ranged; SA Paralysis, ravenous fever, create spawn SQ Impart hunger; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref+4, Will+4; Str 22, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +1, Bluff -5 (-5 OR modifier included), Craft (Leatherworking) +1, Craft (Poisonmaking) +2, Handle Animal +0, Hide +11, Intimidate +6 (+5 OR modifier included), Knowledge (Undead monster lore) +2, Listen +10, Move Silently +11, Profession (farmer) +2,

Profession (guide) +2, Profession (stablehand) +2, Search +8, Spot +10, Use Rope +4; Great Fortitude, Multiattack, Power Attack, Toughness.

Languages: Balok, with a few words of High Mordentish.

Signature Possessions: Indenture deeds to Yvoire estate. Ghoul blood concoction.

Because Aerik is still alive he does not as yet possess all aspects of the Ghoul Lord template as given in *Denizens of Darkness*. He lacks the undead type (and its correlating Hit Dice) and the supernatural Miasma power. Aerik has also not received the bonuses to intelligence, wisdom and charisma that come with the template.

Aerik is a big, ugly, warty, mean-spirited man. He normally bulges out of his gaudy aristocratic clothing, which is covered with food and sweat stains. His big, beefy hands have sharp, gnarly nails. His teeth are sharpened to points, and his breath usually stinks of meat or alcohol. Although he has some of the powers of a Ghoul Lord, he still looks very much alive. His skin has an

unhealthy greenish pallor, which together with his unnatural yellow eye-colour identifies him as one of the cursed Calibans.

Background

Around the year 700 a branch of the Yvoire family migrated from Richemulot to Borca. The details of the family's contract with Camille Boritsi have forever remained secret, but they settled on an estate in western Borca close to the border with Richemulot. The stapan also earned the perpetual title of Conte-a grand title for such a small estate, and such a relatively powerless stapan. The Yvoires became known among the other stapans as a family that liked to put on airs, but could be largely ignored as an economical force. Despite working their tenants mercilessly, the estate has always brought in just enough profit to keep up the increasingly luxurious lifestyle of the family.

Twenty-five years ago the young Irena Bandler married Kiryl Doberfeld, a tenant farmer on the Yvoire estate. Irena's family were also serfs of the Yvoires, and she herself had worked at the manor as a maid for some years. Their first three children were healthy and normal, but the fourth was the result of a difficult birth. Irena nearly died during labour. Although she lost consciousness after giving birth she was roused by her baby's cries. Both the midwife and Irena's husband had by that time determined that the child was fey-touched, and had agreed that the child ought to be taken into the forest. Irena, however, kept on insisting on seeing her baby. Though they feared the shock of seeing the child might be too much for Irena, her continued agitation clearly would end her life.

Reluctantly the midwife decided to hand the baby over to her. Kiryl, meanwhile, went to fetch the local priest. Irena was not at all troubled by the fact that her son's features

were slightly off, or that his eyes had an unnatural yellow hue. She kissed his other minor deformities and smiled at her newborn son. Her son grinned back at her with his little sharp teeth. That was the only time Irena cried out in fear of young Erick.

When Kiryl arrived back at his cottage together with the anchorite Raphael Medsici, he found his wife cradling the infant, showing him to his siblings (the eldest of whom had started to cry at the sight of his newborn brother). The anchorite was fearful of the child, but performed a small ceremony seeking guidance from Ezra. The answer he received was that "The child will rise to acquire his proper place"-which at least eased the anchorite's mind somewhat. However, Kiryl could not persuade his wife of the fact that something was seriously wrong with the child. He has remained detached from the child ever since, except to punish him for every perceived mistake.

Unknown to all, Erick was the grandson of the current Yvoire stapan on both his mother's and his father's side. Both Irena and her mother had at some time been victims of the ardour of the heirs of the Yvoire line. Raimond Yvoire had dallied with the youthful affections of Mira Doberfeld, Irena's mother. When Mira became pregnant with Irena, a marriage with Edik Bandler was arranged for her. Raimond's legitimate heir Xavier forced himself upon Irena (not knowing she was his half-sister by blood) some years after she was married to her cousin Kiryl, thereby begetting Erick: both his son and his nephew. Irena has always kept this quiet, although she did persuade Xavier to make sure 'their' child could grow up relatively unmolested on the estate.

Despite his mother's loving care of him, Erick's youth proved to be a harsh one. His siblings, cousins, neighbours and even the Yvoire children saw him as a monster and considered him a plague on all their lives.

He was teased, taunted, bullied and often beaten, for which he was consequently punished by his father. His malformed features were seen as a sign of his wickedness, and whether or not he was truly born 'bad' he certainly started to act that way once his physical strength started to develop. At first his mother was pleased that he returned home from his chores each evening with less and less bruises, but when her neighbours began to complain and her other children showed signs of abuse, Irena decided to correct his wicked ways. Not only did she scold him, she also tried to teach him moral lessons and tell him moral tales. The only stories that stuck were made up about their supposed ancestors the D'Eaubervilles, a family of aristocratic paladins who won honour and renown in either Mordent or Dementlieu-depending on the story.

Erick became more and more isolated from the rest of the society on the estate. He started to roam the forests whenever his work was done for the day. Occasionally he would skulk near the manor in the evenings and at night. He craved the Yvoire's wealth and power and their harmony and happiness-unable to see that their wealth was a bubble that would burst without the toil of their servants, their power merely an expression of their arrogance and their harmony merely a result of the tyrannical patriarchy of Xavier Yvoire who demanded proper behaviour and etiquette. The family's happiness was only Erick's own unhappiness reflected in the parlour window. The other thing of interest he saw was the Xavier's young daughter Aquilina: she was a delicate beauty who Erick longed for.

When Erick was nineteen the area around the Yvoire estate was beset by a chain of mysterious disappearances. Things could have turned out badly for Erick, who was rumoured to be the culprit, if it had not been for a group of outlander adventurers who arrived at the scene and determined that

Erick was clearly innocent and that the actual culprits were a roving band of ghouls.

The adventures, who were remarkably accepting of Erick, hired him to be their guide for the local area while they hunted down all the ghouls. During their stay in the forests Erick learned a lot about the ghouls and other undead from discussions with the party's cleric. Erick devious mind thought up a new use for the infection that causes the raging hunger of the ghouls. When, after barely surviving an ambush by the ghouls, the party orders Erick to place the bodies on a pyre, he collects some of the ghoul blood in a flask.

Back on the estate Erick stored the blood in a cool place, while the adventurers receive their reward. A few days after they have left, Erick arranged for one of the horses of a young Yvoire to bolt during riding lessons, and although the child was not too seriously hurt, Erick was able to wipe up some drops of blood before being sent away for scaring the horses and the children. He adds these drops to the ghoul blood in the flask. Later that month the entire Yvoire family leaves for a few weeks to spend the season in Sturben and Levkarest. Erick manages to secretly add some of his blood concoction to the dinners of his family and closest relatives.

At night, while they are ill and weak he leads them to the cellars of the Yvoire manor by force. He actually needs to force-feed some suspicious relatives during the next few days, but within a week, the trap is set. He keeps his family locked up, checking to see if the ravenous fever of the ghouls has indeed infected them.

When they start to attack each other out of sheer hunger, he feeds them bits of other Yvoire tenants through slits in the cellar door, thereby keeping them hungry enough to want to eat, but not each other.

When the Yvoires arrived back at their estate, the place seems eerily quiet. The windows were shuttered and no lights were on. Once inside they rang for their servants, but none appeared. They were just discussing setting the dogs on their lazy servants when they spot Erick rushing in from the kitchen area towards the great front door. He locked and bolted the door, broke the key, and turns towards the family with an ugly grin on his face. The last thing the Yvoire's heard before the screaming started was the sound of their tenants rushing towards them.

Current Sketch

Erick has taken over the estate, renamed himself and his family, and set himself up as the new Conte. Aerik now craves to be accepted as a proper gentleman, but lacks the etiquette to achieve this. Half his family has died and turned to ghouls, and Aerik controls them and their victims. Like the rest of the family Aerik has become addicted to the taste of his family's flesh-luckily in-laws seem to acquire the same flavour. When he is at the estate he spends most his time bossing his family and servants about. He also goes hunting with his brothers dogs. Aerik often spends days at a time in Sturben, or occasionally another nearby town or village, drinking and gaming.

The Yvoire family never played an important part in the politics of Borca, as their estate was relatively small and unimportant. The recent usurpation of the D'Eaubervilles has gone largely unnoticed by those in power, and will probably remain so for as long as Aerik takes care of collecting of taxes. In fact, Ivana Boritsi has sent agent to the Yvoire estate and knows what has happened and is aware of the condition is of the D'Eaubervilles. She does not feel at all threatened by these minor schemers and their embarrassing disease. Ivana had in recent

years become interested in the young Acquilina Yvoire and had hoped to induct her into the society of the Ermordenung. Ivana believes that a couple of years as the spouse of Aerik will teach Acquilina the required hatred of men and love. Ivana is determined to have Acquilina solve the problem of her in-laws in the end. In truth, Ivana is the contractual heir of a slight enchantment that came into being when her mother signed over the deeds of the estate to the Yvoires on specially prepared paper. This clever little enchantment causes a level of indifference in the Sefeasa towards anything an heir of the Yvoires does-this is also the reason why the Yvoires have never lost their title of Conte.

Personality

Aerik is boorish and domineering, although he occasionally tries to be charming and elegant. He craves the respect he may never achieve. The only person he comes close to caring for is Acquilina, the only surviving member of the Yvoires, who he has forced to be his wife. Aerik is not half as clever as he recently has come to believe he is. His lies are transparent, and his explanations about what happened to the Yvoires even more so. He is largely oblivious to the hatred his family feel towards him, but would order the others to feed on any who shows disloyalty.

Combat

Aerik relies on his own vicious strength and that of his cannibalistic family to protect his interests. During the night his family feasted on the Yvoires he was accidentally bitten by the newly infected Xavier, and has therefore also acquired a taste for his family's flesh and blood. He has also gained some of the powers of a Ghoul Lord. Now his physical attacks channel the supernatural powers of the undead, though Aerik is still alive. He lacks the Miasma power of the Ghoul Lord,

although he often does give off a sweaty stench. He uses what remains of the original ghoul blood to create concoctions that cause selective addictive hunger. Additionally his bite can cause ravenous fever.

Paralysis (Su): Those hit by Aerik's bite or claw attack must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 12) or be paralysed for 1d6+6 minutes. Family members (including those related through marriage) have a -2 circumstance bonus to this check.

Ravenous Fever (Su): Supernatural disease-bite, Fortitude save (DC 20), incubation period 1d4 days; damage 1d4 temporary Constitution and special. See Denizens of Darkness. Due to Aerik's curse the effect is slightly altered to the extent that when the disease continues to progress the effects can only be abated by eating the flesh of relatives. If the disease claims more than 2 points of Constitution damage, the victim can only sate the hunger with the flesh of humanoids who are related to her (either by blood or marriage). If the victim loses more than 5 points of Constitution, the hunger can be sated only with the flesh of a living relative. Flesh of other humanoids can be used to temporarily sate hunger, or used for feasting (see VRGt:tWD, p.42), but does not count towards meeting daily requirements.

Create Spawn (Su): a humanoid or monstrous humanoid reduced to 0 Constitution or less by Aerik's ravenous fever (or that imparted by his blood concoction), or killed by the claws or bite of Aerik or his family rises as a ghoul in 24 hours. All spawn are under Aerik's command, and remain enslaved until his death.

Impart Hunger (Su): No doubt aided by the Dark Powers, Aerik can concoct a dangerous poison from ghoul blood that imparts Ravenous Fever. He can add an addictive desire for particular flesh by including the blood of an individual to the concoction.

Those imbibing the concoction must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 20) or develop a desire for the flesh of those whose blood is included in the concoction. See Ravenous Fever above for the specific results. The added benefit to the use of this concoction is that its creator gains a +5 profane bonus on any intimidate check to direct the victim's hunger away or towards a specific target. The creator can even have limited control over victims suffering from ravenous fever who have failed their Madness check (see above) if the intimidate check is higher than the Madness check DC. The creator can only direct the ravenous victim away towards a visible target.

Family Dinner

Level: 4-6

The adventurers' recent heroics have come to the attention of a local stapan in Borca. He invites them to dinner to meet the family. If they are to his liking he might offer them a place in his home, if not, they might end up roasting in the hearth.

Introduction

The adventure takes place at the D'Eauberville/Yvoire estate in western Borca, located north of the Vasha river near the border with Richemulot. The Dungeon Master can choose to relocate the estate anywhere without much difficulty: isolated and inbred aristocratic families can degenerate in most places in Ravenloft.

The difficulty with this adventure lies in building up an uncanny mood as the adventurers meet a family of freaks and then switching to fighting these cannibals and ghouls (which can result in anything from gore-fest to suspense filled hunt). Aerik is one of the most unsubtle 'mastermind' type

villains the adventures are ever likely to meet. The fact that his evil is so apparent on the outside might lead them to believe there is a more devious plot, or a more devious plotter behind all that goes on at the Yvoire estate. However, sometime the Craving is all the motivation necessary.

Besides Aerik, the estate is home to a fluctuating number of family members, servants, and tenant farmers. Most are low-level commoners and some have recently died and risen as ghouls. Other notable residents include:

Charles D'Eauberville

Aerik's father has succumbed to madness since the night he and his family ate the Yvoires. He is in complete denial and still acts as if he is a lowly farmer working for the absent Conte. Under Aerik's orders his family force him to wear aristocratic suits, which invariably get dirtied as he tries to work on the estate's grounds. Charles only reacts to his real name 'Kiryl', and has recently got into the habit of towing along a toy cow that used to belong to one of the younger Yvoire children. He sees this as a viable excuse for being in his master's house without doing any actual farming. Kiryl still dislikes his son, and is not afraid to express it verbally. Aerik has forbidden the rest of the family to hurt his father beyond tying him down once in a while when he is particularly difficult.

