

CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT: DEMONS

An Unofficial RAVENLOFT® Accessory

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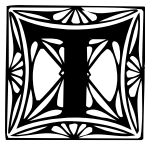
INTRODUCTION

*Pathos, piety, courage - they exist, but
are identical, and so is filth.*

Everything exists, nothing has value

—E. M. Forster
A Passage to India (1924)

FOR THE DUNGEON MASTER



here are few things in the Lands of the Mists as horrifying as demons. They are the living embodiments of evil, creatures that exist solely to spread corruption and fear. Unlike the undead or werebeasts, demons share nothing with the world of mortals. They are alien creatures, more inhuman than any aberration or ooze, driven by alien needs. They may enchant mortals, entrapping them with their beautiful illusions and honeyed promises, but to them, mortals are no more than flies or game pieces. They use mortals to get what they want and then kill them for sport when they have no further use.

Van Richten put forward three theories to account for the presence of demons in Ravenloft, little realizing that two of these theories were correct. While there are no known demons created by demiliches that return to the physical world, vast areas of Ravenloft are influenced by fiends forged from natural evil or visitors from other planes.

Those of extraplanar origin, called Outsiders, universally have darkvision 60', and most have some power of illusion or invisibility to disguise themselves. When reduced to 0 hit points, these demons return to their phylacteries (see below) to recuperate, then possess some unsuspecting mortal when they want to return to the physical world. The most well known 'races' of these outsiders are the lawful evil devils, the neutral evil yugoloths and the chaotic evil demons. These creatures have been involved in a terrible Blood War for longer than even the gods can remember. To try to exploit every possible weakness that their enemies may possess, these factions have evolved into deadly warriors and subtle warriors. Ravenloft has made them even more powerful. Each day, these fiends can cast an extra 4 levels of spells (2 second level spells, 4 first level spells,

etc). Devils can choose their spells from the schools of Enchantment or Illusion, demons from Evocation, and yugoloths from Enchantment or Divination. These extra spells are not shown in the descriptions of the demons below.

Van Richten's third theory was that evil was a powerful enough force in Ravenloft to leave lasting impressions on its surrounds. Evil creatures would imprint their cruelty and malevolence on the ground beneath their feet. The corruption would bubble forth as a demon when it became concentrated enough. Demons created by this 'world evil' have much in common with other natural spirits, called the fey. They all have low light vision. Like outsiders, they have phylacteries, but don't need to possess a mortal to return to the physical world when killed. They can simply recreate their bodies from inanimate matter. Also, they tend to stay close to the area where they were spawned, while outsiders range from domain to domain.

This book presents thirteen demons – including fey, outsiders, and a few more unusual creatures – for inclusion in any Ravenloft or other gothic horror campaign. While battling demons should never become bland or passe, these horrors are varied enough to terrify even the most jaded adventurers.

THE CONCISE DEMON

In the gothic milieu, villains are not psychotic killers. They are people trapped by a tragic mistake that anyone could make. The power of the genre lies in their moral ambiguity and the sympathy they evoke.

Demons are different. They are purely, relentlessly evil; they have no sympathetic qualities and are completely unable to ever truly understand the higher virtues of mortals, like true love or self-sacrifice. They are incapable of redemption.

However, they remain darker reflections of humanity. They are sin, temptation, despair, hatred, violence – *evil* – made solid. Simply meeting such bald-faced depravity should be devastating for any character. More horrifying, however, is the fact that many demons can hide behind a charade of humanity, worming their way into the hearts and minds of those around them and using the subtlest of temptations to twist them into evil.

Like undead, demons are able to project a screen of false thoughts, making them almost undetectable when masquerading as normal people. Should a mortal be unfortunate enough to make contact with the unrestrained malevolence of the demon's pure thoughts, they must make a Madness save. Considering that most demons communicate telepathically as well as verbally,

this can make them truly terrifying to deal with. They can crush their opponents with a simple thought.

Reality Wrinkles

The pure evil of a demon (or pure good, in the case of the rare angel trapped in Ravenloft) is powerful enough to warp reality around the demon, effectively allowing it to create its own mobile pocket domain. In general, the size of this reality wrinkle is proportionate to the demon's strength (around 2000' per hit dice), but this can vary greatly. The wrinkle reflects the nature of the fiend – for demons that feed on fear and mistrust, shows seem more animated, statues seem to move and familiar faces are suddenly alien and unforgiving. For demons that enjoy simple destruction, the air thrums with energy, the ground moves like a trapped animal and people are unusually quick to anger. Although the effects are subtle, particularly if the fiend is weak, it is possible to notice them (Spot DC 30 – the fiend's CR). Paladins and good clerics gain a +2 competence bonus to this check.

A successful Knowledge (outsider lore) (DC 20) or Knowledge (Ravenloft) (DC 25) check means that the character recognizes the disturbance for what it is. Of course, sometimes a fiend's reality wrinkle is very obvious – when it is employing the Deeper Darkness land-based power, for example.

There are two types of people who can automatically detect reality wrinkles, although they are ironically at opposite ends of the moral spectrum. As described in Chapter Two of the *Ravenloft Campaign Setting*, paladins can detect the true nature and presence of evil outsiders with their *detect evil* ability. Likewise, darklords are able to sense the usurpation of their power over an area of their domain and can track a demon that way. Within the wrinkle, darklords effectively lose the rulership of their domain. Although they can't leave their prison, they lose all the abilities that being a lord brings. So, Ivana Boritsi couldn't close Borca's borders or detect poison while in a fiend's reality wrinkle. If the fiend decided to stand at the border, that section would be perfectly safe for mortals to cross, regardless of whether Ivana is within the wrinkle or not. For this reason, almost all darklords (particularly those with small domains) hate and fear demons and will do anything to get rid of them.

Demonic Bargains

In the gothic genre, Faustian bargains are perhaps the most famous and powerful tools in a demon's arsenal. Amongst outsiders, the erinyes, succubi, glabrezu, and arcanaloths are most famous for offering bargains, although in truth any demon can do so. With their ability to *detect thoughts* and high Sense Motive skills, demons are able to pitch exactly the right bargain in exactly the right way to get what it wants. The magic

of the contract is such that the demon can provide almost anything, although the gifts they offer tend to be worth less than nothing and cost the gullible mortal everything. Both parties are bound by the letter of the agreement (whether written or spoken), but with millennia of practice, most fiends are adept at working around this restraint with ambiguous wording, hidden clauses and literal interpretation.

The demonic bargain is an agreement between a mortal and a fiend. In return for performing a service for it or giving it something, the fiend gives the mortal a gift. This 'gift' is like that provided by a failed Powers Check – although it may do what is wanted, it has horrific side effects. For example, a human who wished to be able to fly might grow massive bat wings (increasing his OR) and have her health forever ruined when her bones are hollowed out to make her light enough to become airborne. A fiend may show a miser a room full of illusory treasure and promise them 'all this' in return for their soul upon death. Of course, once the mortal realizes the hideous nature of their new abilities the demon names an even more ghastly service for its payment.

If the agreement requires some active service, such as killing someone or desecrating a temple, an unwilling party who delays filling their end of the bargain suffers a negative level every day that they delay. These levels are removed at the rate of 1 per day once they return to their task.

The demonic agreement is very similar to that used in *binding* and the *planar ally* spells. At the DM's discretion, these spells can forge this gothic contract instead of the usual agreement, with all the powers and limitations that implies.

One of the most common bargains used by many lawful fiends and a few chaotic ones is the Blood Oath. In the ritual agreement, the fiend gains power over the mortal in return for ephemeral promises of power, wealth or a sense of belonging. In some cases, the fiend may offer more tangible powers, such as the ability to use one of its spell-like abilities once per day. This allows the fiend to create what looks like a real religious cult to ensnare the worshippers of good deities.

The fiend can unerringly sense the location of any mortal bound to it by the Blood Oath. If the mortal is within the fiend's reality wrinkle and in sight, the fiend can kill or injure them with a thought. If the mortal fails a Fort save (DC 15 + ½ the fiend's Hit Dice + the fiend's Cha modifier) they either die or are struck with incredible pain for 10 full rounds. Which occurs is up to the fiend. If the save is successful, there is no effect and the mortal is immune to the fiend's punishments for 24 hours.

Possession

This is the second universal power of the Gothic demon: the ability to take control of a mortal's body and

use it to fulfil its dreadful goals. There are two forms of demonic possession, depending on how much time the fiend has to prepare for the attempt and how much control it needs over the mortal's body.

The first form requires a crystal to act as a focus, some personal item belonging to the victim and a fetish (an object that reflects the nature of the fiend. For example, Inajira may use books as fetishes, while Elsepeth uses dolls). The fiend must spend one full day preparing for the attempt. At the end of this time, the fiend moves into the focus. When the victim comes within 10 ft./fiend's Hit Dice of both the focus and the fetish, the fiend can try to take possession of their body. The victim must make a Will save (DC 10 + $\frac{1}{2}$ the fiend's HD + the fiend's Charisma modifier) or be possessed. The victim's soul is drawn into the fetish and the fiend takes control of their body, where it has absolute control for as long as it desires. If the save is successful, the mortal is immune to possession from that fiend for 24 hours.

If the fiend doesn't have enough time to prepare properly, it can still attempt to possess someone with neither a focus nor a fetish. The fiend must make a touch attack. If it hits and the victim fails a Will save (DC 5 + $\frac{1}{4}$ of the fiend's HD + the fiend's Charisma modifier), the fiend is drawn into the victim's body. However, the victim's soul remains present and able to fight the fiend for control. Every ten minutes, the pair must make a contested Wisdom check (with the fiend getting a +4 competence bonus); the winner has control for the next ten minutes. Once per day, the victim can make a Will save at the original DC to try to expel the fiend from their body. They must also make a Madness save due to their intimate contact with the fiend's mind.