Kiryl is a 5th level expert (farmer) who suffers ravenous fever. He is big and brawny, with brown hair, brown eyes and a long, often filthy, grey brown beard. He tends to take small bites from his life-stock when hungry, but the family makes sure he dines with them on family flesh on a regular basis.

Irene D'Eauberville

Aerik's mother used to be the only one that loved him, but he never felt anything

resembling love for her. Her love for him has soured since his youth and this has turned into hate in recent months under the effect of ravenous fever. Unlike Aerik's father she has embraced her role of matron of the house. Most hours she sits in the salon ordering about her maids, servants, nieces and cousins. Irene is plotting for one of her daughters to take over the estate from Aerik. Irene is a 6th level commoner/1st level aristocrat suffering from ravenous fever. Irene is a dark-haired woman of around forty. She still retains much of her former beauty. Since the changes at the Yvoire estate, she has improved in deportment and is one of the few family members who could be mistaken for real aristocracy under close scrutiny.

Allisha, Madeleine and Jacqueline D'Eauberville

Ali, Madge and Jacky are Aerik's sisters. Although they are healthy looking farm girls they just do not look convincing in the aristocratic frocks they wear nowadays. Aerik uses his sisters as bait to get new flesh and blood into the family. Both Allisha and Madeleine have had (and tragically lost) four husbands by now, about half of them are kept as ghouls in the basement. Allisha is still married to Maarten Mendelssohn. Madeleine wears a choker that covers a nasty bite mark from one of her sisters. Jacqueline is only fourteen, but Aerik is keen on marrying her out as soon as possible to anyone rich or fat enough. Allisha and Madeleine are 2nd level commoners/1st level aristocrats. Jacky is a 1st level aristocrat.

Acquilina D'Eauberville-Yvoire

Acquilina is a pretty, frail looking thing. She is blond with blue eyes. Acquilina was a spoiled brat, who considered herself to be a lost princess kidnapped by some second rate aristocratic family. She currently spends

most of her time locked away in the attic room trying to avoid the D'Eaubervilles as much as possible. Although she hates Aerik with a passion she is totally dependant on him, and occasionally enjoys exciting his brutal violence. She also sets him on anyone who angers her. When in public she is quiet, playing the role of a beset innocent young wife. Acquilina is a 2nd level aristocrat.

Leonardo D'Eauberville

Leo is Aerik's older brother. He is a big, burly man. The brothers never liked each other, but since the change Leo has become Aerik's most loyal supporter, mostly due to the fact that Leo has died and risen as a real ghoul under Aerik's control. Leo drives the family coach and is the keeper of a kennel of extremely vicious dogs. Leo hides his undead state under a dark and voluminous coachman's cloak. Whenever Aerik has guests at the manor Leo prowls the grounds with a couple of his dogs. In addition to the normal powers of a ghoul, he has the scent special ability.

Sebastian D'Eauberville

Seb is Aerik's younger brother. He is tall, blond and clean-shaven. Aerik has used Seb to get women into the family, but Seb has the tendency to gorge on his new bride on their wedding night, leaving little for the rest of the family. Most of his brides are malformed ghouls kept in the basement. Although Seb still dresses as a dandy, Aerik has demanded that he no longer bothers any female guests before they are wed into the family. Seb has taken to taking care of the dogs together with Leo. Sebastian is a 3rd level rogue. If during the adventure Seb dies and rises as a ghoul he gains the Disfiguring Bite extraordinary ability (see VRGt:tWD, p. 47).

Maarten Mendelssohn

Maarten was a bard in Kartakass who dreamed of being a famous composer. With his father's aid he studied at the conservatories of Kartakass, Dementlieu and Richemulot. After graduating he decided to return to Kartakass to marry his childhood sweetheart. His route led him near the D'Eauberville estate where he was invited to give a dinner concerto. There he caught the eye of Allisha, who managed to manipulate him into an awkward rendezvous, which ended with her brother Aerik bursting into her boudoir insisting Maarten make a honourable woman of his sister.

Despondently, Maarten consented to the marriage, and succumbed to ravishing fever when the family partook of his flesh. However, Aerik saw some use in Maarten, and saw to it that he was left largely untouched. Maarten now reluctantly acts as Aerik's secretary and teacher and occasionally still performs for guests. Maarten is a 3rd level bard/ 5th level expert (composer). He is a clean-shaven young man with long light brown hair.

Raphael Medsici

Raphael Medsici worked as the parson on the Yvoire estate. On the night the family was slaughtered, Raphael lost his legs, his right arm, and two fingers on his left hand. His mind is gone too, partly as a result of ravenous fever. He is an elderly man of about 70 with a long grey beard. He is usually set at one end of the table where he spends dinner either cursing Aerik or blaspheming against any religion, including Ezra's. Raphael officiated at Aerik's wedding with Acquilina, and may bind other family members and guests into matrimony.

Iwan Bandler

Iwan Bandler is one of Aerik's cousins. He is about Aerik's age, and quite good-looking, with long wild hair and an impish smile. Aerik has chosen him to take the place of Sebastian as the prospective groom of any suitable female guests. He is a 2nd level rogue with high charisma.

Prologue

The adventures can expect an invite to the D'Eauberville estate if their recent heroic exploits become known in western Borca. If these exploits happen close to the estate the adventurers' deeds do not have to be big, but any heroic deed that is big enough for news of it to travel from Richemulot or anywhere else in Borca to Sturben will draw Aerik's attention. Surviving a night in the nearby House of Lament would suffice.

A few days after having performed a publicly known heroic deed the adventurers receive the following letter written in beautifully handwritten, but badly spelled Balok:

Dear Heroes,

Your chivalric deeds have come to the attention of my master, the Conte D'Eauberville. he is most interested in meating such renound heros such as yourselves, and hear of your great adventures and deeds. I can hereby invite you to the Yv D'Eauberville estate in two days, or whatever day will suit., for dinnerparty.

Yours sincerely,

Maarten Mendelssohn-D'Eauberville

- Secretary to his highness the Conte D'Eauberville

The messenger directs the adventurers to the estate and will carry a message there if the party so wishes. He knows that the estate has recently changed hands, but knows none of the particulars.

If the party is not likely to accept this invite, the DM can allow the party to happen upon the D'Eauberville estate. Alternatively they might be hired by Maarten Mendelssohn's father to rescue his son.

Fellow traveller

The journey to the D'Eauberville estate leads through the lush, dark woods of Western Borca. Travellers have little to fear from wildlife as long as they stay away from poisonous creatures-mostly insects and reptiles that have bright warning colours. The adventurers are also likely to bump into groups of Borcan enforcers, who are most willing to let them pass-for the habitual fee. These enforces, as well as any inhabitants, can point the way to the estate, although they still occasionally refer to it as the Yvoire estate. When the adventurers near the estate they spot someone on horseback trailing them:

You hear the trampling of hoofs behind you on the trail. As you look back you see a heavyset brown horse with a rider covered in a dark blue cloak with small white spots. The horse looks sweaty and tired and as it comes nearer you can hear that the rhythm of the hoof beats is becoming increasingly unsteady. As the horse begins to sway from one side of the trail to the other, the rider starts to make frantic movements while trying to stay seated in the saddle. There is a light frothing at the mouth of the horse, and then it just keels over in mid canter. The rider half falls, half jumps out of the saddle to escape being crushed under the horse' weight. The horse is lying on the ground making convulsive movements, while the rider is having difficulty getting up as well.

If the adventurers decide to help the horse and the horse rider they find there is little left to do to help the horse. Apart from having broken one of its legs in the fall, it is in the final stage of dying of poison. Unless there is access to healing magic the horse will die within half a minute. A short investigation of the corpse will show that it has a snakebite on an inner thigh.

Helping the rider is less problematic as she easily helped back onto her feet. She has, however, sprained an ankle, and will be hobbling along for the next few days, unless the adventurers can supply magical aid. The rider is a young woman in her early twenties, with blue eyes and straight strawberry blond hair. Her dark blue cloak is covered with a hundred or so images of a small moth. Under her cloak she wears a clean blousy shirt, a short pleated skirt and high black boots. Apart from her sprained ankle there are some chafe marks on her palms and knees.

She introduces herself as Nicole Yvoire from Mortigny. She has been lost all day trying to find the estate of her Borcan cousins. She thinks her horse must have scared up a snake while trekking through the forest. She says she will be most grateful if anyone were able to bring her safely to the Yvoire estate. If the adventurers ask why she is going to her cousins estate, she says it is only for a family visit. If they ask her if she knows anything about why it is now called the D'Eauberville estate, she claims not to know why this is so, but that finding out is one of her reasons for this family visit.

Nicole will try not to divulge to much of her background at this time. In actual fact she is an apprentice mage studying with her uncle Isodard Yvoire at La Maison des Cent Papillons. During some private studies in the library of this astronomical observatory she discovered that certain items were missing from the library. After some investigation into the history of the observatory and her

family she discovered that a small branch of her family had migrated to Borca some decades ago. Because the items went missing around the same time, Nicole now suspects that these missing tomes might be found at her cousins' family estate. Hoping to gain new knowledge and power she has set out on her own to retrieve the missing tomes. She will do anything to get into the Yvoire estate and have a proper look around. Nicole is practical, not evil, and will be repulsed by what happened at the Yvoire estate.

Nicole Yvoire

Human Wiz2, HD 2d4+2; hp 9; Init+2; Spd 30 ft.; AC: 12 (+2 dex); Melee+1, ranged+3; SA: spells; SQ: spells; AL: TN; SV Fort+1, Ref+4, Will+3; Str 10, Dex 15; Con 13, Int 17, Wis 10. Cha 13

Skills and Feats: Bluff+3, Craft (alchemy)+6, Concentration+5, Knowledge (arcane)+8, Knowledge (nature)+7, Profession (scribe)+1, Spellcraft+8, spot+2; lightning reflexes, scribe scroll, enlarge spell.

Spells per day: 4/3, Base DC 13+spell level

Spellbook: 0-all, 1st-*charm person, comprehend languages, detect secret doors, erase, identify, message, protection from evil, ray of enfeeblement.*

Equipment: Spellbook, dagger.

Languages: Balok, Mordentish, Falkovnian, Darkonese.

The adventures can decide to let Nicole join them or leave her behind. In the latter case she will try to use *charm person* on one of the adventures. If this fails she will finally arrive at the estate carried by a peasant's wagon near the end of dinner.

The D'Eauberville Estate

The D'Eauberville estate consists of a large two-storey manor house, its surrounding grounds, and a patchwork of farmland nestled in the woods. Large tracks of hilly woodland have been cut down in the last decades to accommodate the tenants and the land they till. The peasants the adventurers will come across remain aloof and taciturn. They are quietly fearful of the inhabitants of the manor, as well as some cousins of the D'Eaubervilles who still work among the peasants and who remain loyal to Aerik.

The Manor itself has seen better days, though the painted façade still retains some of the bearing an aristocratic dwelling should have. To one side of the manor house is a small chapel (now dedicated to Ezra, but rarely used) surrounded by a graveyard largely consisting of simple numbered posts, as is the custom in Borca. There are a few headstones memorialising some of the Yvoires who died years ago.

There are posts that supposedly mark the graves of the unfortunate Yvoires who perished recently, but their graves are empty. To the back of the manor is a large, muddy pond. At the bottom of this pond lie the bones of most of the D'Eauberville's victims.

On a nearby hillock is a large dog kennel from which the barking and growling of dogs can clearly be heard.

When the adventurers approach the large hardwood front door of the estate they are silently greeted by Elphric the family butler. He is a fragile old man, who is suffering from the shakes. Aerik has forced the old man to continue his service after the Yvoire's deaths. To stop him from talking, he ripped the old man's tongue out and forced him to eat it. Elphric will indicate to any character with visible weaponry to leave her weapons in a chest in the Hall. He will then take them into the library.

There are plenty of seats in the library for all the characters to sit. There is also a large basket in a corner where a bitch has recently delivered a new litter. The library only contains one bookcase, and most of the books are romances and books about hunting. There is also a book with the genealogy of the Yvoires on a bottom shelf. The characters might be able to spot (DC 25) a spy hole in the back of one of the shelves through which Aerik is currently examining his new batch of victims. Even if they notice it, Aerik will quickly rush in from the adjacent room and introduce himself as their host the Conte.

After introductions there is scant opportunity to ask Aerik any questions, for he invites his guests to join him at the dinner table, no matter what time it is they have arrived. He requests that any conversation topic will rest until they are seated.

The Dinner

Aerik leads his guests into the large dining room at the back of the house. The smudgy windows overlook the pond, a lawn of grass that requires more upkeep, and the edge of the forest. There is a large, dark wooden table domineering the dining room, and plenty of chairs for everyone. The characters will also notice there are a few dogs moping and lying around the table. Aerik asks everyone to sit down, after which he introduces the rest of his family. Elphric and other house servants bring in the first course: a meaty broth. As the meal starts there is time for conversation and questions. Characters will quickly notice that Aerik has very bad table manners.

Aerik will first ask the heroes to tell all about the adventures they had, including their latest heroics. Any questions from their side will be met by curt noncommittal answers, or downright lies.

If asked what happened to the Yvoires, Aerik claims that most of them died of a terrible swamp fever and lie buried in the cemetery. Only Acquilina survived and she was most grateful of him from saving her from the fate that befell her family (which is partly true).

If Nicole poses any questions, Aerik denies any knowledge of what happened decades ago when the Yvoires left Richemulot. He reminds everyone that he himself is descended from a different, far older family that came from Mordent. As proof of this he indicates a painting on the wall. It shows a man in shining, knightly armour, who bears a striking resemblance to Aerik, especially in the jaw line. Aerik found this painting in the Yvoire's cellars when setting up his scheme, and sees it as proof of his mother's tales.

In fact, there are some clues that the painting is not what it seems. Firstly, a character examining the heraldic signs may spot (DC 12) an image of a moth that is identical to that on Nicole's cloak. Anyone with knowledge (heraldry), or a related knowledge ability, can see that the other heraldic signs are largely overwrought and meaningless with a successful check (DC 15). Anyone succeeding on a Craft (painting) or applicable Knowledge check (DC 20) will see that the style is an imitation, and that it was probably painted in Richemulot (DC 25) within the last hundred years or so. Finally, if the characters get the chance, they can find the name of Crespin Yvoire written in pencil on the back. Crespin was Raimond's father (and therefore Aerik's grandfather and great-grandfather) and the member of the Yvoires who led them to Borca.