While possessing someone, the fiend is still able to use all of its mental abilities, including skills, spell-like abilities and some supernatural abilities. They are unable to use the mental abilities or memories of the victim.

The fiend is driven out of the victim's body by *miracle*. *Wish* and *holy word* are also useful, but the spell must overcome the fiend's spell resistance. None of these spells grant the demon a save. *Banishment*, *dismissal* and *magic jar* are less powerful; the demon is allowed both a saving throw and spell resistance, and, in the case of *magic jar*, a contested Wisdom check to avoid being expelled. If the fiend is expelled, the victim becomes immune to possession by that fiend for 24 hours.

Phylacteries

Most demons in Ravenloft have a phylactery (some mundane item that represents the fiend's personality or true nature). If an outsider is reduced to 0 hit points, it returns to its phylactery rather than being killed or returning to its home plane. If the phylactery is then destroyed, the fiend is permanently and instantly killed.

Otherwise, the fiend is able to return to the physical world after 1 day of rest. It can possess any sentient being within 10 ft./Hit Dice, as described above. Their soul is annihilated and the fiend takes control of their body. It gradually warps into the demon's original form.

Although fey retreat to their phylacteries as normal when 'killed', they don't need to possess someone to return to the physical world. Instead, they simply create new forms for themselves from inanimate matter. This process takes 1d10 days.

A creature holding the phylactery is immune to the negative effects of any bargains made with that fiend, including the Blood Oath. They also cannot be possessed. Destroying a phylactery varies greatly in complexity; it may be as easy as a single hammer blow or involve an arduous quest and numerous special materials. For more powerful fiends, destroying a phylactery is as difficult as destroying a minor artifact.

AL-KHYMER

By Luiz Eduardo Peret

"Attract thy enemy with the perspective of advantage... if the enemy is greedy, seduce him with goods... then attack and defeat him when he least expects it."

-Sun Tzu
"The Art of War"

BIOGRAPHY



ot all fiends come from the places traditionally known to mankind as "hell". Entities from other planes can be driven by dark goals and attempt to sow as much pain and destruction upon humanity as possible. Alien creatures summoned by ancient spells, these beings have little else in mind besides the utter annihilation of those who would compel and enslave them. It is this hateful, venomous nature, rather than the plane of origin, which makes them demons. This is the case with al-Khymer, the mighty genie that would never be bound.

Appearance

Although not a true fiend, al-Khymer does look quite "fiendish". In his true form he is a fourteen-foot tall, heavily muscled humanoid with golden skin. He sports a fiery-looking ponytail on his otherwise bald head, and two small red horns protrude from his forehead. His eyes are pits of flame and sulfurous smoke pours from his mouth and nose. He wears an exotic coppery-red garb that seems made of solid flames. His hands have bronzed, claw-like nails and are adorned by jeweled rings, and his feet are cloven hooves. He wears a bronze necklace with his clan's symbol, a 4-inch octagonal medallion engraved with crossed scimitars. His body radiates palpable heat, making the air shimmer around him.



Like all his kind, al-Khymer can also polymorph himself into forms that better suit his diabolical plots.

Phylactery

Al-Khymer is unique because his phylactery is also his prison and a powerful magical item. For much of his time in Ravenloft, the efreeti has been trapped within a one-foot iron bottle covered with a layer of rust and petrified mud. Below this cover there are intricate patterns of silver and gold. The stopper is made of bronze, stuck in place with mud and ancient spells. For al-Khymer to be freed, a magical password is needed; afterwards, he can come and go as he pleases. The bottle is warm to the touch (but not altogether hot) and weighs two pounds.

Powerful warding spells protect the bottle from harm and shield the trapped genie from discovery. The flask is protected by a permanent spell turning, and is far more resilient than one would expect. It has 45 hp and a hardness of 15. Al-Khymer loathes his prison,

spending as little time in it as possible, but always carries it with him. He knows it is necessary for his very existence.

Al-Khymer

Large Outsider (Evil, Fire, Law): CR 10; HD 12d8+36; 90 hp; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 20 feet, fly 40 feet (perfect); AC 20 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +8 natural); Atk Slam +15/+10 melee (1d10+9 + 1d6 fire); SA Spell-like abilities, heat; SQ Fire subtype, damage reduction 10/gold; AL LE, SV Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +9; Str 23, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 19, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +17, Concentration +18, Escape Artist +15, Intimidate +13, Listen +14, Move Silently +15, Sense Motive +15, Spellcraft +13, Spot +14; Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Reality Wrinkle: 24,000-foot radius

Land-Based Powers: None

Corruption Index: 0

Background

Al-Khymer's tale began centuries ago, in the Elemental Plane of Fire. In the City of Brass, he was the head of a noble house, aspiring to attain nothing less than the position of pasha – a rank reserved for only a handful of efreet that answered directly to the Great Sultan and administered all efreet business in the Prime Material Plane. Such entities were akin to demigods, and al-Khymer knew he would have to try hard to prove himself worthy. He thought that if he showed his ability to trap and destroy would-be “genie masters” as proof of his vile intellect, the Sultan himself would notice him.

Therefore he devised a simple but clever plan: accepting summons from spellcasters from the Prime Material Plane that were greedy for wishes, he would trick them with his unending cunning and beguilement and bring ultimate destruction upon his summoners. Sometimes he would toy with his summoner, carrying out warmongering tasks and then going to the caster's enemies and bargaining with them for the other side's ruin. In the end, he would annihilate both sides.

But one day, everything changed. In a vast desert, two enemy tribes were battling over control of an isolated, strategic oasis, formed by a natural spring that was the only source of water in miles. To the dismay of both sides, the spring was at the heart of an ancient temple. Each tribe was ready to raid the place and drive away or kill the priests, but the willpower and sharp

mind of the high priest, a devoted, severe man named Thalib al-Jahlah, and the faith of his followers, proved more than once that neither side would possibly win alone.

One of the tribe leaders summoned al-Khymer, who quickly tricked his foolish summoner to wish not for victory, but for the destruction of the other side. He then visited the enemy camp and did the same. But before he moved to fulfill both tasks, he decided to take the best advantage of his plan, and arranged for the priests to learn of his coming and believe he was going to kill them first. He hoped the desperate humans would try to summon a genie to their aid as well, so he would repeat his previous move and create such a mass slaughter that this time the Great Sultan himself would applaud him. He made both sides become hot-blooded and ready to kill each other, just waiting for his call to come from the temple.

However, al-Jahlah had enough efreeti lore to be aware of al-Khymer's scheme. He knew the efreeti would continue with his deadly machinations if left unchecked and decided to stop him, even at the cost of his own life. He summoned al-Khymer and pretended to be the frightened, obtuse priest the creature believed he was. Then, suddenly, he produced an ancient scroll with a powerful binding spell, and a magical iron flask. The efreeti was caught unawares and trapped within the container, but not before giving an anguished battle cry. According to the spell, he was to be imprisoned until such time as he had completed 101 tasks for humanity.

The high priest threw the bottle into the pool, where no one would ever find it. At the same moment, both raiding parties, whipped into battle frenzy by the genie's last cry, stormed the oasis and killed everyone. No one had seen the high priest send the flask into the muddy oblivion of the pool bottom, and al-Khymer was forgotten during the onslaught.

For uncountable years al-Khymer remained in the bottle, which had sunk deep into the mud. The unbearable coldness of that tiny flask and the realization of his complete failure ate at al-Khymer continuously. Knowing that even after being rescued he would still be bound by 101 tasks, he vowed to return to his home plane with far more than 101 new deaths by his hand. The dark powers listened to his vows and took the oasis to Sebu.

After many years, the intense magical heat of al-Khymer's essence transformed the contents of the pool, giving it some healing properties. A few years ago, a group of Pharazian healers and herbalists found the ruined temple and studied the powers of the mud bath, restoring the temple around it. Word of the healing pool slowly spread, and every year more and more pilgrims came to use it. Al-Khymer was immediately aware of the arrival of the priests and his wounded

pride festered as he saw himself being used once more. At the same time, however, he yearned for someone to free him.

The priests often took purifying baths and al-Khymer turned this to his advantage, whispering soft words to the youngest of them, presenting himself as the “Voice of the Healer”. The acolyte, a young and naïve man named Ymir, was frightened at first, thinking him to be the ghost of one of the priests who had built the abandoned temple, but soon decided he was harmless and later, useful. The genie lured him first with tales of spreading comfort and healing through the desert, and then with ambition and greed, promising to make a high priest of him, if only the young man would find the bottle in the pool and open it. Poisoned by those sweet words, the acolyte eventually found the bottle.

The efreeti knows that Thalib al-Jahlah’s ancient scroll must be used to free him before he starts to accomplish the tasks, and now he looks for ways of finding and bringing it back to his unsuspecting puppet. Meanwhile, he has wisely advised Ymir about many things, prompting his rise in station and trapping the young priest in the genie’s web of deceit. He is also careful to make sure the bottle remains within the pool until the scroll is found, lest it lose its healing properties and make the other priests suspicious.

Personality

Al-Khymer has been a manipulator all his millennia-long life, using mortals as expendable pawns in his lust for power. Since his imprisonment he has become bitterly mad with frustration and obsessed with freedom. His hatred towards humans knows no limits, but he is still cunning and patient enough to use them once more. As soon as he has achieved freedom he will most probably turn the tides against his current “master.”