Aerik and some of the other family members will by now already be heavily into their cups, and some will be staring indecorously at Nicole, because they smell the familiar Yvoire flesh. Nicole, while

actually uncomfortable with the attention, will try to use this to her advantage in questioning the family further. At some point Aerik will become wary of her questions and will boorishly order to cease her babbling.

The second course is a meat stew. The meat is strange and smells odd. The dish is in fact cousin Suzette Bandler, Ivan's quarrelsome sister, whose flesh has been seasoned with Aerik's concoction. Some of the family members will joke that the meat is tough. Aerik is trying to infect the characters with ravenous fever to make them more pliable to his machinations. Also, if some manage to escape, the constant gnawing of their stomachs will force them to return to the estate at some later point.

Characters in Borca learn to be suspicious of their food, so they might take counter-measures against poisoning, and they should get a check to spot that the meat is humanoid before eating it. During dinner Aerik will now also overtly, and leeringly indicate to his family who should flirt with which prospective family member. This flirtation will keep up all through dinner and the rest of the evening, until the chosen character succumbs and is lured into a private rendezvous with one of the D'Eaubervilles.

Dessert consists of a sweetly flavoured wine, small cakes and some pork rinds. After dinner, the guests are invited to coffee in the games room (where the family plays simple card games) or more drinks in the library. Some members of the party will be increasingly left alone with a single member of the family who seems besotted by them.

Alternatively, if Aerik believes a character is not worth to join the family (because they either lack useful skills, or seem too dangerous to let live), he will try to get rid of them in a different way. For example, he might lead a character around the sights in the house, ending the tour in the basement (where there are almost two dozen ghouls

waiting to taste any type of flesh). Or he could use his paralytic power to drag two characters into a locked room upstairs without food to see what happens when they succumb to the fever. (perhaps using their blood in a new batch of his concoction).

Other games the family play are setting some of their more vicious dogs after the characters during a night time hunt. Some family members have taken to slowly, painfully dissect paralysed guests, and feed them their own flesh. Whatever befalls any of the victims, the ultimate end of the guest is the family's stomach, despite the fact that they prefer to partake of family flesh.

Those characters chosen to become part of the family are either asked nicely by their prospective partner, or forced into it through Aerik's manipulative scheme. He will probably try to set things up in such a way that he can burst into a room and catch a character in the arms of one of his sisters or his cousin. The victim will be manhandled into the dinning room, where the ceremony will be led by Aerik and Raphael Medsici. Although the old man is largely insane, anyone who swears to wedding vows with a D'Eauberville in front of him becomes part of the family for the purpose of ravenous fever. The only way to escape this bond is to get the marriage annulled by another Anchorite.

Whether or not Aerik is killed during the adventure, if the characters ever return to the estate after a couple of months, they will find that Acquilina (if she survived) is managing the estate with an iron fist. The estate is completely renovated, and the farmlands are bountiful. Acquilina no longer plays the innocent victim as she has now found her place as one of the Ermordenung.

The adventurers might be inclined to help Nicole in her quest to retrieve her family's books. The books were part of the deal Crespin Yvoire made with Camille Boritsi. This search will lead Nicole and the adventurers deep into Misericordia.

Recurrence

If the characters manage to survive the incidents at the D'Eauberville's party some might still have to fight off the ravenous fever. Though casting a Heal spell is the prescribed way of getting rid of this disease, a party that does not have access to this kind of magic might find other ways around it. Perhaps the DM might allow powerful hypnosis to suppress or sublimate the urge of the Craving.



Vile Mists of Darkness

Book of Vile Darkness in Ravenloft

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Feats

All Vile feats require a Powers Check when they are first taken, at a 4% chance of failure. Any Vile feat that is use-activated also requires another Powers Check every time it is used.

Corrupt Spell: This feat causes spells used in conjunction with it to require Powers Checks.

Corrupt Spell-Like Ability: This feat causes spell-like abilities affected by it to require Powers Checks.

Prestige Classes

Cancer Mage

Although not a true spellcaster, the Cancer Mage is found with startling frequency across the Demiplane, spreading like the diseases they are so fond of. It's thought that the first Cancer Mages came from the city of Nosos, that haven for disease and vice. Their origins within that offal and plague-

ridden demesne are unclear however. What is known now is that Cancer Mages are most often found in the southern lands of Verbrek & Sithicus.

In Verbrek, the Cancer Mages are often Werewolves in the forest, ostracized from their clans for their sickness. Not all of these Werewolves die; some gain strength from their afflictions and become Cancer Mages, combining their lycanthropic abilities with those gained from this prestige class.

The blighted forests of Sithicus are filled with fungi and tumor growths on the foliage, and sometimes the elves that are struck with disease lose a little of their mental stability as well. Such elves believe that by taking sickness into their own bodies they are actually creating a conduit between themselves and the woods, looking for the connection that they know they are missing.

Otherwise, Cancer Mages can be found in Barovia, Falkovnia, Forlorn, Lamordia, Sebu, the Shadow Rift, and Tepest. Barovia has Cancer Mages that often venerate Erlin, believing the death aspect he symbolizes

corresponds with their own abilities. Falkovnia's destitute citizens often succumb to disease, and Cancer Mages are not unknown in the back alleys of the cities and filth. Forlorn's hardy folk do not fall prey to poison and disease easily, and those who are cast out of society for their ailments often brood and take up this class.

Occasionally the odd Druid who cannot be cured of his afflictions and is denied his place among his fellows gets angry and takes up this prestige class as a means of revenge. In Lamordia, the study of medicine and science has inadvertently created some Cancer Mages as the study of disease progresses among the doctors of the land. Sebuia is a harsh desert land, and wasting plagues sometimes ravage the populace. It is not unknown for a Wild Child to become infected with disease and be cast out from his fellows, only to develop these powers. In the lightless chasm of the Shadow Rift some Cancer Mages dwell, but these are almost all Half-Arak and Feytouched beings who follow the Sith and share their fascination with death. This is due to the fact that the Sith themselves cannot be diseased by normal means. Finally in Tepest the odd disease can decimate small groups of people, and the survivors often turn to the Cancer Mage class as a means of revenge against nature and a protective measure.

Alterations

Contagion (Sp): Using this ability requires a Powers Check.

Cancerous Companion (Ex): The creature created by this ability is a Dread Companion. Children of the Night (Su): This ability only functions in domains with Full or Spars Ecologies.

Viral Agent (Su): This ability does not function across a domain border, whether open or closed.

Insect Plague (Sp): See Conjuration (Summoning).

Viral Ally (Su): This ability is limited as Viral Agent (see above). See Enchantment.

Disease Form (Su): Using this ability requires a Powers Check (as if Contagion were being cast).

Demonologist

The Demonologist is common only within the depths of the Shadow Rift in Ravenloft. There, some of the Sith turn from their standard practices to the lore of the Demonic, for the purposes of fighting the outsiders, controlling them, or simply understanding them as they do mortals. These Arak are often followers of the Spider Queen as well, and offer up profane services in her name.

Alterations

Charm Demon (Sp): See Enchantment.

Quasit Familiar (Ex): The process of becoming the Demonologist's familiar causes the Quasit to lose its Reality Wrinkle as it binds itself to its master.

Dominate Demon (Sp): See Enchantment.

Diabolist

Unlike the Demonologist (see above) the Diabolist is much more wide-spread through the Demiplane. There seems to be no shortage of mortals willing to devote themselves to forbidden hellish powers, and they may be found in the lands of Borca, Falkovnia, Hazlan, Invidia, Necropolis, Nidala, and Richemulot.

In Borca, the few arcane casters that develop there often pledge themselves to the Devils in hopes of gaining even more power

to wield within political society to their benefits. In Falkovnia, the Diabolist is a wizard who has pledged his life to Drakov and seeks to gain more power to serve his master in his war campaigns.

The dry land of Hazlan has clerics, sorcerers, and wizards who become Diabolists. The Clerics are those who follow the Lawgiver and see the Devils as his servants in the land. The arcane casters take a more pragmatic view of the situation, again using their abilities to ensure their survival and rise in prominence in the arcane society. Invidia has few sorcerers (and even fewer wizards), and these folk practice their magic in secret, lest they be punished by superstitious townsfolk. Often to increase their power they will pledge themselves to the Devils in hopes of gaining power.

It is rumored that Malocchio Aderre has some Diabolists that serve him directly, carrying out his will in the domain. In the decimated city of Necropolis, there were great academies where magical learning could be taught. Within the dark corners of the universities and studies the practice of the Diabolist was carried out, and many Diabolists exist there to this day, albeit in an undead state.

In the land of Nidala, Diabolists are those few clerics who leave the service of Belenus, and take up the practice of the profane. Why they do this varies by individual, but it is definitely not unknown for an exiled or fugitive cleric to become a Diabolist. Finally, Richemuloise wizards sometimes follow this prestige class, seeing the powers the Devils offer as an enticing reward for service. In the oppressive domain of intrigue and subterfuge, any edge can be a valuable one.

Alterations

Diabolism (Ex)

Any spell enhanced with this ability requires a Powers Check due to the evil nature of the enhanced magic.

Imp Familiar (Ex): Because the Imp bonds itself to the Diabolist as a familiar, it loses its Reality Wrinkle.

Disciple of Asmodeus

The Cult of Asmodeus is active in Ravenloft, and the largest chapters are present in the domains of Borca, Dementlieu, Hazlan, Necropolis, Pharazia, and Richemulot. The Cult is attracted to the more advanced domains of Borca, Dementlieu, Necropolis (pre-Requiem), and Richemulot for the political and societal power they can gain.

The domain of Hazlan has a fair number of Disciples due to the arcane nature of the land, and the power that arcane magic can bring. Finally, the downtrodden citizens of Pharazia have been accepting of the Cult. This is most likely due to the fact that it provides a surcease from the constant moral edicts of Diamabel. Of course, such cultists must operate in the strictest secrecy, and so far they are succeeding; although Diamabel is aware of the presence of the devil-worshippers in his land somewhere.

Otherwise, the cult has made small forays into other domains where they have small chapters. These lands include Barovia, Darkon, Forlorn, G'Henna, Invidia, Nidala, and Tepest. There's not much noteworthy about these cultists, except that they exist and constantly strive to take over the lands they are present in.

Alterations

Charm (Sp): See Enchantment.

Command (Sp): See Enchantment.

Summon Hellcat (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Evil Authority (Sp): See Enchantment.

Summon Major Devil (Sp): See Conjunction (Calling).

Greater Command (Sp): See Enchantment.

Disciple of Baalzebul

The cult of Baalzebul is similar to the Cult of Asmodeus, but concentrated in different domains. It still has a sizable presence in the lands of Dementlieu and Richemulot, but it's also popular in the domains of Darkon and Necropolis. These liars and sneaks thrive off of society and thus the lands of Darkon and the city of Necropolis were attractive places to set up headquarters.

Other domains that show signs of the Cult are Borca, Hazlan, Invidia, Mordent, Nidala, and Pharazia. Characters following this class always seem to have something to do in these lands, whether it's murdering rivals, lying for their own gain, or just having a "good time."

Alterations

Suggestion (Sp): See Enchantment.

Summon Osyluth (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Insect Plague (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Beguiling Nature (Sp): See Enchantment.

Summon Cornugon (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Disciple of Dispater

The Disciples of Dispater are not found with any great frequency within the Demiplane. The odd evil combat-oriented being venerates this devil, but there are no major cults dedicated to him. Small groups of

beings gather together and venerate him, occasionally teaching another being the ways of Dispater.

Alterations

Requirements: A sacrifice must still be made on an altar of iron, but an Erinyes need not be present for the sacrifice, since she could not return to report to him afterwards.

Summon Erinyes (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Iron Body (Sp): See Transmutation.

Disciple of Mammon

The cult of Mammon has only set up a headquarters in one place in the Demiplane; the domain of Nova Vassa. Here, particularly decadent nobles gather to plan ways to increase their holdings, or to engage the many harlots the Cult holds captive. A particularly brutal crime lord named Malken has been seen at the cult's base of operations, but he is not a member of the cult himself. Instead he simply appears from time to time, and seems to have some pull with the leaders of the Cult.

Alterations

Cheat (Sp): Using this ability requires a Powers Check.

Summon Osyluth (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Summon Gelugon (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Disciple of Mephistopheles

Much like the Disciples of Dispater (see above), the Disciples of Mephistopheles are not found in any one domain of the Lands of Dread. They have no widespread cult like those dedicated to Asmodeus or Baalzebul,

and most commonly they are found working alone, or with a few fiery evil creatures.

They are most likely to be found in domains that allow arcane practice, such as Darkon or Hazlan, but even in these domains they are extremely rare. In actuality, it's simply a case that only those who dedicate themselves to this calling from the beginning actually become these Disciples. No domain in Ravenloft has the common skills necessary to take up this class.

Alterations

Summon Hamatula (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Hellfire (Sp): The use of this ability requires a Powers Check.

Hellfire Storm (Sp): The use of this ability requires a Powers Check.

Lifedrinker

The Lifedrinkers in Ravenloft are very rare. Theoretically, they could often turn up in the lands of Hazlan or the Shadow Rift, both places where arcane knowledge is prized and studied. However, in practice this is not the case, as Vampires are rare in both lands. This is not to say that they don't exist, just that the absence of the undead monstrosities makes the chances of any becoming Lifedrinkers rarer.

Of the two domains, Hazlan is slightly more likely to have a Lifedrinker, due to the proximity of the domain to Barovia, and the proliferation of Vampires in that land. Of course, a Vampire can just as easily make its way through a Fracture into the Shadow Rift and attack a Half-Arak or Feytouched being there, spreading the curse of its existence on.

Alterations

Blood Servant (Ex): See Conjunction (Calling). Using this ability requires a

Powers Check, due to the evil nature of the outsider being called.