Combat

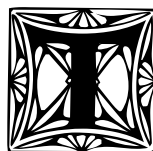
The genie is not fond of brute force. Most of the time he will avoid combat, preferring to make humans fight among themselves so he may amuse himself. If provoked, however, he can be quite deadly. Al-Khymer is more powerful and more intelligent than the average efreeti. He knows how to use his terrible appearance to best effect, emerging from the mists or polymorphing from human form to terrify his opponents.

Spell-like Abilities: At will — *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*. 1/day – grant up to three *wishes* to nongenies, *detect magic*, *enlarge*, *gaseous form*, *invisibility*, *permanent image*, *polymorph self*, *wall of*

fire. These spells take effect as though cast by an 18th level sorcerer (save DC 13 + spell level)

Heat (Ex): Al-Khymer does a further 1d6 fire damage to all those in melee combat or grappling with him.

THE POWER OF WORDS



his adventure focuses on al-Khymer’s attempts to free himself from his prison and the dire consequences of this. Although it can be used as a stand-alone adventure, it works better as part of a major campaign. The adventure is designed for 4-6 players of levels 3-5. Combat with the genie isn’t necessary, but GMs who intend this to occur should ensure that the heroes have access magical weapons and cold-based spells to have a fair chance. The temple is currently placed in Sebu, but can easily be moved to another domain to suit individual campaigns. Any isolated desert environment is appropriate.

Adventure Background

When they carried al-Khymer to Ravenloft, the mists placed a copy of the ruined temple in another part of the same desert, deeply buried under the sands. There, driven by his self-imposed duty of defeating the genie, Thalib became an ancient dead, with his followers turned into desert zombies. They fiercely guard the scroll containing the spell that can break the enchantment keeping al-Khymer in his flask. Until it is recited again, al-Khymer is trapped, unable to even start to perform his 101 tasks. The dark powers taunted him with the knowledge that the key to his freedom still lies with his hated captor.

Recently, caravans brought rumors to al-Khymer’s temple about ruins that had been uncovered by the desert winds and were haunted by monsters. With a flash of insight, al-Khymer realized the ruined temple was the one that held the key to his freedom. He warned Ymir about the danger his undead foes might represent should they ever decide to attack the oasis, and of the powerful magic contained in the scroll. Now an esteemed advisor in the order due to al-Khymer’s guidance, it was easy for the corrupted priest to convince his peers that action must be taken to avoid the threat. Ymir told them that he had had a dream, where a powerful undead abomination used a magical scroll to dispel any protection the temple might have and destroy the pool before killing everyone. The good priests were quite frightened by the prospect.

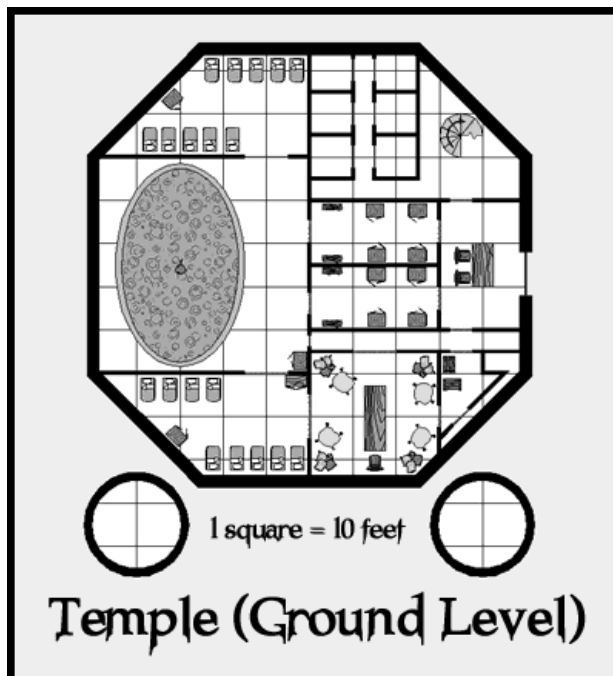
It is at this point that the heroes join the adventures. If possible, it is preferable to have the PCs acquainted with the temple and the priests before this

adventure. Perhaps they have visited it before, in search of healing or advice. Confidence is the key here, so that they will not doubt the priests' motives. Abel, the high priest, will ask them to find and bring back the scroll, destroying as many undead as possible when they do. Ymir then plans to use the scroll to free al-Khymer, who will make him high priest. The other priests remain unaware of Ymir's true goals. Meanwhile, Thalib will not rest if the scroll is moved and used.

The Adventure Begins

The adventure starts when the heroes arrive at the temple, either for a curative session or advice. The mud bath restores 1 hp to those who remain immersed for 10 minutes, and heals a further 1d8+3 hp to those who stay for 1 hour. To those infected with some kind of disease, an hour's bath allows the character to attempt another saving throw to resist the disease, and a three hour immersion grants a +2 bonus to the save. These are supernatural effects. The pool temporarily loses its healing powers whenever the flask is removed, and perceptively grows colder.

The treatment fee is relatively modest (3gp per hour of immersion), following Ymir's advice that "a miracle may be cheap, out of mercy, but must not be freely given, otherwise it will not be properly valued." The priests accept goods or services in lieu of money, but will not let anyone into the pool without charging. For advice, there are priests ready to talk about mundane matters for 5sp per session. Ymir himself will only attend to the most important affairs, charging 3gp



(the order considers him to be a "healer with words and deeds", so an audience with him costs as much as an hour in the healing pool). Abel, the high priest, is very old and rarely takes part in this day-to-day business of the temple.

As the heroes conduct their business in the temple, read the following:

A priest moves silently towards you. Bending to your ear (to avoid disturbing the others in the pool), he asks you to follow him, as the high priest would like to have a word with you. Such an honor is exceptional, because the holy man is quite old and rarely lets laymen see him.

If the heroes chose to follow him, they will be led through the corridors of the temple to the high priest's room. Other priests and acolytes will discreetly look at the heroes as they pass, talking to each other in hushed tones before turning away.

You are guided to a simple, comfortable room with yellow couches and multicolored pillows. Abel, the high priest, is waiting for you on a high chair at the end of a table covered with ornate towels and fruit platters. He looks quite old, his gray beard reaching halfway down his chest and creases building up under his deep brown eyes. He motions for you to take seat and asks you to share his meal. After a while, he points a trembling finger to the east and speaks.

"A few moons ago, the winds revealed a ruined building two days away from this temple in the direction of the setting sun, a place haunted by abominations. One of our advisors has dreamt that a scroll might be found there, a magical text that can be used to dispel the healing effects of our curative bath and the protections of our temple. The dream revealed that vile creatures guard the scroll. More than that has not been said. We fear that these monsters would come here and kill us all, or at least use the magic to prevent us from healing anymore. We are healers, not men of war. Could you help us, bringing the magical text here so that we might guard it?"

If the heroes are reluctant to help, Abel offers them free healing and advice for the next seven times they visit the temple, and also offers two scrolls of *cure light wounds*, to be used in the trip. If they do not have camels, the temple will lend some to the heroes, along with water and supplies for a week. This should be enough to convince the heroes.

Unearthed Treasure

Unless the DM wishes to introduce an incidental encounter, the trip through the desert is mostly uneventful. Normal animals are kept away from the sands around the temple by the presence of undead in the temple surrounds.

The map for both temples is the same, with one difference: in the ruins there is a gaping hole in the ground where the pool is in the priest's temple. Be careful to alert the heroes to this fact without making it too obvious. The heroes should be able to see beyond the state of disrepair of the buildings, and this will probably be their only clue that not everything is as it seems.

In a 100-foot radius around the temple, desert zombies silently swim under the sands, awaiting unwary trespassers.

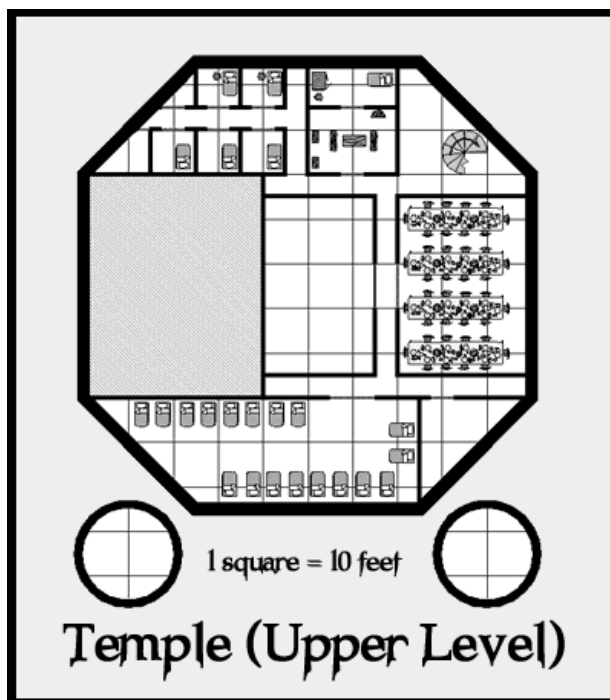
In the sandy wastes ahead of you, partially buried pillars mark the entry of an ancient building, ravaged by time. Not a single vulture flies over the four minarets or the shattered central dome. The dunes right before the entrance seem to move and shift in the whistling wind. So far there is no sign of the monsters mentioned by the priests, and you begin to think of how the desert can play tricks on fearful minds. As you move forward, though, suddenly various pairs of withered hands reach from the sands below you, clawing at your legs and trying to drag you beneath the sands!

Desert Zombies (2d6 per encounter): CR 1; Medium-sized Undead; HD 2d12+3; 16 hp; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 feet, burrow 20 feet; AC 13 (-1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk Slam +2 melee (1d6+1); SQ Undead, burrow; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Feats: Toughness

Notes: **Burrow (Ex):** Desert zombies gain a +12 racial bonus to their Hide skill while beneath the sand. They typically lie in wait then explode out of the sand beneath their victims. If they gain surprise, they typically start a grapple and try to drag their opponent beneath the soil, where they suffocate.

The desert zombies attack in groups, trying to gain surprise. The GM should include enough encounters to challenge the heroes, but not enough to whittle down their resources too much. After they have reached the temple, the heroes can approach the scroll, which is in the pool chamber, and guarded by 6 desert zombies with 22 hit points each. When 1d4 rounds have passed after they remove the scroll, read the following:



As you are moving to the exit with your prize, you hear a faint noise coming from inside the wide hole. As you cast a nervous glance over your shoulder, the withered crown of a head breaks through the dried mud. Two milky eyes, burning with hatred, lock onto yours, and the creature begins rising relentlessly towards you. You feel an unnatural shudder travel up your spine, and realize this creature is somehow different from the monsters you have battled so far.

Thalib al-Jahlah

Male Second rank Ancient Dead ex-Pal 5: CR 6; Medium-sized Undead; HD 5d12+3; 42 hp; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 feet; AC 22 (+8 natural, +4 scale mail); Atk Slam +10 melee (1d6+5); SA Fear, disease, rebuke undead as a level 7 cleric; SQ Damage reduction 5/+1, turn resistance +2, resistant to blows, rejuvenation, immune to fire, double damage from cold attacks; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +10; Str 21, Dex 12, Con -, Int 9, Wis 18, Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: Climb +13, Diplomacy +9, Heal +8, Hide +9, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +14, Move Silently +9, Ride +5, Spot +14; Alertness, Courage, Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness.

Notes: **Fear (Su):** Those viewing Thalib must make a Will save (DC 17) or be paralyzed with fear for 2d4 rds.

Disease (Su): Inflicts mummy rot with a touch. Those who die from the disease rise as desert zombies under Thalib's control.

Resistant to Blows (Ex): Physical attacks only do half damage, applied before damage resistance.

Rejuvenation (Su): The ancient can rejuvenate 6 hp per hour after resting for 1 day. It is helpless while rejuvenating and must rest for 1 further day once healed.

Thalib cannot speak and will not communicate with intruders. Undeath has warped his holy aura into a wall of hatred, so al-Khymer suffers a –4 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls when within 100 feet of him. The temple has a similar ward while the scroll is within it. Even if destroyed, Thalib reforms in a few days and will slowly track the scroll, even pursuing it (or al-Khymer, once he is freed) into the Mists if necessary. Any people he meets will face the horrible prospect of becoming desert zombies under his control.

Twisted Wishes

If the heroes become suspicious of the true nature of the scroll, divination magic will reveal that it has a magical formula to dispel powerful wards. Abel is not sure of how it might be used against the temple, but Ymir gladly offers to examine it, since it was his “dream” that brought up the subject.

At this time the heroes receive whatever immediate prize they deserve (healing for their wounds or disease if they faced Thalib) and are free to leave or stay, as they desire.

If the heroes choose to stay in the temple, Ymir will attempt to restrain himself from beginning the second part of his plan to free al-Khymer while they are still present. After two days, however, his ambition will get the better of him, and he will commence anyway. If the heroes remain in the temple, the DM may need to involve them in several of the ensuing events listed below.

Late one night, Ymir will go to the pool and rescue the bottle, using the scroll to set al-Khymer free. Believing himself to be in control of this new spirit, he immediately wishes to rise in power within the order “in a discreet fashion.”

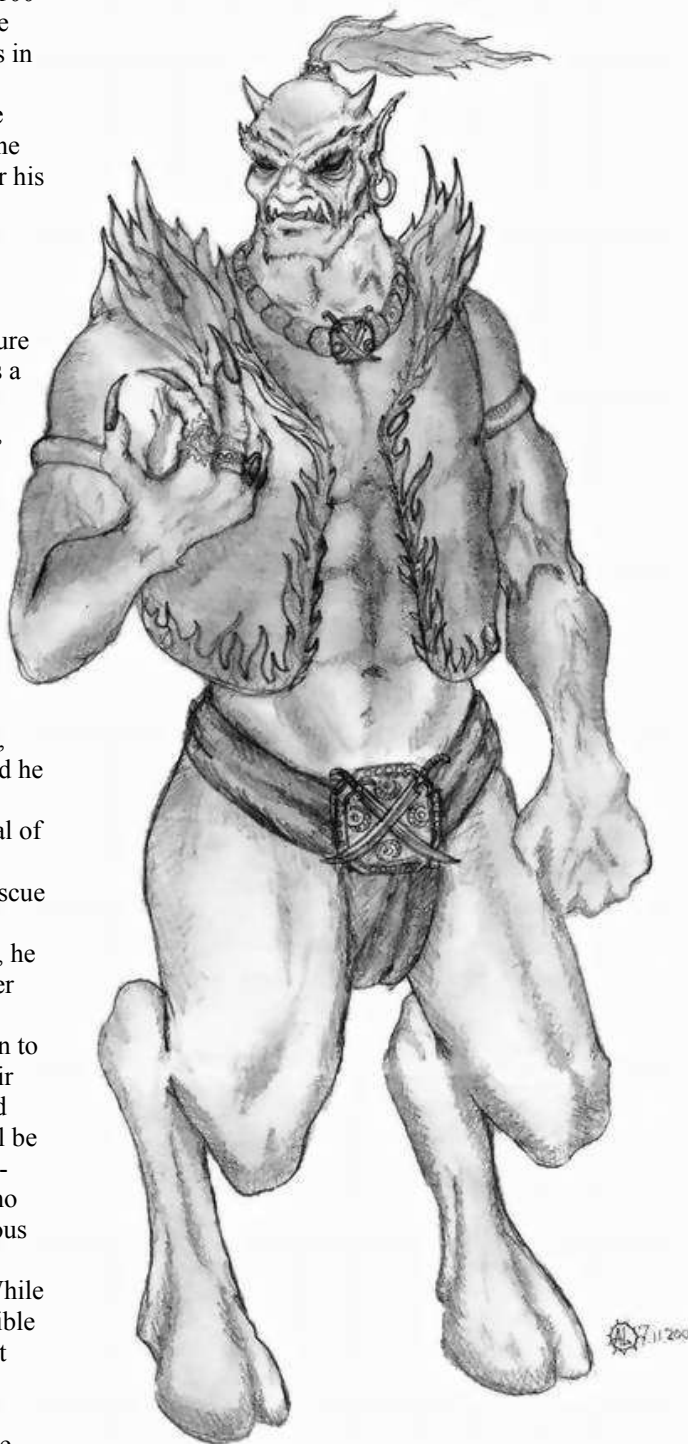
As commanded, Al-Khymer will use an illusion to scare Abel into falling from a minaret. At first, Ymir will be angry at the genie for killing the much loved priest, and terrified that his role in Abel’s death will be uncovered. That guilt he felt is soon appeased by al-Khymer, when he suggests that Abel had detected no wards around the temple, and was growing suspicious of Ymir.

Ymir will make preparations for the funeral. While most other priests believe Abel’s death to be a horrible accident, a few of them suspect that the scroll might have something to do with it.

Shortly after these events, Ymir will make his second wish. Worried about being discovered by the

other priests, he wishes that he could remove all the suspicions surrounding Abel’s death. Al-Khymer has interpreted this loosely – after all, confirming Ymir’s guilt will remove suspicion just as much as confirming his innocence. Through using the heroes, al-Khymer intends to free himself of Ymir.

If the heroes are still within the temple, al-Khymer



will approach the heroes in the guise of an acolyte, asking them to investigate Ymir, as a result of suspicions held by other priests within the order.

If the heroes have left the temple, al-Khymer will pose as an acolyte and pursue the heroes, to ask them to return to the temple.

Adapt the following as required when the efreeti reaches the heroes:

A man on a camel, bent over his saddle, approaches you. The camel looks sick and exhausted, and the man riding it seems no better. He wears the attire of the priests, although his robe is torn and dirty. He seems to have ridden all day at a rapid pace, without stopping for food or rest.

As you come closer, you can see a wild look in his face, probably due to sunstroke. He mumbles incomprehensible words to you, and almost falls off his mount. Slowly, he regains his senses and finally talks, his voice rasping and coughing: "Something... horrible... happened. The high priest... dead! Ymir... our advisor... says it was an accident, but some of us fear that... we believe something is wrong. That scroll... since it came, things changed... Ymir changed, now he orders us about... the pool is getting cooler... You must return to the temple and help us..."

The priest 'dies' soon after from a mixture of heat exhaustion and dehydration. Al-Khymer intends the adventurers to return to the temple to confront Ymir.

Hot Prints and Cold Clues

Al-Khymer, in an effort to grant Ymir's wish, will even set about planting clues as to his guilt, to remove the doubt from the situation. A small amount of investigation will turn up evidence revealing Ymir's role in Abel's death. At the same time, the behavior of the heroes will confirm Ymir's suspicions that they suspect him.

At the temple, the other priests are reluctant to speak freely regarding Ymir, but a few will reveal that Ymir has been acting very strangely, such as talking loudly to himself in his quarters and refusing to attend advice sessions. He claims to be too busy with important matters.

At some stage, the heroes may decide to investigate Ymir's quarters. If they do manage to enter his room (bearing in mind the other priests within the temple) read the following:

The room is simple, but not as neatly organized as the high priest's quarters. Books, scrolls and empty food platters are randomly piled. The scroll you have brought here is nowhere to be seen. As you advance

into the room, the smell of sulfur invades your noses. You can see Ymir's footprints in the dusty floor, along with another strange pair. They seem to have been made by a huge goat, but have clearly burned the surface of the stone.