Boost Defenses (Ex): This ability works slightly different in Ravenloft, due to the nature of Vampires and the aging rules put forth in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook. It functions as listed in regards to the natural armor bonus, turn resistance, and cold & electricity resistance, but its damage reduction does change. Instead of being 20/+2, it increases the existing damage reduction by 5 points and still is beaten by silver and magic weapons.

Blood Revel (Ex): Some of the effects of the Blood Revel change due to the rules for Vampiric Aging in Ravenloft. The strength bonus stays the same, but the Fast Healing bonus simply becomes a +5 bonus to whatever Fast Healing the Vampire already possesses, and the damage reduction increases by 10 points and is still beaten by silver and magic weapons.

Mortal Hunter

The fact that there are no native outsiders in Ravenloft means that this prestige class is only taken by a Fiend that enters and takes it up, or has already taken the class when they are drawn into the Demiplane. However, Ravenloft affects all beings equally, and even one of the Mortal Hunter's abilities is affected.

Alterations

Slay Mortal (Su): Using this ability requires a Powers Check with a 5% chance of failure. If the Outsider using the ability has a Reality Wrinkle, then a failed Powers Check is treated as a failed Power Ritual and adds 1d4 points to the Outsider's Corruption total and halves the Reality Wrinkle's Radius. See "Fiends" in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Soul Eater

Another prestige class that is not common anywhere in the Demiplane, the Soul Eater might have been found in Necropolis, but for the fact that the undead cannot take this class. Instead these are solitary beings found anywhere in Ravenloft.

Often they are creatures that are on the brink of death and find a mysterious being offers them new life, but at a price. Whether these beings are "Death" as Strahd von Zarovich made a pact with, or the Dark Powers, or some other mysterious creatures, is unknown.

Thrall of Demogorgon

The Thralls of Demogorgon are solitary beings who thrive on chaos and disorder. They are often found in the lands of Har'Akir, Hazlan, Necropolis, and Sri Raji. Har'Akiri and Rajian Thralls often learn of the rite to take this class from forgotten ruins where evil dwells. Hazlani Thralls often learn from the same sources, though from ruins in their own lands. While Necropolitan Thralls often learn this class from any number of sources; the great wealth of knowledge that the city holds is a breeding ground for this class.

Otherwise, sometimes Thralls of Demogorgon are found in Barovia, Darkon, Lamordia, Nova Vassa, the Shadow Rift, Souragne, Tepest, and Vechor. Depending on the view of magic in the domain in question will determine whether or not the Thrall is a spellcaster or a Rogue of some kind.

Alterations

Requirements: An intelligent being must still be sacrificed to take this class, and still on unhallowed ground at night, but it need not be in the presence of a Demon, due to their rarity in Ravenloft.

Scaly Flesh (Ex): Every time the Thrall gains a natural armor bonus from this ability, his Outcast Rating increases by an identical amount.

Summon Demon (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Two Personas (Ex): The DM can refer to the section on Major Madness effects to see guidelines on how to handle multiple personalities.

Death Touch (Sp): See Slay Living.

Demogorgon's Will (Sp): See Limited Wish.

Thrall of Graz'zt

The Cabals of Graz'zt are found most commonly in the lands of Hazlan and in the city of Necropolis. In both domains they pursue their goals of learning the secrets of others and thus holding power of those unfortunates. In Hazlan, the atmosphere is well suited to this task, with the various infighting between the wizards of the Mulan for Hazlik's favor. Necropolis held a similar attraction until the Requiem occurred. Now, although the Thralls are still active, the lure of the flesh has been taken from them, with the (mostly) passionless undead in residence.

Otherwise, Thralls of Graz'zt are sometimes found working singly in the lands of Borca, Dementlieu, Har'Akir, Pharazia, Richemulot, the Shadow Rift, and Sri Raji. In Borca, Dementlieu and Richemulot they work within society, gaining their station and power through their wiles. Har'Akir, Pharazia, and Sri Raji present a more primitive and dangerous society to work within, but they find their abilities are up to the task. Finally, within the Shadow Rift, some Powrie, Sith, and Teg Arak as well as Half-Arak and Feytouched beings take up this class for the power it brings them.

Alterations

Charm (Sp): See Enchantment.

Summon Demon (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Thrall of Juiblex

Much like some of the Devilish Disciples, the Thralls of Juiblex are not found commonly in any domain in Ravenloft. And although they are not found commonly in any land, those who do follow this demonic power often gravitate to the city of Nosos, floating in the ever-present Mists. This bastion of filth and decay often plays host to numerous slimes, molds, oozes, and jellies that the Thrall of Juiblex thrives in the presence of. Hiding deep in the fecund sewers, the Thrall performs sacrifices to the dark demon, capturing people from the streets above for the horrid rites.

Alterations

Contagion (Sp): Using this ability requires a Powers Check.

Alter Self (Sp): See Transmutation.

Summon Demon (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Polymorph Self (Su): See Transmutation.

Thrall of Orcus

Thralls of Orcus come from lands where magic and religion are common and accepted. They also come from lands with a strong undead population, most of the time. The domains that often feature these Thralls are Darkon, Har'Akir, Hazlan, Necropolis, and Sri Raji.

In Darkon and Necropolis, they are often spellcasters who have studied some of the tenets of the Eternal Order and have thrown their lot and knowledge in with the Demon Prince of the Undead. They often form small

cabals and have cells throughout the land of Darkon in most of the major cities. Necropolis especially has Thralls present, although they keep a very low profile due to Death's megalomania in his complete rule of the city. In Necropolis especially, the Thralls of Orcus do battle with those who follow Demogorgon & Graz'zt, although this is a subtle underground war of assassins.

In the southern land of Hazlan the Thralls study the tenets of the Lawgiver, though few actual clergymen take up this class. In this land the Thralls are much more likely to be actual Necromancers, gathering together in small cabals. Here too, the Thralls fight with the Thralls of Demogorgon & Graz'zt, again in small underground battles. Hazlik has no wish to see his domain ripped open in magical warfare.

Finally, Thralls of Orcus are found in Har'Akir and Sri Raji. In the desert land of Har'Akir they often study the tenets of Osiris or Set, and are often fighting in the sands and tombs with the Thralls of Demogorgon, or less likely, the Thralls of Graz'zt. In Sri Raji they study under the tenets of Kali and here too they fight against the Thralls of Demogorgon, or the less common Thralls of Graz'zt.

Alterations

Massive Girth/Skeletal Visage (Su): When this ability is gained, the Thrall must make a Powers Check with a 4% chance of failure due to the vile feat.

Summon Undead (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Pallor of Death (Su): See Transmutation.

Death Touch (Sp): See Slay Living.

Summon Nightwing (Sp): See Conjunction (Summoning).

Ur-Priest

See "Misty Divine" in Quoth the Raven issue #12 for full details on this prestige class.

Vermin Lord

Vermin Lords are relatively more common than some classes in Ravenloft. They are often found in Sebuia, the Shadow Rift, Sithicus, Valachan, and Verbrek. In Sebuia they are often Wild Children who have become Druids, or Nomads who have taken up residence in the Forbidden Wastes, befriending the scorpions of the deserts. Within the Shadow Rift, they are often Powrie or Teg Arak, also following the path of the Druid and socializing with the Spiders that dwell within the Rift.

In Sithicus the Vermin Lords are evil elves who follow the Druidic ways and associate with the spiders of the forests. There are also tales of elves who grew too attached to their Stag Beetle mounts and through their obsession become Vermin Lords as well.

Valachan & Verbrek also have Druid Vermin Lords, and spiders are the most common companions of these beings. However, in Verbrek, sometimes followers of the Wolf God will also take up this prestige class, infecting their lycanthropic bodies with all manner of pestilence. Truly horrifying are these beings, with their natural abilities, clerical spellcasting, and Vermin Lord capabilities.

Otherwise, the Vermin Lords can be found in Barovia, Falkovnia, Necropolis, Paridon, and Richemulot. Barovian Vermin Lords are often unique individuals, the rare Druid who finds the abilities complement his natural ones. Falkovnia's squalor and filth in its cities often houses Vermin Lords who simply study the abilities they need to master the back-alleys and byways of their homes.

Necropolis had some Vermin Lords in those beings that followed the Eternal Order,

but since the Requiem there have been no new cases of them, due to the destructive elements of the Shroud on natural vermin life. Paridon has the odd Vermin Lord; often an outcast from the Temple of the Divinity of Mankind, and find that their abilities allow them to survive on horrid fare, instead of starving.

As well, some of these Vermin Lords move into the sewers, and into the land of Timor, and find that they can survive in the lightless depths. Some have whispers that the abilities of the Vermin Lords allow them to serve the Hive Queen of the Marikith, or at least, defend suitably against her depredations. Finally, the sewers of Richemulot are not home to just Wererats; many vermin make their homes there too. The Vermin Lords often carve out small domains for themselves, at least until they become too much of a problem, and the lycanthropes are forced to deal with them directly.

Alterations

Chitin (Ex): Every +1 bonus of natural AC from this ability also gives the Vermin Lord a +1 to his Outcast Rating.

Vermin Servant: The Vermin Servant is a Dread Companion, as detailed in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Spider Hand (Sp): See Transmutation.

Swarm Armor (Su): The swarm of vermin from this ability actually tunnel under the Vermin Lord's skin, giving a hideous appearance to the as the insects burrow around his body. Otherwise, the ability is unchanged.

Spider Legs (Sp): See Transmutation.

Warrior of Darkness

The Dark Knights come from a few different domains in Ravenloft, but are most

Magic

commonly found in the two lands of Hazlan and Necropolis. Hazlan encourages the arcane studies that the Warrior of Darkness studies and oftentimes favored and trusted Rashemani servants will be trained in these arts by their arcane Mulan masters. In Necropolis, the Warriors of Darkness are more self-taught, and while the arcane is not emphasized as much, the libraries of Il Aluk often contain tomes that can teach the fiendish languages that a prospective student must master to take this class. Nowadays after the Requiem, Warriors of Darkness are still found, as servants of Death or other powerful undead in the Slain City.

Otherwise, Warriors of Darkness can be found in Darkon, Har'Akir, Lamordia, the Shadow Rift, and Vechor. Warriors found in Darkon are often in the same circumstances as those from Necropolis, minus being undead. In Har'Akir they often find the rituals and magic necessary for their craft in forbidden tomb walls or on ancient buried stone tablets. Lamordia has Warriors that focus much more on the alchemical and scientific side of the prestige class, and pay only the smallest heeding to the arcane qualities.

Within the Shadow Rift the Warriors of Darkness come from the ranks of the Sith Arak as well as the Feytouched and Half-Arak. Finally, on the distant island land of Vechor, the Warriors of Darkness are evil men and women who have studied the arcane methods that are not unknown in that land and combined them with primitive alchemical formulae just being developed in that land to devastating effect.

Alterations

Black Magic Elixir (Su): If the Warrior of Darkness takes the Demonic Wings ability, then he must make a Powers Check as though he were casting the spell of the same name every time he utilizes the ability.

Evil Spells

If the optional rule is used that makes the spells Contagion, Deathwatch, Desecrate, Doom, and Trap the Soul evil spells, then casting these spells requires a Powers Check as normal.

Corrupt Spells

Because of the inherent nature of these spells, anytime a corrupt spell is cast, a Powers Check is required as if the spell in question were an Evil spell, even if the corrupt spell doesn't carry the Evil descriptor. If the spell is also necromantic, then the Powers Check is increased, as detailed in the Ravenloft Player's Handbook.

Spell Lists

Cleric Domains

As an option, the DM may make the following domains available to characters following the Ravenloft deities:

Bestial Domain: the Wolf God

Corruption Domain: Erlin, the Eternal Order, Set

Darkness Domain: Arawn

Greed Domain: Set, Zhakata

Pain Domain: Kali, the Wolf God

Spell Descriptions

Aberrate: See Transmutation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Absorb Mind: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Absorb Strength: After this spell is completed, the caster is also able to use an ability identical to the spell Ghoul Touch once while the Absorb Strength spell is still active. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Abyssal Might: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Alert Bebilith: See Conjunction (Calling). Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check. The Bebilith is not able to return to its home plane once it is called, but it is free to travel the Demiplane, subject to the limits of its abilities.

Angry Ache: The circumstance penalty for this spell is increased to -3 for every four caster levels (maximum penalty -15). Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Apocalypse from the Sky: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Befoul: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Bestow Greater Curse: This spell can be used to create curses of any kind, as described for Bestow Curse. The example curses are of lethal severity. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check with the chance of failure determined by the severity of the curse, not the effective spell level.