Confronting Ymir

At some point, the heroes will decide that they wish to confront Ymir about recent events. If they come openly and demand to see Ymir, other priests and servants will assure them that he is unavailable. They will find it hard to get answers from the priests, either due to their fear of Ymir, or simply because they feel that the heroes' demanding behavior is inappropriate and ungrateful. Persistent questioning will, however, find at least one priest willing to discuss Ymir's involvement in recent events, especially if the heroes present evidence.

Through whatever means, the heroes or other priests will eventually track down Ymir when he attempts to visit the pool. Aware of the growing suspicion around Abel's death, he has decided to take the bottle away and leave the temple to establish another position of power somewhere else.

Ymir

Male Human Clr 5: CR 5; HD 5d8+15; 37 hp; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 feet; AC 13 (Dex); Atk Sickle +3 melee (1d6); SA Spells, rebuke undead; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 10

Skills and Feats: Concentration +6, Diplomacy +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +5, Spellcraft +4, Spot +5; Alertness, Dodge, Empower Spell.

Domains: Knowledge, Luck.

The advisor draws near to the pool, a look of doubt in his fearful eyes. He appears surprised and outraged when he notices you in the shadows by the pool. But instead of calling his fellow priests, he jumps into the pool and sinks. In a few moments he climbs back out, with a mud-covered object in his hands. He seems to be opening a bottle, and shouts: "You will never have him, never! O Healer, for the third time I summon thee! Protect me from my enemies, now and forever!"

A sudden smell of sulfur pours forth, and a fiery cloud bursts from the bottle, knocking it out of his hands. From the cloud emerges a nightmarish creature of gold and flame. It floats in the air above the pool, surveying you all with an unreadable expression on its demonic face. The other priests, drawn by the roar of wind and blast of heat from the creature, scream, faint

or run away at the dreadful sight before them. The creature's fiery eyes flash with amusement and in a thundering voice it says, "Yes, 'master,' protect you forever I shall!"

If the heroes do not act, al-Khymer crashes into the pool. The heat from his body causes the water to evaporate in an explosive burst. When the steam clears, Ymir has vanished – only a cracked bulge in the dried mud remains. Ymir is trapped beneath the mud and suffocates in a few rounds. Unless the heroes actually attack him, al-Khymer states that he has no quarrels with them and just wants to leave. The heroes have to choose whether they save Ymir, battle the genie or aid the other priests. If they attack al-Khymer, he avoids killing them – they might prove useful in the future.

During the encounter, Thalib invades the temple. He ignores the PCs and priests unless attacked, moving relentlessly towards al-Khymer. When Thalib first appears on the scene, read the following:

A look of disgust crosses the genie's face, as it turns towards the abomination. It grabs its bottle and disappears in a misty cloud, swearing that this is not the last time you will hear about him.

Recurrence

The pool loses all its powers once al-Khymer leaves. Al-Khymer's curse prevents him from being totally defeated until he has fulfilled 101 wishes. He can easily return during the campaign, both as a nemesis for the heroes and to offer them a demonic bargain when they need it most. Either way, he will always seek to corrupt those around him and bring them to destruction. With time, the heroes can develop a better understanding of his powers, weaknesses and personality, and he can become a major nemesis, haunting them for the rest of their lives, until they become powerful enough for an outright combat. They might also try to recover the bottle and find a way to permanently trap the genie within the pool, restoring the healing powers to the temple.

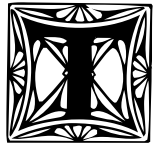
THE BLACK DUKE

By Ryan Naylor

*Hatred is a tonic, it makes one live, it
inspires vengeance; but pity kills, it
makes all our weakness weaker*

—Honoré de Balzac
La Peau de Chagrin (1831)

BIOGRAPHY



here are demons who exist only to terrify—horrific engines of destruction that move from village to village, laying waste to everything in their path like a natural disaster. More terrifying still are those who lurk like spiders in webs of corruption and despair, playing people against one another for their own sick enjoyment. Most terrifying of all are fiends that can both destroy the minds and devour the bodies of all they come across. The Black Duke is one of these demons.

Appearance

In his natural form, the Black Duke is a huge, barely humanoid reptile. Scales the color of dark rubies and fresh blood cover his entire body, from his overlong, gorilla-like arms to his splayed and clawed feet. His draconic appearance, bat-like wings, spined prehensile tail and massive barbed whip make the cornugon enough to drive make any mortal mad with fear. However, it is the look of malevolent contempt in his fiery eyes that makes him completely horrifying.

Due to the publication of *The Beast of Ehrendton*, the Black Duke's most widely known form is that which he wore during his campaign in northern Nova Vaasa, seventy years ago: a large, brutish man in black plate and chain, with wild black hair and a tangled beard. However, he is a subtle creature, and has adopted many other forms in the decades since. Because his disguises are illusions, not polymorphing, the Black Duke is restricted somewhat to forms that can disguise most of his bulk, so he prefers to appear as

humans, elves and dwarves. However, the illusion does have its advantages: the Black Duke retains his natural attacks and great strength at all times. For those times when only a small form will do, he usually relies on possession.

Luckily for his would-be hunters, the Black Duke arrogantly tends to make his aliases almost monochromatic: their hair, eyes, clothing, even their names suggest one color (often black, white, gray or red). This obvious clue to his true nature is simply another way to show that he is smarter than the unsuspecting mortals that surround him. He enjoys parading his superior might in front of mortals.

Phylactery

The Black Duke's phylactery is his huge whip. He carries this whip everywhere, too paranoid to put it down for even a minute. He normally cloaks it in illusion, making it appear as anything from a normal whip to a belt or cloak—anything that will let it pass unnoticed.



The Black Duke

Male Cornugon (Baatezu) Exp 2, Fgt 2: CR 14; Large Outsider (evil, lawful); HD 2d10+11d8+2d6 +45; 135 hp; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 20 feet, fly 50' (average); AC 25 (−1 size, +1 Dex, +15 natural); Atk Tail +13 (1d3+2+ wound), bite +13 (1d4+2) and either whip +20/+14/+10 (1d6+ stun) or 2 claws +19 (1d4+5); Face/Reach 10' x 10'/15'; SA Spell-like abilities, fear aura, stun, wound; SQ Damage reduction 20/+2, immune to fire and poison, regeneration 5, telepathy 100', see in darkness, cold and acid resistance 20; SR 24; AL LE, SV Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +12; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +19, Concentration +15, Climb +16, Diplomacy +15, Hide +9, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +12, Listen +16, Move Silently +14, Search +14, Sense Motive +16, Spot +16; Cleave, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Bluff), Sunder.

Reality Wrinkle: 7,500'

Land-Based Powers: Control Dreams (Nightmare Lands), Forget (Darkon)

Corruption Index: 5

Background

In the Nine Hells of Baator, cornugons are the elite guards of powerful devils and strategic points. They are loyal (by baatezu standards) and possess an overwhelming hatred of creatures of disorder like the tanar'ri. The Black Duke is no exception to this rule, although he has found that corruption and manipulation to be weapons just as powerful as brute force in the war against chaos and good.

The Black Duke was a guard in the city of Grenpoli, the infernal training ground for baatezu politicians, a nest of intrigue and shifting alliances where overt violence was outlawed and devils lived and died by their political savvy. In this hellish place, only the guards were allowed to carry weapons, enforcing the non-violence rule and punishing lawbreakers. The Black Duke was a perfect guard for the city-school, being naturally gifted in the arts of war as well as learning the subtle ways of politics.

Unfortunately, the Black Duke eventually made a mistake that cost him his freedom. An erinyes tricked him into entering a *gate* conjured by a Barovian priest named Brother Micah, trapping the fiend in Ravenloft. The priest expected some kind of spirit to appear that would educate him about the worlds beyond his own. The enraged cornugon offered to let him experience

them directly, and tore the priest and his chamber apart in a fiery explosion.

The fiend next appeared in the newly formed domain of Nova Vaasa, a few years later. He created a brigand army called the Brothers of the Whip and made war on the people of Nova Vaasa until Prince Rivtloff sent six noble warriors to destroy him. The unfortunate warriors expected to find a human brigand. This false expectation didn't last for long. He brutally killed four of the nobles, leaving only Sir Armand Ironhand and Jess d'Lurien alive to spread word of his existence. He was last seen walking into the shadows away from the terrified warriors, laughing. The abandoned Brothers of the Whip were arrested and executed and Sir Armand's book, *The Beast of Ehrendton* was published a few years later. Most people assumed it was fictional, and the Nova Vaasans—after tightening the security in their northern cities and becoming more wary of outsiders—forgot about the bandit leader.

Although he remained out of sight of mortals, the Black Duke was not inactive. He moved to the city of Bergovitsa, taking advantage of the unrest his band of cultists had created to seize a position of power and weld a strong and lawful state. Once he had made Bergovitsa one of the most orderly cities in the chaotic domain, he began slowly and surely extending his influence outwards. By the year 755 BC, the Black Duke had extended his invisible iron grip over much of southwestern Nova Vaasa, even reaching into parts of eastern Barovia and northern Hazlan. Through a brilliant series of contracts, possession, blackmail, loyal minions and assassinations, the devil has managed to turn most of this area to his own twisted ethics. And he is forever expanding his web to engulf more.

Personality

The Black Duke's most obvious trait is arrogance. He insists on leading each advance into a new village personally, even when his aims would be better served elsewhere. This is the main reason for the slow expansion of his influence—if he were less obsessed with control, the Black Duke may have overwhelmed far more of eastern Ravenloft than he has.

The Black Duke is a brutal, controlling sadist. He refuses to take advice from anyone; all dissenters are punished for the impertinence of contradicting him. He is motivated by the desire to corrupt and to terrify and is determined to return to Baator, both to complete his duties to Grenpoli and the Blood War, and to have his revenge on the erinyes who trapped him. His web of corruption is simply to entertain him while he is in Ravenloft, and to ensure that he takes as many souls with him as possible when he goes. He has no real interest in control over Ravenloft.

THE BLACK DUKE

Combat

The Black Duke loves terrifying people and glories in slaughter, but only enters into combat when his long-term plans won't suffer for it (for example, when he can destroy everyone present). More so even than other cornugons, the Black Duke is a terrifying opponent. He can effortlessly win almost any combat.

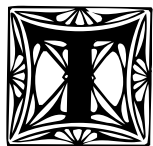
Spell-like abilities (Sp): At will—*animate dead*, *charm person*, *desecrate*, *detect magic*, *detect thoughts*, *dispel chaos*, *dispel good*, *magic circle against good*, *major image*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, *suggestion*, *teleport without error*. 3 times per day—*fireball*, *lightning bolt*. Once per day—*wall of fire*. All spells are cast as a 12th level sorcerer. Save DC is 13 + spell level.

Fear Aura (Su): As a free action, the Black Duke can affect all those within 5' with a *fear* spell, as a 12th level sorcerer. The save DC is 17.

Stun (Su): Those who are hit by the cornugon's whip must make a Fort save (DC 17) or be stunned for 1d4 rounds.

Wound (Su): Damage inflicted by the Black Duke's tail causes deep, bleeding wounds. The victim continues to lose 2 hp per round until the wound is bound (Heal DC 10) or they die.

RULE OF LAW



The Black Duke has begun extending his iron grasp into Hazlan, taking advantage of the unrest in a small village to seize control and twist the village to his own warped philosophy. This adventure casts the heroes as the unwitting tools of this fiend. Through their attempts to bring peace to the village, they will actually bring Kubar into the Black Duke's web.

This adventure is designed for characters of levels 3 to 5. Characters prepared for investigation and stealth are particularly valuable.

Adventure Background

The mayor of Kubar, Yanor Biret, was not originally an evil man. He was, however, firmly devoted to the doctrine of the Lawgiver and the supremacy of the Mulan race. If people were content to keep their place, they were treated relatively well; if they stepped out of line, they were dealt with mercilessly. Kubar became known (to the Mulan at least) as a harsh but fair place.

Eventually the Rashemani that lived in the village became tired of Biret's draconian rule and began agitating for a more equal share of power. The

demonstrations began peacefully, but Biret immediately crushed them. The brutality he used to contain what he saw as blasphemy only convinced other Rashemani to join the demonstrations, determined to remove the cruel mayor from power.

The Black Duke appeared in the midst of this escalating turmoil. He possessed the leader of the Rashemani, Maran Rosa, and under his leadership the revolt became more violent, more militaristic and more regimented. The situation reached a head when Biret's son's carriage was attacked as he came home from boarding school in Toyalis. Biret's militia found Lothar, his son, missing and everyone else slaughtered. A ransom note—demanding that a council composed of equal numbers of Rashemani and Mulan replace the mayor—was delivered a day later.

When the heroes arrive, they become trapped in the Black Duke's web. They are too late to foil the kidnapping; Lothar is already dead. However, the Black Duke has raised him as a zombie. The fiend has already begun transforming Kubar into an intolerant, orderly place. The final step is gaining the ear of Yanor Biret, and the Black Duke believes that masquerading as his beloved son is just the way to do that.

The Adventure Begins

There are a number of ways to introduce the heroes to the city of Kubar. As the most likely introduction, they may hear of the kidnapping while in Toyalis, and journey north to help. Alternatively, they may be recovering at the conclusion of an adventure in Nova Vaasa. One of the Black Duke's minions may approach them pretending to be Biret's cousin, and send them to aid his master.

Either way, when the heroes arrive in Kubar they find it in turmoil. The Rashemani have begun exerting more pressure upon the mayor by prowling the streets in gangs, assaulting the Mulan and vandalizing their buildings. In return, Biret has increased the number of militia patrols and enforced many harsh punishments on lawbreakers and rioters. Although as outsiders the adventurers are unlikely to be affected directly by either side, they should be made uncomfortable by the undertone of violence within the once-peaceful village. Of course, if one of the heroes is a native of Hazlan, they probably will become targets, especially if they obviously support one side.

Polite PCs will easily be able to get directions to the mayor's house, where they will be introduced to the situation first hand.

Kubar (Hamlet): Conventional; AL LN (with strong LE tendencies); 100 gp limit; Assets 575 gp; Population 150; Isolated (130 Rashemani, 20 Mulan).

Authority Figures: Yanor Biret, male human (Mulan) Ari5; Marran Rosa, male human (Rashemani) Com7.

At Home with the Mayor

The mayor's home is a relatively modest building of traditional Hazlani design. It is surrounded by a waist high mud-brick fence, which has recently had iron pickets attached to it to raise it to shoulder height. A large number of militia (both Rashemani and Mulan), dressed in red coats and many wearing symbols of the Lawgiver, patrol the grounds and the surrounding streets.

The adventurers will be stopped at the gate by two militiamen and asked their business. If they tell the truth about wanting to help rescue Biret's kidnapped son, one of the guards will sprint to the house, returning a minute later to show them in. Other reasons will probably require a Bluff check (DC 15) to get past the guards. If the check fails, the heroes will be politely turned away; if they persist in harassing the guards, they could well be attacked or arrested. If combat ensues, after a few rounds a large group of Rashemani appears, marching up the street to Biret's house for another protest. They will come to the heroes' aid, throwing rocks and insults at the guards, who retreat to behind the fence, leaving the PCs to the crowd.

If the heroes are allowed into the house, one of the guards will lead them to Biret's office, a spacious, elegant room dominated by a large desk and an equally imposing fireplace. The room is on the northern side of the house, away from the main street. A small shrine to the Lawgiver is set into an alcove next to the office door.

Yanor Biret is a tall, slender man, dressed in fine black robes. His skin is tanned and covered in purple and red tattoos. He is bald but wears a small goatee. When the heroes first enter, he is calm and resolute. The mention of his son, however, brings a tremor to his voice and anxiety to his eyes. The PCs first impression of Biret should be of a hard man distraught over the kidnapping of his son.

He is prepared to hire the PCs to rescue his son, realizing that, as foreigners, they may be able go where his militia cannot. He offers them 30 soulorbs each to rescue his son and swears them in as temporary members of the militia. This allows the heroes to move about during the nightly curfew without being harassed by the guards, but they are expected to act in a fashion that will do justice to their new position. They are to do nothing that will add to Kubar's disorder; their job is precisely the opposite.

If the heroes aren't willing to agree to his terms, Biret icily calls for a guard and has them thrown out, into the teeth of the angry mob gathering outside his home (see below). This may lead the heroes to throw

their weight behind the Rashemani protest against the draconian mayor.

If they are willing to act in an exemplary manner, Biret explains the situation to them. The DM should summarize the information from the Adventure Background section above, being careful to portray Biret as an embattled, good-hearted man who only wants order in his village. However, PCs who make a successful Sense Motive check (DC 18) will get a sense of his hostility towards the Rashemani people. They may realize the situation isn't as black and white as he makes it seem.

Biret has kept the ransom note and will show it to the heroes if asked. It is written on coarse paper in a legible but unschooled hand. It reads, "If you ever want to see your son again, instigate a council composed of equal numbers of Rashemani and Mulan. We will meet at 10:00 a.m. on the morning of the 15th to discuss further terms." The 15th is tomorrow; Biret wants the heroes to rescue his son tonight. He suspects that Lothar is being held in an old school that Rosa is using as his headquarters. However, he has no firm evidence to support this and doesn't want to endanger his son by attacking the wrong place. Any guards in the area have been attacked and driven away.

Throughout the interview, a large crowd of Rashemani has been gathering outside. The noise of their protests increases throughout the heroes' introduction to Biret until they reach a fever pitch. When it does so, a stressed looking guard appears at the office door, asking for Biret to come and supervise the guards as they deal with the rioters.

Yanor Biret, Male Human Ari 5: CR 4; Medium-sized Humanoid (Human); HD 5d8; 25 hp; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 feet; AC 12 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge); Atk Slam +3 (1d3 subdual); AL LN (strong LE tendencies); SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11, Gather Information +11, Knowledge (nobility) +11, Listen +12, Ride +9, Sense Motive +12, Spot +12; Dodge, Great Fortitude, Jaded

The Riot

A crowd of about fifty Rashemani has gathered on the southern side of Biret's house. Initially, they were protesting peacefully (led by the vocal Rosa), but a few choice illusions and *suggestions* from the Black Duke, coupled with the antagonistic nature of both sides, has quickly provoked the demonstration into a war of words. By the time Biret and the heroes arrive, the scene is only seconds away from violence.

At this point, the heroes could be on either side of the fence, in support of either group. If they try to calm

THE BLACK DUKE

things down, a voice (conjured by the Black Duke) from a group of people near them will accuse them of being traitors and spies, provoking that group to attack. The Black Duke will then *suggest* that they are in danger of their lives and should defend themselves with lethal force.

If the heroes become caught in the riot but don't draw attention to themselves, the DM should impress upon them the brutality and desperation of both sides. The Rashemani are fighting for their freedom and their lives; the guards are fighting to contain a blasphemous attack on everything they believe in. The guards attack with the flats of their swords and their fists; the rebels reply with fists and rocks.