Black Bag: Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Bodak Birth: See Transmutation. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Boneblade: In the Demiplane the caster may transform the bone into any one or two-handed slashing weapon. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Boneblast: The Constitution damage caused by this spell is always at least 1 point,

even if the target successfully saves. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Call Dretch Horde: See Conjunction (Calling). Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Call Lemure Horde: See Conjunction (Calling). Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Call Nightmare: See Conjunction (Calling). Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Charnel Fire: An undead creature killed by this spell may still return as a Rushlight, seeking vengeance upon the caster. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Cheat: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Circle of Nausea: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Claws of the Bebilith: See Transmutation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Claws of the Savage: See Transmutation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Cloud of the Achaierai: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Clutch of Orcus: The damage caused by this spell is increased to 1d3+1 per round. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level

when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Consume Likeness: If the caster chooses to switch back to his normal form while under the effects of this spell he heals hit points equivalent to if he had rested for the night. This does not occur if the caster is slain and reverts to his original form. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Cruel Disappointment: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Crushing Fist of Spite: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Curse of the Putrid Husk: If the target fails to save against this spell, in addition to being dazed he must make a Horror save. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Damning Darkness: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Dance of Ruin: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Darkbolt: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Death by Thorns: Those slain by this spell rise as free-willed Wights three days later. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Death Grimace: A corpse brought back to life (or unlife) after this spell is used on it (whether through Animate Dead, Create Undead, Raise Dead, or similar magic) can recall the most commonly known name of the being who cast the Death Grimace

spell upon it. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Demon Wings: See Transmutation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Demoncall: Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Demonflesh: See Transmutation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Despoil: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Devil's Ego: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Devil's Eye: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Devil's Tail: See Transmutation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Devil's Tongue: See Transmutation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Distort Summons: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Distort Weapon: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Dread Word: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Drown: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Ectoplasmic Enhancement: When this spell is used on an incorporeal undead

creature, it may choose a single ability from those available to Ghosts, as described in the Monster Manual or the Ravenloft Player's Handbook. This ability disappears when the spell duration ends. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Eternity of Torture: If the target succeeds at the save against this spell the penalties last for 1 minute per caster level rather than 1 round. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Evil Eye: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Evil Weather: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Eye of the Beholder: See Transmutation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Eyes of the Zombie: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Fangs of the Vampire King: See Transmutation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Fiendish Clarity: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Flesh Armor: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Flesh Ripper: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Forbidden Speech: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Glimpse of Truth: As Divination. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Graz'zt's Long Grasp: See Transmutation. If the caster's hand is "killed" while the spell is in effect, it may animate as a self-willed Crawling Claw (see Monsters of Faerun) and attempt to return and rejoin with it's original owner. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Grim Revenge: The undead hand created by this spell has maximum HP and if it defeats its owner, becomes free-willed. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Gutwrench: Should the victim of this spell perish, and the caster absorbs the intestinal life force, the caster also gains a +6 enhancement bonus to Strength instead of +4. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Heartache: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Heartclutch: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Hellfire: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Hellfire Storm: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Hell's Power: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Identify Transgressor: As Divination. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Imprison Soul: If the victim of this spell dies (i.e. the body of the victim is reduced to a Con of 0) then if the caster chooses he can animate the corpse as an undead creature with the appropriate spell. As long as the

caster possesses the original soul, the animated undead will always serve the caster, no matter what method is used in its creation. Should the caster lose possession of the soul, the undead may become free-willed, depending on the method of its creation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Liquid Pain: This spell creates two doses of agony in Ravenloft, instead of one. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Lahm's Finger Darts: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Love's Pain: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Masochism: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Mindrape: See Divination, Enchantment, and Mind-Affecting. Even though the caster can change the victim's alignment with this spell, he still cannot learn the true alignment of the victim. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Mirror Sending: This spell cannot cross a domain border, and depending on the nature of the caster, this spell may provoke a Horror save.

Morality Undone: See Enchantment. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Pestilence: The disease created by this spell causes 1d3 Strength damage, in addition to the 1d4 Constitution drain. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check. Those killed by this spell may very well rise as Plague Blights (see *Libris Mortis*).

Plague of Nightmares: Casting this spell requires a Powers Check. Those slain by this spell may very well rise as Bastelli (see *Denizens of Dread*).

Power Leech: A victim that loses any ability points from this spell is also fatigued until it can properly rest. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Pox: The Constitution drain caused by this spell is changed to 1d6 from 1d4. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Psychic Poison: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Rapture of Rupture: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Reality Bind: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Red Fester: In Ravenloft the Charisma damage caused by this spell is increased to 1d6. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Rotting Curse of Urfeustra: Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Sacrificial Skill: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Sadism: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Sap Strength: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Seething Eyebane: Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Serpents of Theggeron: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this

spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Shriveling: The damage caused by this spell is increased in Ravenloft to 1d4+1 (maximum 10d4+10). Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Slash Tongue: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Slow Consumption: This spell also allows the caster to use the spell Charm Person once per day as a spell-like ability, due to the vampiric nature of this power. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Song of Festering Death: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Sorrow: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Soul Shackles: If the soul frees itself from this spell, it may, at it's option, return as a free-willed ghost. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Spider Hand: See Transmutation.

Spider Legs: See Transmutation.

Spores of the Vrock: Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Spread of Savagery: See Enchantment. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Steal Life: When cast in Ravenloft, this spell always makes the caster younger. If it's cast anytime other than under the full moon, the caster only gets 1 day younger for each ability point drained. If the spell is cast under the full moon though, the caster gets two weeks younger, rather than simply one. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell

requires a Powers Check. Those slain by this spell often rise as Ancient Dead.

Stop Heart: The Heal check DC needed to stabilize someone from this spell in Ravenloft is increased to 18 rather than 15. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Stunning Screech: Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Thousand Needles: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Tongue of Baalzebul: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Tongue Serpents: See Transmutation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Tongue Tendrils: See Transmutation. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Touch of Juiblex: See Transmutation. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Unheavened: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Unliving Weapon: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Utterdark: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Vile Lance: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Wall of Eyes: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Wave of Grief: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Wave of Pain: After victims of this spell overcome being stunned they are nauseated for a similar amount of time. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Were-Doom: This spell can allow more types of lycanthropy than just those listed in the spell description, and at the end of the duration, the victims get one additional saving throw. Those who succeed are unaffected anymore, but those who fail permanently are infected with lycanthropy and treated as Infected Lycanthropes. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Whirlwind of Teeth: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Wither Limb: After this spell has run its course, the victim is also Fatigued until they can get proper rest. Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Wrack: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Wretched Blight: Add a +1 bonus to effective caster level when casting this spell. Casting this spell requires a Powers Check.

Evil Magic Items

Armor Special Abilities

Demonmight Ward: Crafting or using this armor requires a Powers Check.

Specific Armors

Armor of the Dread Emperor: Although just wearing this armor doesn't require a Powers Check, the act of imprisoning others to take your damage is certainly an evil act and will require Powers Checks of its own.

Fleshshifter Armor: Crafting this armor requires a Powers Check.

Weapon Special Abilities

Bloodfeeding: Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Cursespewing: Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Marrowcrushing: Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Souldrinking: Those killed by this weapon must make a Will save (DC 23) or rise as an undead creature (DM's choice) with as many HD as it had levels. Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Strength Sapping: Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Vile: Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Specific Weapons

Angelkiller: Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Blackguard's Blade: Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Charnel Reaver: Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Harrowheart: Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Hell's Heart Arrow: This item cannot be crafted inside Ravenloft. Arrows brought in from outside instead pass through creatures of Lawful alignment.

Spectral Arrow: Those killed by this weapon must make a Will save (DC 23) or rise as an undead creature (DM's choice) with as many HD as it had levels. Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Warpsword: Crafting or using this weapon requires a Powers Check.

Rings

Master Ring: The Master Ring cannot send pain or messages across a domain border. Crafting or using this ring requires a Powers Check.

Ring of Weeping: Crafting or using this ring requires a Powers Check.

Slave Ring: This ring cannot connect with the Master Ring across a domain border.

Vile Weapon Ring: Crafting or using this ring requires a Powers Check.

Vile Spell Ring: Crafting or using this ring requires a Powers Check.

Rods

Celestial Bane Rod: Crafting or using this rod requires a Powers Check.

Rod of Possession: Using this item in Ravenloft may, at the DM's option, initiate Transposition with a fiend from the Lower Planes. Or, a spirit in the Demiplane may possess the Rod wielder. Crafting or using this rod requires a Powers Check.

Staves

Staff of Corruption: Crafting or using this staff requires a Powers Check.

Staff of Darkness: Crafting or using this staff requires a Powers Check.

Staff of Pestilence: Crafting or using this staff requires a Powers Check.

Wondrous Items

Belt of the Dread Emperor: Using this item requires a Powers Check.

Dark Altar Stone: Crafting or using this item requires a Powers Check.

Elixir of the Dark Speech: Crafting or using this item requires a Powers Check.

Fanatic's Collar: See Enchantment.

Flesh Ring of Scorn: Crafting this item requires a Powers Check.

Gem of Psychic Poison: Crafting or using this item requires a Powers Check.

Iron Maiden of Preservation: Using this item requires a Powers Check.

Maggot Harvester: Crafting or using this item requires a Powers Check.

Necklace of Demons: The Demons summoned by this spell receive the standard Will save with a -2 penalty to resist control. As well, all Demons summoned by this item have the Mists descriptor and are not true demonic beings. They disappear back to the Mists at the end of the 10 rounds. Using this item requires a Powers Check.

Nipple Clamp of Exquisite Pain: Crafting this item requires a Powers Check.

Pain Extractor: Crafting or using this item requires a Powers Check.

Pipe of Grief: Crafting or using this item requires a Powers Check.

Piercing Needles of Pain: Crafting or using this item requires a Powers Check.

Spiralburst Bottle: The gate created by this item links only to the Near Ethereal, and if a creature survives its trip, it cannot progress any further into the Ethereal Plane.

Symbol of Demogorgon: Crafting or using this item requires a Powers Check.

Tongue Studs of Hellbreath: Crafting or using this item requires a Powers Check.

Vasharan Worm Pod: Crafting this item requires a Powers Check.

Artifacts

Minor Artifacts

Demon Blood: Using this item requires a Powers Check.

Demonstone: The alignment conversion of this item forces the owner to make a Madness save if they are not already Chaotic Evil.

Midnight Blade: Using this sword requires a Powers Check, besides the checks that will invariably come from committing murders with it.

Rhapsody of Pain: Using these items requires a Powers Check.

Staff of Malice: Using this staff requires a Powers Check.

Diabolic Engines and Demonic Devices

Cauldron of Zombie Spewing: This cauldron creates 6d12 Zombies instead of 4d12 when used inside Ravenloft. Using this item requires a Powers Check.

Demonic Graft Machine: Good-aligned characters who are subject to Wisdom damage from the grafts this item produces must also make a Madness save every time they take the Wisdom damage. Characters with a demonic graft also increase their OR by +6 if the graft is not hidden very well.

Pain Pit: Using this item requires a Powers Check.

Major Artifacts

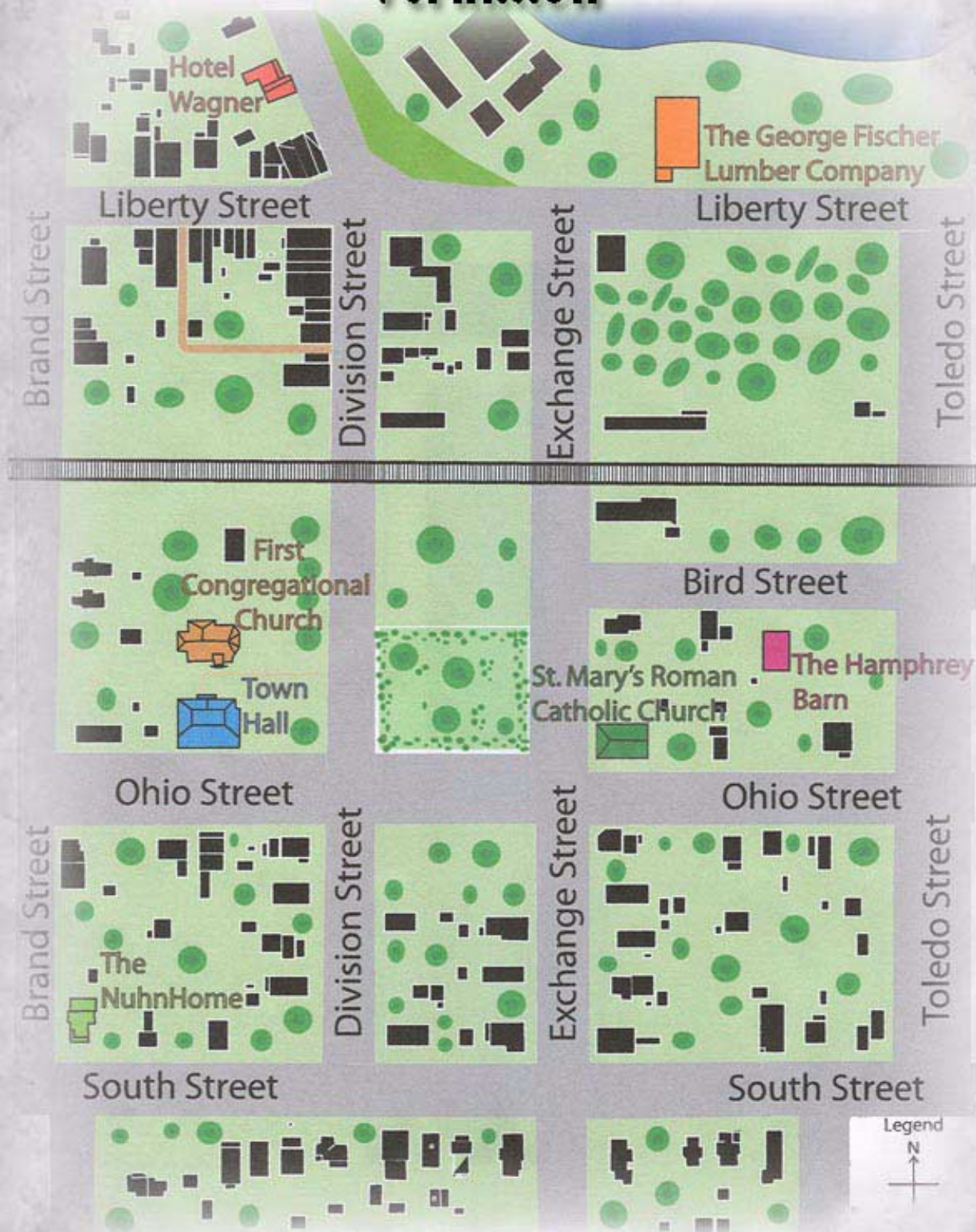
Major Artifacts are powerful enough that they are not affected by any of the changes of Ravenloft, be they beneficial or not. Even though their abilities may not be altered however, if such ability would normally call for a Powers Check upon use, then the character using it still must make a Powers Check. The Dark Powers may not affect Major Artifacts, but that doesn't mean their users are incorruptible.

It is said that in a place called the Iron Sanctum in the land of Hazlan, a group of the monks known as the Guardians stand watch over the Iron Flask of Tuerny the Merciless. Hazlik is said to be searching for this artifact, but it's not known for what purpose.

Evil Monsters

The Monsters listed in the book can be found anywhere, and thus are not present in any particular domain. If a monster has an ability that duplicates an altered spell in Ravenloft, then the ability is also similarly altered. This applies even to the Demon Princes & Devil Lords, unless the DM decides to use the optional rule and give those creatures a divine rank. Of course, doing so would mean that the Dark Powers would be very hard-pressed to hold onto such a being, and it should be able to leave Ravenloft if it wants to. (The Dark Powers have learned from their holding Vecna captive.) Of course, the above assumes that the DM wants to remove one of the fiendish rulers from their home plane and place them in the Demiplane in the first place.

Vermilion





The Curse of Maple Grove

A tale of terror from Gothic Earth

By Blake Alexander

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To my colleague, Professor Jacob VanWorth,

Although my search for information regarding the ill-fated voyage of the Erie Board of Trade has thus far proved fruitless, I have uncovered an intriguing tale while conducting my investigation at the lake shore village of Vermillion, Ohio.

For the last few weeks the area around the village has been plagued by a series of savage attacks upon local livestock. Speculation among the populace mentions a grave site in a cemetery some four miles outside of town over which stands a monument carved in the likeness of a six foot angel. Upon inquiring about the grave, I found that it belongs to a young girl believed to have been murdered by her mother and that the mother of the girl, herself, is buried in an adjoining grave, having taken her own life earlier this year.

Intrigued, the next day I ventured to the cemetery to see the grave site for myself. Although the sun was shining brightly overhead, the cemetery seemed as if the shadows of night still clung to its iron gates.

It took mere moments to locate the grave for the angelic monument rose high above the surrounding markers. Immediately, I was taken back by the melancholy expression carved upon the angel's face and by the monument's eyes which seemed to stare at me as I approached.

Having encountered things reserved for others nightmares, I quickly dismissed my unease and set about examining the statue. To my horror, I found what appeared to be dried blood upon both of the angel's hands and around its mouth.

With this knowledge fresh in my mind I hurried back to my hotel room to compose this letter. I am requesting that you give its contents your attention with haste, my friend, for I do not believe that the evil within the angelic statue will remain satisfied with animal blood much longer.

Timendi Causa est Nesoire,
Ethan Stone



The Curse of Maple Grove

Among the vices that afflict the heart of man few are as corrupting as envy. For it is this such that drives men, or in this case of Lydia Fischer women, into the depravity of hatred.

Even as a child, Lydia Fischer had demonstrated a tendency towards selfishness, especially towards her little sister, Alice. Although the troublesome trait was noticed by their parents, it was dismissed as a childhood characteristic that would be outgrown as she matured into adulthood. Rather than disappearing, as they had hoped, Lydia's selfishness had degenerated into unyielding envy by the time the two sisters had reached their latter adolescent years.

Thus it was, when a handsome young Conrad Nuhn came to work for their father as a foreman in his lumber company, that Lydia began to notice an attraction between the young apprentice and her sister. With each passing day she watched as their feeling deepened, and her heart grew black with envy. Desperately she attempted to lure Conrad's attention from her sister, but despite her best efforts, she could not draw him away from Alice.

As Lydia heart dwelled on her desire to take Conrad from Alice she came upon a plan. Secretly, in her role as one of the bookkeeper at the Firsher Lumber Company, she altered records to make them appears as if Conrad was embezzling. To further her trap, Lydia used her relationship with a young admirer of hers at the local bank to deposit funds in an amount matching the funds missing from the altered records into Conrad's account.

When Lydia had manufactured enough evidence, she confronted Conrad as he left his apartment for a rendezvous with Alice.

She explained that she had evidence that he's been embezzling from her father and that she would take it to her father if he didn't agree to renounce his love for Alice and marry her. At first, Conrad scoffed at her accusations, but once she's produced evidence to support her claim he knew that she was serious and that she had trapped him. If he didn't do as she demanded he would be ruined. Either way, he knew he'd have lost Alice.

Faced with such a choice, Conrad felt he had no choice but to agree. The next morning when he was approached by Alice shortly after arriving at the accounting house, as to why he's missed their meeting the previous night, he explained that they could not see one another again. When the tearful Alice asked for an explanation, Conrad explained that her sister had accepted his proposal the previous night and they were set to be married within the month. With tears steaming down her cheeks, Alice rushed from the accounting house, past the smiling visage of her sister.

The sight of Alice's tearful departure from the accounting tore at Conrad's heart to such a degree that he ventured to meet with her two night later. There he confessed his undying love for her, and explained that he felt powerless to extract himself from the pledge he had made with Lydia. Although he mentioned nothing of the alleged embezzlement or anything of Lydia's manipulation, Alice was touched by his words, and the two continued to meet.

Shortly after Lydia and Conrad were wed, Alice became aware that she was with child. To hide this shame of her indiscretion she accepted the proposal of one of her suitors by the name of Richard Humphrey. Alice's wedding happened quickly, and the secret of

the identity of her baby's father remain her own until the time of her baby's birth seven months later.

Lydia, however, was not to be fooled. The first time she held little Betty Claire she saw the distinct characteristics of her husband in the little girl's face, and she knew what had transpired. With her dark heart, hatred bloomed to a fullness she had not known before. As she watched Alice's love for little Betty Claire grow, in the recesses of her mind Lydia plotted dark schemes by which she could enact her revenge upon her sister, one of which she found to be especially to her liking.

Patiently, Lydia waited until the time was right to set her plan in motion, and that time came one late autumn afternoon, nearly five months after little Betty Claire's birth. In passing, Alice mentioned that she was heading to the General Store for supplies. Seizing the opportunity, Lydia requested that she purchase arsenic for use in dealing with a rodent problem at the Nuhn home. Alice, aware of an apparent change for the better in Lydia since the birth of her niece, happily agreed, unaware of the doom she was bringing upon her family.

Over the next few weeks, Lydia began a series of rumors among the villagers of Vermillion, stating that Alice was acting strangely and that being a young mother might be proving too much for Alice. As is the case with small communities, this rumor circulated rapidly throughout the area.

Within a month Betty Claire fell violently ill. Despite the best efforts of the local physician the little girl died in her mother's arms the following evening. Grief-stricken, Alice asked Richard to have a monument carved in the likeness of a larger than life angel crafted for the little girl's grave in the Maplegrove Cemetery and the Richard complied.

Alice, however, was not left to her grief. Lydia's rumors had done their work. A police investigation uncovered the arsenic that has been purchased by Alice.

As the information circulated around the community, the townspeople became more and more enraged at the apparent atrocity until one evening a group of villagers gathered in the town park while Richard was away on business, among them was Alice's own sister Lydia, her voice rising for the blood of her sister to avenge her niece. As the frenzied mob surged down the street and into her house Alice looked on in terror. She begged for her life as they drug her to the barn behind her house and prepared a noose with which to hang her. With tear filled eyes she looked on her killers and there among her saw sister. In that moment she realized the truth of what a had transpired and she uttered the following curse "Savagery will be repaid in kind, murder for murder, o sister of mine. Justice will come from beyond my sight, for it will seek blood in the dark of night!" As the last of these words escaped Alice's body was lifted from the ground under the power of the noose.

The next morning her body was found by her husband who had returned from his business trip to find the house empty. With the testimony of many witnesses, some of whom had been present in mob the pervious night, regarding the lack of mental stability that Alice has exhibited over the week before, Alice's death was declared a suicide and the her body was laid to rest next to the her daughter's grave, under the watchful gaze of the stone angel.

The next month, under the new moon, the stone guardian rose under the power of Alice's curse. From it's lofty perch amid the monuments of Maplegrove Cemetery it took flight into the midnight sky, it's stone claws seeking the blood payment of justice.



The Stone Angel of Maplegrove

(Gargoyle Variant)

Medium-Sized Magical Beast (Earth)

Hit Dice:	4d8 +19 (40 hit points)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	40 ft (8 squares), fly 60 ft (average)
AC:	16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 12, flatfooted 14
Base Attack/Grapple:	+4/+6
Attack:	Claws +6 melee (1d4+2)
Full Attack:	2 claws +6 melee (1d4+2), and bite +4 (1d6+1)
Face/Reach:	5ft/5ft
Special Qualities:	Damage Reduction 10/magic, Darkvision 60 ft, Freeze
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +4
Abilities:	Str 15, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 10
Skills:	Hide +7*, Listen +4, Spot +4
Feats:	Multi attacks, Toughness
Climate/Terrain:	Maplegrove Cemetery and surrounding area
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	4
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil

Although it appeared that no one heard the desperate curse that Alice uttered on the

night of her death, the curses power settled within the Stone Angel that she has so lovingly placed as guardian over her little daughter's grave. During the dark of the moon it rises into the night sky and stalks those who brought about the Alice's death in country side surrounding the lake shore village. So far, the statue has only managed to visited it's horror upon a small number of livestock belonging to one of the men who was a member of the mob, but this is not by design, but merely the product of fate. Should it encounter anyone remotely connected with Alice's death on the road, or elsewhere in it's nightly hunt, it would certainly attack them without mercy.

As the light of day approaches, the statue is drawn back to the cemetery where it normally rests. With the first light of dawn it reverts back to a normal monument, it's consciousness at rest. Any damage done to the statue while under the light of the sun is supernaturally restored when the time comes for the new moon, however, damage sustained while the angel is animated remains after its transformation back into a monument.

Should Lydia ever be brought to justice for the deaths of Alice and Betty Claire, the curse will be laid to rest.

Combat

The Stone Angel attacks without warning, often swooping out of the dark night sky of the new moon.

Freeze (Ex): If encountered among the gravestones of Maplegrove Cemetery, the Stone Angel will attempt to hold itself still so that it appears to be a monument. An observer must succeed at a Spot check (DC 20) to notice the angel is really alive.

Skills: The Angel receives a +8 supernatural bonus to Hide checks when concealed among the tombstones of Maplegrove Cemetery.

Lydia Fischer Nuhn

(Category One Hag)*

Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice:	3d8+6 (hp 18)
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft.
AC:	16 (+1 Dex), +5 Natural)
Attack:	2 claws +5 melee
Damage:	Claw 1d4+3
Face/Reach:	5ft by 5ft/5 ft
Special Attacks:	None
Special Qualities:	Spell-like Abilities (change self at will)
Saves:	Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +8
Abilities:	Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 13
Skills:	Appraise +9, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +7, Gather Information +7, Hide +5 Knowledge (Local) +6, Knowledge (Toxicology) +6, Listen +7, Profession (Accountant) +7, Profession (Cook) +4, Sense Motive +7, Spot +6
Feats:	Alertness, Combat Casting, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus(Diplomacy)
Climate/Terrain:	Lake Erie Shore, Near Vermillion
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	3
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil

* Base creature is a 3rd level Tradesman

Although the village of Vermillion suspects no wrongdoing on the part of Lydia Fischer, her dark deeds have not gone totally unnoticed. In her true form, she is no longer the pretty young woman she had once been, rather she is now a twisted crone whose once fair complexion has been replaced by a wrinkled skin with a sickly green pallor. Her once delicate hands now are claws topped with nails that are as strong and a sharp as

knives and her once beautiful hair is now a tangled mass. Still, Lydia has managed to maintain her guise as a normal human by cloaking herself with her change self ability whenever she leaves the sanctuary of her lakeside home.

Since Alice's death, Lydia hatred has begun to consume her. In a fit of rage she slew the grieving Conrad and devoured his body. To cover for this, Lydia has told her family, neighbors and friend that Conrad took her sister's suicide hard and took to traveling as a sales and acquisition representative for the Fischer Lumber Company and that his job keeps him on the road for great lengths of time. In order to keep this ruse from being revealed she "arranged" with her ogre pawns for her father to be injured while working at the lumber company, leaving her as acting head of the business in her father's absence.

Should anyone inquire about Alice, Lydia will give the impression that she is heart broken at her sisters untimely death and will do her best to appear as if she is full cooperating with such inquires. At the same time, Lydia will attempt to glean as much information as she can from the questioner during such a conversation. If she feels that the investigator might pose a threat Lydia will attempt to remain appraise of their search into Alice's death, possibly attempting to seduce an attractive male investigator if she feels that it will aid her in gain the information she desires. Should it become obvious that an investigation is getting to close to the truth about Alice's death, Lydia will consider using a lumber yard laborer who took part in the lynching of her sister as her pawn in dealing with her problem. Lydia could also resort to poison if she thinks she has the investigators trust, or if she can trick them into eating something that has been poisoned.

Lydia greatly fears the rumors that are circulating concerning the attacks and refrains from going anywhere near Maplegrove Cemetery during the night.

Combat

Lydia prefers to attack from while her opponents are distracted, often taking advantage of her ability with diplomacy and bluff to lull others into a sense of security before attacking.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will-*change self*. This ability is as cast by a 8th level sorcerer.

Lydia's Ogres

Large-Sized Giants

Hit Dice:	4d8+11 (30 hp)
Initiative:	-1
Speed:	40 ft
Armor Class:	13 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +5 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 13)
Base Attack / Grapple:	+3/+12
Attack:	Axe +8 melee (1d8+7/x3) or Navy Pistol +1 ranged (1d8/x3, 50ft)*
Full Attack:	Axe +8 melee (1d8+7/x3) or Navy Pistol +1 ranged (1d8/x3, 50ft)*
Space/Reach:	10ft/10ft
Special Attacks:	None
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60ft, low light vision, Masque of Form (Su)
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7
Skills:	Toughness, Weapon Focus (Axe)
Environment:	Fischer Lumber Yard, and the area surrounding the Village of Vermillion
Organization:	Solitary, Pair, or Gang (2-4)
Challenge Rating:	3
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil

Among those who participated in the lynching of Alice Fischer Humphrey were four employees of the Fischer Lumber Company; Clyde Ables, John Barrick, Willie Linnell, and Benedict Sanford. Due to their betrayal of the Fischer family in partaking in Alice's death, the four men have found themselves transformed into misshapen brutes of great strength and limited intellect. Despite the fact that each has also found that they have a limited ability to appear in the form they wore before their transformations, they fear they will be found out, and thus have allied themselves with Lydia and act as her muscle when such is needed in dealing with potential problems.

If Lydia is expecting trouble at least one of her pawns will be armed with a Breech Rifle +1 Ranged (1d12/x3) 150 ft.