During the battle, the most perceptive adventurers will notice how lawful both sides are—everyone protects their friends and works together to harm their enemies. To those who notice, the orderly riot has an almost scripted feel, as though it has been planned out in advance. However, the Black Duke's touch is light, so only the most perceptive heroes should notice this.

The DM should draw out the riot for as long as is necessary to impress the brutal, intolerant atmosphere upon the heroes. As soon as the action starts to drag, a squad of twenty guards, armed with clubs and protected by large shields and helmets, appears at one end of the street. They wade into the protesters, who are forced to flee under the assault. The heroes can flee with them as either allies or spies, follow along behind them, or stay at Biret's house until nightfall.

Guard: Human War 2; CR 1; Medium-sized Humanoid (Human); HD 2d8+4; 13 hp; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 feet; AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather armor); Atk Longsword (used nonlethally) +1 (1d8+2 subdual) or Club +4 (1d6+2); AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Listen +4, Ride +4, Spot +3; Alertness, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Rebel: Human (Rashemani) Com 3; CR 2; Medium-sized Humanoid (Human); HD 3d4+6; 13 hp; Init +0; Spd 30 feet; AC 10; Atk Slam +2 (1d3+1 subdual); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Craft or Profession (various) +5, Handle Animals +3, Spot +3, Use Rope +4; Iron Will, Skill focus (craft), Toughness.

“I Have A Dream”

If the heroes allow themselves to be carried along with the crowd of Rashemani, they are taken to a disused schoolhouse on the eastern edge of the village. This is the place where Biret believes his son is being

held. The Rashemani move inside, cheering and shouting. Even those injured seem to be uplifted by the fight, wearing their bruises with pride. As they see it, the guards' violence justifies the rebels' protests and will convince more Rashemani to join them. They completely ignore their own brutal behavior.

When the heroes try to move inside, two huge Rashemani farmhands block them. The farmhands are suspicious of the heroes' motives and won't let them inside until convinced that they are not Biret's spies. This takes a Bluff check (DC 15) or some fast-talking by one of the players. Give the check a +4 bonus if the heroes fought with the Rashemani in the riot—one of the rebels who saw them fighting will intervene in their favor. If they fought against the Rashemani, the check has a –6 penalty.

The farmhands will call for help immediately if they are threatened, and the rebels will not rest until they capture the 'spies'. If they are captured, the Black Duke holds a trial, accusing the adventurers of treason against the free Rashemani race. Unless he can make a demonic bargain with them for their safety, he will have them executed.

Once inside the old school, the PCs will see most of the Rashemani heading to the hall (room 7). The heroes will raise suspicions if they ignore the activity in the room and immediately begin snooping around. The hall is full of Rashemani, all clapping each other on the shoulders and congratulating themselves on the day's accomplishments. They seem sure that Biret will give in to their demands at the meeting tomorrow—and with his son captive, how could he not? This is a good opportunity to impress the rebels' infernally inspired callousness upon the PCs. They may hear talk of “disposing” of Lothar, or see a woman proudly holding up her battered child, telling those around her how she thrust him into the path of the guards only to have him clubbed out of the way.

After a few minutes, Rosa appears on the stage, greeted by a deafening wave of cheers and applause. He smiles proudly, raises his hands for silence, and begins to speak into the sudden, expectant hush.

Marran Rosa was originally an intelligent, quiet man. He was peaceful and gentle, but possessed a fierce desire to liberate the Rashemani. When the demonstrations first began, he was always in the background, working for freedom but ensuring that things didn't get out of hand. The Black Duke decided he would make a perfect pawn, and had Biret's militia beat Rosa's wife almost to death. When Rosa found her, he was consumed with rage. The Black Duke appeared and offered to help him get his revenge. Rosa's wife was sent to her family in a nearby village to recover, and the newly possessed Rosa took control of the rebels, turning their demonstrations into something wicked and oppressive.

Now, the quiet young man is a firebrand. As he speaks of liberation, equality and revenge, images of the world the Rashemani want to create dance before the PCs' eyes. His words bring fire to their bellies and the sounds of revolution to their ears. "Rosa" (aided by his diabolical magic) is one of the best orators they have ever heard. If the PCs had any sympathy towards the Rashemani at all, they are in danger of being completely swept away by his words. Heroes can make a Spellcraft check (DC 26) to realize the Rashemani are being magically influenced during the speech.

The Black Duke's speech is a perfect time to sneak out of the hall and go looking for Lothar Biret. Every eye is fixed on Rosa. In fact, the Black Duke is so sure that the best time to leave is during his speech that he actually weaves a subtle *suggestion* for them to do so into it if they show no signs of movement.

After his speech, Rosa retires to prepare for the meeting tomorrow. The other Rashemani go to the classrooms to bind their wounds and to celebrate until nightfall, when they go out into the street. There they either head home or go out to vandalize property belonging to prominent Mulans.

Marran Rosa (possessed by the Black Duke), Male Human Com 7: CR 6; Medium-sized Humanoid (Human); HD 7d4+14; 31 hp; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 feet; AC 12 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge); Atk Slam +4 (1d3+1 subdual); AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +5, Handle Animal +4, Profession (farmer) +13, Use Rope +4; Courage, Dodge, Endurance, Skill focus (profession).

Note: When the Black Duke possesses Rosa, the cornugon has his own personality, skills, feats and magical abilities.

Into the Lion's Den

In the descriptions below, general information about the location is presented, followed by specific encounters for three different time periods. The first is during the Black Duke's speech—lasting until half an hour after the riot, (about ten minutes after the heroes sneak out of the hall). The second lasts from the end of the speech until nightfall, after which most of the Rashemani leave. The third lasts from dusk until dawn, at which time the Rashemani return to prepare for the showdown with Biret.

The DM should emphasize the tension inherent in sneaking around a decaying school with potential enemies on every side. If the heroes are discovered and can't talk their way out of it, moving around will quickly become far more difficult for them.

The Old School

1. The Grounds: A few Rashemani patrol the school grounds at all times, watching for Biret's guards and other spies. About a quarter of the patrols (each of which has 1 Rashemani per hero) also have 1d3 dogs.

The school is in reasonable condition, considering that it has been abandoned for some years. Most of the windows have been boarded up, and the doors are barred and guarded at all times by 1 Rashemani per hero. There is a small belfry above the classrooms. Although there is no way to get to it from the ground floor, the heroes may believe that Lothar is being held up there.

2. Classroom: This room has been converted to a sleeping chamber for those whose homes were destroyed by Biret's guards. The desks have been pushed to one side, making room for the sleeping mats that cover the floor.

1: There is no one here. Looters will find about 2d6 moondaggers and some useful gear.

2: People come in and out of this room constantly.

3: Around 2d10 people are in here, either preparing for bed or asleep.

3. Classroom: This classroom has been left as it was when the school was closed down. Child-sized desks and chairs stand in neat rows in the dark room, covered in white sheets. A few roof tiles have slipped off, letting the rain in and rotting the floor boards directly beneath. Anyone who walks over this area must make a Ref save (DC 12) or fall noisily into the basement beneath, alerting everyone in areas 2, 4, 5, 6 and 10 to their presence. A Spot check (DC 16) reveals the danger.

4. Classroom: The desks have been pushed aside to make way for crates of food and other supplies. There is fresh water, wine, beer, flour, vegetables, dried meat, cloth and a few simple weapons.

1 and 3: There is no one here.

2: People preparing the feast in room 5 come in and out of this room constantly.

5. Classroom: The Rashemani have turned this room into a mess hall. Meat roasts in the fireplace, barrels full of wine lie open on the tables and the room is full of people celebrating.

Those who were injured in the riot come here after the Black Duke's speech to have their wounds bound.

1: There are 1d6 Rashemani women preparing the meal here.

2: This room is full of people, drinking, gambling, chatting and eating.

3: A few people remain, playing cards, telling stories and eating. Most are drunk.

6. Storeroom: A rumpled sheet of canvas lies across the floor of this windowless room, concealing the trap door to the basement. A Spot check (DC 18) or Search check (DC 10) reveals it. The rest of the room

THE BLACK DUKE

is piled with junk from when the school was in use, as well as the original furniture from the office (room 8).

7. The Hall: This large room has a low stage at one end.

1: The hall is packed with people listening to the Black Duke's speech.

2: A few people remain, talking and enjoying themselves.

3: The hall is empty.

8. Office: This room was once the headmistress's office. Now, the Black Duke uses it to hold Rosa when he isn't needed. The old furniture has been replaced with a camp bed, some clothing and a small picture of a young Rashemani woman. Concealed beneath the bed is a large, ornately cut bloodstone that the Black Duke uses as a focus for possession, and a functional steel dagger with a ring around the pommel, which he uses as a fetish.

1: No one is here.

2 and 3: After the speech, Rosa retires to his bedchamber. The Black Duke sends him to sleep and returns to his own body. The fiend wipes Rosa's memory of the last 24 hours, and then rewrites them using *Control Dreams* (the dreams the cornugon sends are incredibly detailed 'memories' of the previous day). This ritual has been repeated every night since Rosa's wife was assaulted, leaving his memory a cunning mix of fact and fiction. That way, Rosa remains committed to the revolution and unaware of the demon that has been using him.

To stop Rosa being disturbed, a pulley system has been attached to the doorknob, so that when it opens, a bucket of green slime is tipped over whoever is in the doorway. A Ref save (DC 17) allows the hero to avoid the deadly trap. The trap is designed for intruders like the PCs; after the Black Duke whipped someone for awakening him, the Rashemani no longer disturb their leader under any circumstances.