Masque of From (Su): Each of the transformed works from the Fischer Lumber Company have the ability to assume the form that they held before their transformation. In this form they retain their ability scores, and statistics as listed above.

Alice Fischer Humphrey

(Category One Ghost, Geist)

Medium-Size Undead(Incorporeal)

Hit Dice:	2d12 (hp 13)
Initiative:	+0
Speed:	Fly 30 ft. (Perfect)
AC:	10
Attack:	None
Damage:	None
Face/Reach:	5ft by 5ft
Special Attacks:	Aura of Dispair, Phantom Shift
Special Qualities:	Undead Traits, Incorporeal, +4 Turn Resistance, Rejuvenation
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1

Abilities:	Str -, Dex -, Con -, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16
Skills:	Bluff +8, Diplomacy +10, Equestrian +5**, First Aid +5**, Handle Animals +6**, Hide +10, Knowledge (Etiquette) +7, Knowledge (Local) +7, Listen +10, Move Silently +2**, Profession (Bookkeeper) +6, Search +9, Sense Motives +3, Spot +9, Use Rope +5
Feats:	Perfect Memory (Auditory), Negotiator
Climate/Terrain:	The barn behind the Humphrey House
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	1/2
Alignment:	Lawful Good

* Based on a 2nd level Tradesman

** These rolls for these skills are rendered useless by Alice's current state.

Those few who have visited the barn where Alice Humphrey's body was found have left there telling of a sense of unease that seems to permeate the area. Most attribute this to the suicide that is believed to have taken place there, but in truth, the spirit of Alice Fischer Humphrey still lingers near the site of her death, waiting for some way in which she can gain justice for herself and her daughter. Thus far, all who have ventured near to the barn have been driven away by the foreboding cause by Alice's presence with the barn.

Should someone come to the barn during an investigation in Alice's death she will attempt to use her phantom shift ability to show them the true tale of her demise. If more than one individual is present Alice will study their actions for a few moments before selecting the individual who seems most likely to both understand what is happening in the phantom shift and help bring about justice for Alice.

Combat

Aura of Despair (Su): Alice continually radiates an aura of despair in a 120 ft. radius. Creatures within this radius must make a Will save or suffer a -2 morale penalty to saving throws, attack rolls, ability checks, skill checks, and weapon damage rolls. This penalty lasts until the victim leaves the area around the Humphrey barn. Those who succeed at the saving throw cannot be affected by Alice's aura of despair for 24 hours. The Will Save for Alice's Aura of Despair is DC 13.

Phantom Shift (Su): Alice can make ethereal resonance visible and tangible to the living. An individual selected by Alice ceases to see or feel the Material Plane as it is, but instead experience the ethereal resonance present in the barn, which will immerse the witness into the scenes surrounding Alice's death. A DC 13 Will Save is necessary to resist Alice's Phantom Shift.

Incorporeal: As a spirit, Alice can only be harmed by other incorporeal creature. She ignores damage from corporeal sources. In addition she can pass through solid objects, and always succeeds at Move Silent checks.

Rejuvenation: If "destroyed", Alice's spiritual form will manifest with the Humphrey barn within 2d4 days. The only way to end Alice's haunting of the Humphrey barn is to bring Lydia to justice for her and her daughter's murders.

Turn Resistance: Due to her connection with the scene of her death, Alice has a +4 turn resistance and will cower if turned in the Humphrey Barn.

Undead: As an undead being, Alice is immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep paralysis, stunning and disease. In addition, she is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Minor Characters

Lydia and Alice are not the only interesting character residing in Vermillion that the Player character might cross paths with. Other suggested village that might help to add to the thickening plot can include the following:

Sheriff Simon Demouth: Vermillion's local lawman. Sheriff Demouth is very resistant to any insinuation that the animal attacks have been made by anything supernatural. He will also be suspicious of anyone who is not a resident of the area surrounding Vermillion and may begin to believe that such characters are connected to the attacks. The Sheriff is the only lawman in Vermillion and must deputize common citizens in times of emergency. Thus, Sheriff Demouth could be used to give the players the legal authority to investigate the attacks should the Gamemaster desire such a tie in.

Father William Summers: Father William, parson at St. Mary's Catholic Church, has much to be ashamed of. The night of Alice's death he witnessed the mob heading for Alice's house but feared for his own safety and ignored her plight. He now lives with the guilt of her death and he is dreadfully afraid that his cowardliness will come to light. Should anyone question him with they made get the impression that he has something to hide, thus providing the Gamemaster with an additional red herring for the adventure.

Adventure Hooks

- The Player Characters have been sent to Vermillion to investigate the cattle mutilations that have transpired in the area over the past few months.
- While traveling through the Vermillion the Player Character's either witness the

Death Angel's first attack on a human being, or they themselves are the first victims of Alice's fury.

- The Player Character's are hired by Alice's husband, William Humphrey, to look into the occurrences surround his daughter's death.





Bleakstone

City on the Edge of Darkness

By Stephen "ScS" Sutton
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Like a shadow or obscuring mist, the presence of evil is subtle. Though it may be silent and weightless, those beneath its gloom feel its cold, dark presence. Inch by inch, mile by mile, the Red Death spreads its darkness. Though the dread entity holds all the world within its grasp, there are a few dark corners where its vile influence is even stronger.

Here then, is a well of darkness; a tiny city, trapped beneath the shadow of the Red Death. Day by day, the dread entity's influence grows, as corruption and dread spread through its streets.

Yet all is not lost, for there yet remains some spark of hope within the gloom. The evil may yet be pushed back and the land redeemed, if only a band of heroes might make their stand, in Bleakstone.

Geography

Bleakstone sits on the shores of Lake Superior, surrounded by the wilderness of Minnesota. Flanked on either side by rocky cliffs, the port of Bleakstone is the only usable harbor for many miles. High Northern hills ring the city and slope down towards the point, like a trowel blade pointed into the lake. Further north, the land is broken by rolling hills, valleys and woods.

Though mild in climate, Bleakstone is perpetually shadowed by grey clouds. The wind often carries a chill, even in summer. In the warmer months, a cool mist forms on the lake and wafts over the cliffs and valley. Between the weak sun, cool winds and mists, few crops grow well. Most farms are located past the High Hills, far from the mists and where the knolls and sparse trees break up the wind. Older residents claim that the weather was once much more pleasant, though no one can account for such a deterioration.

Bleaksotone in Brief

Population: 15,000 Humans

Location: United States, Minnesota

Law Enforcement:

Response: 1D4 Constables (Soldier 2)

Average response time: 1D8 minutes

Sinkhole Rating: 2

History

Bleakstone began as a trading post built in the late 1780s. Indian bands from the hills brought furs and other goods, though they refused to go near the township, claiming the land was "bad". Isolated by the wilderness, Bleakstone became a haven for criminals and other dark things. The small port languished in obscurity until the war of 1812, when Tecumseh's forces laid waste to the town. Military records from the time hint that the Americans allowed and perhaps even assisted in the massacre. Most historians dismiss such rumors as they are unable to fathom any threat so feared as to produce such an unlikely alliance.

In 1815, Methodist pilgrims founded the port of Elderslot on the Bleakstone site. Over the decades, Elderslot grew as a fishing community, and prospered as farming hamlets and lumber camps emerged in the high northern hills.

During the civil war, iron was discovered in the Starbury Valley, just west of the town. Irish, Italians and Finnish laborers were brought in to build the railway from the lake to the Starbury valley. Unwelcome amongst the insular people of Elderslot, the immigrants built their own communities, Etrusca, Spivy Point and Kellona Bluffs.

As the mines in Starbury grew, the mine owners began to look for suitable homes close to their investments. Rather than live too far in the wilderness, the industrialists began building expensive estates along the High Hills. New businesses flourished in the area just beneath the hills, which would later become the City Center.

In 1872, the cadre of industrialists consolidated their influence by amalgamating the various towns and villages into a proper city. Government offices were built in City Center, and power was officially transferred to a council under the control of the established elite. By 1872, Bleakstone was reborn as a thriving industrial port.

Recently

Since being rechristened Bleakstone, the port city has fared little better than the original. Soon after amalgamation, farmers began to notice the climate turning for the worse. Years of cooler weather halted agricultural expansion in its tracks. Locals found themselves struggling to make ends meet.

Tendrils from the larger railways reached the Starbury valley, stemming the flow of iron through the ports. Many of the factories and refineries closed, putting hundreds out of work and driving many businesses bankrupt.

The killing blow came in 1881, with a terrible quake that left the original harbor front submerged. The ruins of the old port proved to be an impassible barrier to vessels, destroying Elderslot's only means of support.

Since those dark days, Bleakstone has decayed. Though officially one city, the residents are divided between ethnic and residential lines. The people of Elderlot especially are suspicious of "outsiders".

Once more, Bleakstone is home to crime and corruption. The port's location on the lake and train routes allows all manner of smuggling and criminal enterprises to flourish without fear of discovery. The elite

of Bleakstone watch the collapse of their city, safe in the knowledge that their wealth protect them from the suffering below.

Visitors to Bleakstone find the residents highly suspicious and superstitious, even given to strange flights of fantasy involving ghosts and goblins. Still, even the most rational of visitors will sense the indescribably aura of dread that infuses every inch of Bleakstone.

Places

Bleakstone is a city divided; each township has its own unique style and culture.

Elderslot

Elderslot is a tangled web of roads, alleys and side streets, nestled in the shallow valley beneath the high northern hills. Constructed by the Methodists in 1815, Elderslot sits on the original site of the Bleakstone settlement. Once a prosperous fishing village, Elderslot declined under the siege of the outside world, until all that was precious was lost. Now all that remains is an urban ruin and faded memories.

Residents of Elderslot are a harsh, insular people. Many have not forgotten the days of blissful solitude, when their community was free to do and worship as they pleased. Most blame the immigrants and other newcomers who polluted their pious town. The people of Elderslot overcome their mistrust only to earn enough to survive.

1. Harbor Front Ruins

Several decades ago, a large quake caused the original harbor to slide into the water, utterly destroying the docks and homes built there. Many of the dead and wounded swept out and never recovered.

Over time, a number of aftershocks pushed the wreckage deeper, completely submerging most of the ruins. The remains of the Old Harbor Front are a tangled mass of timbers and brick, most of which is completely submerged. Several of the buildings remained intact, creating an under-water village.

Years ago, the city attempted to clear the harbor and rebuild, but a number of mechanical failures and tragic accidents plagued the project. The old harbor remains to this day, choking off shipping like a treacherous reef. Some say that on moonlit nights, they can see dark things swimming through the ruins.

2. Old Methodist Church

At the top of a hill, overlooking the streets of Elderslot stands the old Methodist church. Abandoned after the big quake, the building fell into decay. Recently, the property was bought by a social club, calling itself the Estoic Order of Poseidon. The group hasn't improved the property, nor have they moved the graves in the cemetery behind the church. The locals say that on nights when the sky is black, they can see lights in the church, and hear strange noises - described as singing, or chanting, or barking or gibbering.

3. The Underground

When the Methodists built their settlement, they did so over the ruins of the original Bleakstone. As a result, the ground beneath Elderslot is a honeycomb of ancient cisterns, basements and wells. The original residents of the town did their best to seal up all openings to the subterranean maze, but crumbling walls and rotting wood have broken these barriers over the decades. Those few who have explored these tunnels report that they are massive in scope and depth, almost as if someone or something is still excavating them.

Spivy Point

Spivy point encompasses the eastern half of the valley, stretching from Elderslot to Kellona Bluffs, where the bay turns to sheer cliffs. The harbor on the point can be treacherous, but the hard rock upon which it stands protected it from the quake of 1881. The point was populated during the great influx of people when the mines were discovered. Unlike the Bluffs or Etrusca, no single immigrant group dominated on the point, and so the people have melted together into a typical maritime community.

4. Donald's Pawn Shop

Donald's Pawn Shop stands on the Northern corner where Spivy Point meets Elderslot and City Center. The store is managed by Donald Coulterman, a retired miner, and his French-Canadian wife Norma. The elderly couple lives on the second floor and occasionally rent the guest rooms to people who need to lay low for a while. Rumors say that the Coultermans make most of their money selling guns and stolen goods.

At night, the basement of the building is opened for billiards, poker and drinks. Most of the regulars at Donald's Bar are old fishermen and shady characters who like their privacy. Drinks are always free to policemen on patrol, assuming they know when to look the other way.

5. The Lighthouse

Beyond Spivy Point is the lighthouse, a white tower on an island of black rock. The beacon is currently abandoned, and looks as though in need of repairs. While it is close to the mainland, underwater canyons funnel currents between the island and the point, making the waters treacherous. The beacon was first built in 1802, and was rebuilt over the decades, as was needed. Sadly, in this age of decline, the maintenance of the lighthouse

has been ignored. Every so often, the city tries to recruit a new keeper of the lighthouse, without any explanation as to the fate of the last man to stay there.

6. Mr. Laos House of Curiosities

A small grey sign hangs at street level, inviting shoppers to squeeze down a gloomy 3-foot wide alley, and ascend a rickety staircase, to enter Mr. Laos House of Curiosities. The shop is a claustrophobic mess of ancient and dusty artifacts, with tiny isles cleared amidst the clutter.

All manner of oriental relics are shoved upon the shelves and cases of the shop. Amidst the mess, customers might find countless bottles of unknown powders, figurines of jade, ivory devil masks, pieces of Hindu sculpture, and even a mummified pygmy.

When customers enter, Mr. Lao emerges from his apartment in the back room. The old man moves so quietly that few notice him until he is already upon them. Mr. Lao is a tiny, ancient Tibetan, who appears slightly frog-like and speaks English with a slight accent. Lao prefers to invite customers to take tea with him, in order to determine which of his curiosities might best fit their needs. Customers who ignore his advice, or who try to steal from the shop, soon regret their impudence.

City Center

Since the days of prosperity, City Center has welded the various townships of Bleakstone together into a single city. Unlike Elderslot or Spivy Point, which grew organically, City Center was built as a planned center for commerce and business. Many of the buildings show classical influences; with towering columns, triangular roofs, and stone blocks replacing regular bricks.

Sadly, the years of gloom and neglect have tarnished the once shining glory of the Center. Like the ancient Greeks and Egyptians who inspired its design, the grandeur of City Center remains in the past.

7. City Hall

City Hall presides over the cooling core of the city. The two-story edifice is made of large blocks of red stone, and is decorated with Greek columns. Once the bustling heart of Bleakstone, City Hall is mostly quite. The clerks and accountants within spend most of their time cataloguing the various ways in which their town is falling apart. The mayor is rarely present, leaving the day-to-day affairs to his deputies.

Beneath the City Hall is the Municipal Archives, storehouse for all records. The archive is cluttered and disorganized, as no one seems willing to work within its gloomy halls. Would-be librarians have complained of poor lighting, the claustrophobic maze of shelves, and even strange happenings that defy rational explanation.

8. Municipal Court

Municipal Court is a triangle formed by the court house, the police station, and the city jail. All three buildings are made of grey stone and are built in the classical style common to City Center. In the center of the triangle is a grassy courtyard, in which stands a statue of justice, wilding a sword and a set of scales.

9. Masonic Hall

Across from City Hall stands the Masonic Hall, meeting place of the local Freemason lodge. No sign or plaque proclaims the building's purpose, though a faded sextant logo adorns both of the heavy walnut doors of the entrance.

Lodge members include prominent men such as the mayor and the chief of police. Some suspicious folk have suggested that the Masons planned the layout of City Center, to form a precise pattern. If true, whatever purpose such designs would serve remains a mystery.

10. Empire Hospital

Empire hospital is a modern hospital, built to consolidate the medical resources of the various townships. The hospital is an imposing on shape on the city landscape; it is a step pyramid, with a crown of obelisks at its top. Doctor Evart Shandor, a surgical genius brought from Europe, designed the hospital from the ground up. Recently, the hospital board of directors replaced Shandor as chief resident. Neither side has discussed the dismissal, though rumors persist of unauthorized experimentations and unnecessary surgeries.

Dr. Hammond, the city coroner, has quietly expressed concerns about security in and around the hospital. Though tight-lipped on the subject, the doctor admits that on more than one occasion the hospital morgue has been "disturbed".

11. Thomson Museum

Thomson museum is as old and dusty as the relics it houses. Once owned by the founder of Elderslot, the city renovated the old mansion and rechristened it the Thomson Museum in 1872. Few people visit the museum, though every now and then Professor Mazuchin, the Curator, manages to host a truly amazing exhibit.

Mazuchin's friends in the shipping industry occasionally divert exhibits heading for Chicago to Bleakstone. Currently, the museum is exhibiting a Mongolian sarcophagus, originally intended for a group of private collectors.

Etrusca

The little community of Etrusca was built around the docks and factories where the Italian labourers worked. In the midst of the Northern wilderness, Etrusca is a microcosm of Italian culture, customs and beliefs. Visitors of Etrusca find the people friendly, though tight-lipped. Like most Italians in the Americas, they have suffered from discrimination and live like second-class citizens.

Within the working class neighborhoods, there are a few successful businessmen. These entrepreneurs credit their rise to good family connections, and hope to improve all of their community through legitimate business.

12. Caruso Club

The social heart of Etrusca is the Caruso Club, a restaurant and social club where the locals celebrate special events, such as weddings or baptisms. During the day hours, however, the club hosts local businessmen, who prefer to hold meetings in privacy. It is increasingly common to find police or city officials invited to the club by "concerned citizens", who would like to ensure that the authorities pay their community the right kind of attention.

13. Saint Josef Cemetery

Old superstitions die hard, especially in Bleakstone. Several weeks ago, constables apprehended a small group of men attempting to exhume a grave in Saint Josef Cemetery. The would-be ghouls refused to explain their actions, though several citizens, a priest included, pleaded with authorities to release the suspects without charge.

While the grave robbers were still in custody, a police patrol found the grave unearthed. Despite rigorous searching,

constables could find no trace of the body and the coffin that housed it. Further investigations have been halted over concerns of a sudden outbreak of an unknown disease.

High Hills

The rich and wealthy people of Bleakstone reside in the High Hills, a band of manors and estates built on the plateau where the cliffs level off. From their fabulous mansions, the American aristocracy looks down upon the city, secure in the knowledge that their station protects them from the poverty and decay below. The people who live here are wealthy landowners and industrialists, and the staff that attend to their every whim.

14. Hill Hotel

Hill Hotel is a great manor built on the edge of the cliffs, close to a stop on the railroad. A number of the residents of the High Hills pooled their money to create a splendid hotel with which they might attract more of the idle wealthy to their home. The Board of Directors spent no expense to create a first class resort, though for the most part it is unused and empty.

The owners have found that the only challenge greater than finding guests, is keeping the staff. Cooks, maids, handymen and other staff rarely work longer than a year. Some complain of strange happenings, while others grow more and more tense until they go mad. A short while ago a caretaker claimed that he had found old Indian artifacts, including a skull, while digging on the property. The manager promptly fired the grounds keeper and denied the accusations.

15. Mayor's Mansion

The mayor of Bleakstone is Colonel Beauregard Westermoor, a former officer in the civil war. Westermoor saw little combat during the war, and spent most of his time occupying captured cities. After the war, Westermoor drifted across the country, until a wealthy industrialist decided that he would make an ideal figurehead mayor.

Fascinated with Southern culture, he lives in a replica of a plantation house. Westermoor rarely performs mayoral duties unless a great deal of pomp and fanfare is involved. Many believe that the mayor has made a fortune embezzling money and taking bribes. Those who spread these rumors do so quietly, since those who speak against the mayor are often fined or arrested on unrelated charges.

Kellona Bluffs

Kellona Bluffs sits upon the high cliffs east of the city. The fertile land gave the early inhabitants prime land to farm, as well as close proximity to the markets in the valley below. The bluffs were settled mainly by Irish immigrants, who found the landscape similar to their homeland. In the gloomy weather, most farms make only enough to survive, though sheep and quail seem to do well in the cool climate.

16. Chapel Hall

From its perch on the bluffs, the great edifice of Chapel Hall casts a long shadow over the city of Bleakstone. A reclusive millionaire built the aging manor long before Kellona Bluffs joined the city. Dark tales abounded of the happenings within those walls, hinting at decadence, depravity and dementia. Even after the death of its owner, the legend of Chapel Hall has only intensified.

Seized by the city as unpaid back taxes, the property clerk, Johnas Windlay, rents Chapel Hall, though every tenant has met with tragedy. There have been several deaths by accidents, murders, sicknesses and suicide. The house is empty now, though a caretaker and his sister maintain the grounds.

17. Ether House

Hoping to develop new treatments for mental disease, Doctor Raymond Esther invested his fortunes in the construction of his Hospital for the Mentally Distressed. The hospital, or "Ether House" as the locals call it, is a refurbished mansion built with state of the art treatment facilities and surgical theaters. Sadly, the hospital's appearance of modern civility is nothing but a veneer.

Originally built to house the mentally ill in comfort, Esther found that most of his patients deteriorated rapidly under his care. Many became dangerous and required secure quarters to protect themselves and other patients. The basement is a hive of cells and cages, filled with writhing, shrieking lunatics.

18. The Grave Mound

Not long ago, several woodsmen discovered an old Indian burial mound. The grave mound is ringed by a series of arches made from branches, which are anchored by boulders. At the very top of the mound stands a stick, upon which a bear skull and a bundle of feathers are affixed. Strangely, the site was well preserved against the elements and the local flora. Though no Indians native to the region live near Bleakstone, those from surrounding areas have warned against tampering with sacred ground. A researcher from Chicago is traveling to the site, to study what appears to be a monumental discovery.

Countryside

Beyond the rich estates of the High Hills lies the rolling northern countryside. These lands were once farmed by the Indians, who were gradually driven away. The lands were later settled by Finnish and Ukrainian immigrants. Many speak English poorly, with a thick accent. Feuds between the Finns and the Ukrainians continue to divide the rural communities, even to this day. Intensely proud of their heritage, these farmers cling to the old traditions of farming, worship and superstition.

19. Anderson farm

Anderson Farm is one of the largest, and oldest of the farmsteads in the countryside around Bleakstone. The estate dates back to the original Bleakstone settlement. The original owners were massacred in the war of 1812, though by which side, no historian knows for sure. A Finnish family, the Nikulains, adopted the farm and worked the land in peace until the weather began to worsen. Blights and frosts seemed to target their little land, driving the family into desperation. Neighbors also note the infestations of great flocks of crows on the Anderson farm. The fat black birds are unnaturally aggressive, and harass any who would try to drive them from their territory.

20. Hermit House

The farmers have always avoided the Northern woods for fear of wolf attacks, but a recently a German man, Wilhelm, bought property there. The hermit often ventures into town to collect on the wolf bounty and buy ammunition and traps. Strangely, he is also known to stop by pawnshops for jewelry and antique cutlery. Police are currently investigating Wilhelm for the sudden disappearance of live stock and a local man.

Beyond the City Limits

The city of Bleakstone tapers off into a series of farming hamlets, which in turn give way to rolling hills and forests. For the present, Bleakstone is effectively isolated in the wilderness.

Fort Vigilance

Many miles north of Bleakstone is the aging Fort Vigilance, an old lookout post dating back to the end of the war of 1812. The dilapidated fort houses a tiny garrison, comprised of soldiers and officers that the army wished to be rid of. The motley force is commanded by Colonel Samson, an old cavalry commander. Though often too drunk to issue commands, Samson believes that it is his sworn duty to protect America from "those damn Canadians".

Railroads

Originally built to move ore from Starbury to the port, the railroad in Bleakstone is now connected to the greater network of the USA. All manner of goods and people could be moved into the city, if only anyone had a reason to do so. For the most part, more people leave by the rails than come in.

Starbury valley

To the west of Bleakstone is Starbury Valley, a rocky basin carved out of the earth. This unassuming dale has become a small but growing mining community. Once the catalyst for Bleakstone's growth, Starbury is now a curse. The people of Elderslot hate the town for drawing the outsiders that invaded their pious village. Others resent the town for connecting to the railways and choking off the flow of ore through the port. The wealthy industrialists of the High Hills do not share this attitude, as they continue to reap the profits of their investments in that valley.



Credits

Authors and Editors

Blake Alexander

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Creator of "The Curse of Maplegrove".

I would like to thank the following sites for their, sometimes conflicting, stories regarding the Angel of Maplegrove Cemetery.

- <http://members.toast.net/orion2000/nopr/erie.htm>
- <http://www.greenapple.com/~lmccrady/angel.htm>
- <http://www.deadohio.com/MapleGrove.htm>
- <http://www.forgottenoh.com/Counties/Erie/maplegrove.html>

David "Jester" Gibson

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Creator of Starlit Signs, Children of the Night: Ermintrude, and Races of the Mist: the fey.

David 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 Dread Lands, but not today.

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Creator of Children of the Night: Conte Aerik D'Eauberville.

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Creator of The Omen Watchers.

I live near the city of Milano (city of pollution and stupidity) and work there as actor, voice actor and translator. The first time I had a contact with Ravenloft was in a discount bin a comiconvention in Milano. I bought the Campaign Setting, and it was love at first sight. Since then, I conducted a major campaign that lasted three years, and I'm now conducting a spin-off of the campaign with two of my players. My next big campaign will start this year, I think. Currently, I'm translating in Italian some of the articles of the Quoth the Raven netbook for a just opened website, Ars Arcana (www.ars-arcana.it).

Mark Graydon

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Creator of Sorcery and Shadows and Vile Mists of Darkness.

After a long hiatus from Netbooks, I came back with this article. I got the source idea for it when I wracked my brains, trying to come up with a sea adventure that didn't necessarily involve the sea very much. I also wanted to use an ocean creature in a venue that wouldn't normally be expected. I think it turned out all right.

M istshadow

aka Gin

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Creator of Story of the Fallen Queen.

Hmmm... 35-year-old cat-loving nerd. Likes working with graphics applications, especially Terragen and Apophysis. Have been playing D&D since 1986. Started playing Ravenloft when the black box edition was new and have been hooked ever since. I first made Murillia on a whim and then decided to use it as a threat to Sithicus. Currently working on compiling a Gothic Asia netbook for Ravenloft with some of the talented members of the Fraternity message board. Eventually I intend to publish netbooks on the two unique worlds I've worked on over the years.

Nathan "Dmitri Stanislaus" Okerlund

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Creator of Isle of Ravens and the Umbra.

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...

Robert W. Elliott

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Author of When Nightmares Wake

I have been in awe of the Mists since Castle Ravenloft first loomed forth from them so many years ago. And they are well nigh the nearest thing I have to a fixed address.

Stanton Fink

aka Gemathustra

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Artist of Registry of Monsters.

Please address Stanton F. Fink #5 as "His Imperial Weirdness."

Stephen "ScS" Sutton

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Creator of Bleakstone.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to the creation of this netbook, from the writers to the people who gave us their feedback on the message boards. With your help, we can continue to improve Quoth the Raven and make this netbook a success.



Your Luck Just Ran Out

When your number's up, its up.

For many years Quoth the Raven has reigned as the world's most unofficial Ravenloft netzine. But now, our favorite netbook faces its greatest challenge; the number 13. Bane of architects and fridays alike, 13 is the most primal force in all the universe. Bringer of chaos, herald of woe, the thirteenth issue has hung like an albatross upon our community. Yet now, the time has come to face the peril. This month, Quoth the Raven brings you thirteen articles of unadulterated evil. Experts have estimated that the misfortune quotient of this issue to be equal to seven black cats breaking a mirror by opening an umbrella indoors, beneath a ladder. Readers will risk every ounce of fortune they possess to peruse these accursed pages.

So, dear reader, you must ask yourself: "Do I feel lucky?"

Well do you?

Punk?

For use with these Dungeons and Dragons® core books: Players Handbook™, Dungeon Master's Guide™, and Monster Manual™ as well as the following Ravenloft core books:

Ravenloft Campaign Setting 3rd edition™,
Ravenloft Player's Handbook™ and
Ravenloft Dungeon Master's Guide™