If the heroes wake Rosa, he is very confused—the dream has not completed rewriting his memory. He remembers nothing of the Black Duke, the trap on the door, the riot or the speech. He does remember kidnapping Lothar, but believes that the action was justified. He is quiet and confused, nothing like the fiery leader the PCs saw before.

9. Latrines: These latrines are still used. If desperate, a slender human, elf, gnome or halfling can climb into the tank below.

10. Basement: A short ladder leads down into this small room. It is crowded with junk, and a massive dog is chained up in one corner. It is trained to attack anyone except those accompanied by its master, and will lunge, barking furiously, at anyone who steps off the ladder or falls through the floor above. This will alert the rebels above.

Just out of the dog's reach, partially hidden behind a broken table, is Lothar. The boy is about twelve years old. His scalp is decorated with his first tattoos. His skin is pale, his eyes dilated, and he is unresponsive. Casual observers will probably assume he is in shock, a reasonable conclusion considering what he's been through.

Sadly, the truth is that Lothar is beyond shock. As soon as he arrived at the schoolhouse, the Black Duke poisoned the boy. He then animated his body as a zombie and ordered it to behave like a real boy. He still blinks and breathes; the only way to be completely sure that he is undead, not in shock, is to use magic. The rebels don't know that the boy is already dead. Lothar will obediently follow his rescuers, stumbling dazedly along behind them.

The Trap is Shut

After Rosa's speech, the Black Duke plans to execute the next step in his plan. These events occur at the same time as the heroes are searching for and finding Lothar, whenever that happens to be.

The Black Duke *teleports* into Biret's house, startling him as he stares pensively across the village to the schoolhouse. Taking the form of a man in black platemail (reminiscent of the Lawgiver's image), the devil tells Biret that the heroes are failing to rescue his son—unless he acts soon, Lothar will be dead by the time the heroes find him. He offers to make a bargain with the frightened mayor: in return for some later service, the Black Duke will ensure that Biret "sees his son again". The Mulan man signs an intricately bordered contract, and the cornugon disappears with a laugh, leaving the contract behind. Yanor throws the contract into the fire (where it refuses to burn and can be rescued by an observant PC when they return) and collapses behind his desk, his face in his hands. He is still sitting there when the heroes return to Biret's house with Lothar in tow.

The Black Duke's plans are nearing completion. The ornate border to his contract is actually a statement ceding Biret's soul to the Black Duke upon the man's death, written in an ancient language from a distant plane. When the heroes return to the mayor's house and pass the shrine in front of Biret's office, the fiend possesses Lothar's zombie.

As soon as they open the door to Biret's office, Lothar's face takes on more animation than the PCs have seen on it so far. He calls out, "Papa!" and runs across the room to his father, who throws his arms around him. He thanks the heroes profusely, never letting his "son" stray from his side.

At the meeting the next day, spurred on by his possessed son, Biret meets with the Rashemani rebel leaders. He has his guards mercilessly slaughter almost

half, leaving only a few that the Black Duke knows can be manipulated easily. Without their leaders, the rebels are crushed. The Rashemani's plight worsens, and Kubar falls neatly into the Black Duke's web.

Recurrence

Following these events, the PCs are most likely not completely aware of what is transpiring in the town of Kubar, providing opportunities for further involvement in the town's affairs.

Following this scenario, the Black Duke intends to slowly corrupt Yanor until he becomes Lawful Evil. When the Black Duke grows tired of working through Lothar and has completely indoctrinated Kubar's Mulan, he will have some Rashemani rebels murder both Yanor and Lothar. He will then take on the appearance of another Mulan (allegedly sent by Hazlik to replace the dead mayor) and rule Kubar with an iron hand. Once the region is thoroughly warped to his infernal philosophy, the Black Duke will move on to fresh territory. The PCs may be involved in these events in any number of ways, returning to this dark and unforgiving Kubar to see what they inadvertently helped create. Alternatively, they could fight the cornugon's minions elsewhere in his holdings, such as Bergovitsa or some new territory.

Of course, the Black Duke can be used in many other ways. He may decide that it is finally time to concentrate on returning to Grenpoli, perhaps forming an alliance with another devil or Styrix the Night Hag to do so. The heroes could be alerted to the developing situation by a rash of murders and sudden deaths across the south-eastern Core as the Black Duke harvests all the souls that are owed to him.

Finally, the Black Duke is a militaristic fiend devoted to the destruction of Chaotic Evil creatures. It is only a matter of time before he tries to kill either Hazlik or Malken, or decides to hunt down one of the tanar'ri trapped in the demiplane. Accustomed to hellish tactics, he is likely to wage this war with no respect for innocent bystanders. Unless the heroes stop this clash of titans, the destruction could be immense.

BOREAS

By Andrew Wyatt

The Westerly Wind asserting his sway from the south-west quarter is often like a monarch gone mad, driving forth with wild imprecations the most faithful of his courtiers to shipwreck, disaster, and death.

—Joseph Conrad, *The Mirror of the Sea*



BIOGRAPHY



Outside the shuttered windows, the wind whistles a tuneless, eerie song. Thunder cracks in monstrous peals, and rain hisses against the roof tiles. Feel the wretched stirring in your breast, the depravity rolling in like the tide. Feel all that is pure and sacred wash away in the face of your own demented urges. It is no mere thunderstorm that approaches. It is the herald of Boreas, the Bad Wind.

Appearance

Boreas resembles a mass of rippling air, much like a heat mirage. It is featureless, save for the vague suggestion of a mouth and a pair of eyes. Though the creature's form appears insubstantial, it is nonetheless cool and quite solid. A discordant whistling accompanies Boreas' movement.

Boreas

Eolian: CR 5; Large elemental (air, chaotic, evil); HD 8d8; hp 36; Init +5 (Dex); Spd Fly 90 ft. (perfect); AC 18 (-1 size, +5 Dex, +6 natural); Atk +9 melee (slam, 1d8+6); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SA Improved grab, suffocation, spell-like abilities; SQ Acid vulnerability, aura of chaos, damage reduction 10/+1, electricity immunity, elemental; SR 13; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +11, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 20, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Hide +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Spot +6; Flyby Attack

Reality Wrinkle: N/A

Corruption Index: N/A

Background

Boreas was summoned from its home on the Elemental Plane of Air to the Realm of Dread a few years ago. Its summoner was an unbalanced wizard with feverish fantasies of chaos and destruction. His devotion to chaos sprung not from any philosophical belief in freedom or lawlessness, but severe misanthropy. Simply put, Boreas' summoner hated

everything and everyone, and his own restlessness could only be satiated by destroying everything in his sight. He lusted for nothing less than the destruction of the world and the sweet oblivion that would follow.

Violent and impulsive, yet possessed of a keen mind and obsessive habits, this wizard worked diligently to research his own variant of *lesser planar binding*. His goal was to pluck an elemental of chaos from the Plane of Air, and to then control it for his own purposes. Boreas' summoner hoped for a nearly unstoppable servant, one that would lay waste to the Land of Mists at its master's bidding.

While the wizard's spell was indeed successful in drawing an eolian—an air elemental of chaos—into the Realm of Dread, the summoning had unforeseen consequences. The Mists themselves were woven into the breezes that housed the elemental spirit, touching off something unspeakable in the eolian's already manic mind. Boreas arrived in the Land of Mists an insane entity, and completely uncontrollable by its summoner. The unfortunate wizard was quickly slain by the rampaging Boreas, who fled into the night. The Bad Wind had been unleashed on the Land of Mists.

Boreas has become a dangerous creature indeed. Its wild nature has become tainted by the unholy cravings of its Mist-body, and perhaps even touched a bit by its summoner's mad dreams. Boreas is discomforted when it has to spend long periods of time over land, so it lurks in the sky above the Demiplane's oceans, particularly the Nocturnal Sea. Flitting about where the air is always chill, Boreas waits for thunderstorms to develop. It then "rides" the storm to shore, making landfall as the storm breaks on the coast. Amid the pounding rain and cracking thunder, it seeks victims to murder or simply drive to madness, before vanishing out to sea once more.

Although it is not truly a fiend, and therefore has no reality wrinkle, Boreas does carry a great power wherever it goes: the *aura of chaos*. This field of chaotic energy causes all manner of strange phenomena, particularly alignment and mood shifts in intelligent creatures. It also creates improbable events that promote chaos, such as bizarre accidents. The most insidious aspect of the *aura of chaos* is its gradual nature. The transformation of those under the *aura's* influence, as Boreas comes ever closer, is very subtle at first. Only when the elemental finally arrives has all sense of sanity vanished from the unfortunate victims of the *aura*.

Personality

Boreas is no longer so much a persona as a force. While it once may have had a true mind, as many sages argue elemental creatures do, Boreas has been driven into frenzied dementia by the corrupting influence of

the Mists. It has no interest in interacting with other intelligent beings, beyond bending their wills to chaos. It speaks only its own depraved dialect of Auran, which to humanoid ears sounds like shrieking wind with an undercurrent of blasphemous murmuring. Individuals who can find a means to understand this language will only comprehend a flurry of whispered, unconnected words that speak to Boreas' insane urges (e.g., "pain. raw. sorrow. end. agony. hate. want. nothing. die.")

Combat

Though Boreas is quite mad, it still exhibits significant cunning and perception in battle. It will use its own flight abilities, as well as the local terrain, to its tactical advantage, and will even utilize distractions and other simple tricks to eliminate opponents. Boreas will not usually attack spellcasters preferentially, unless it detects an overt display of magical power, such as an offensive Evocation spell. The creature still has a strong sense of self-preservation, and while its courage is fueled by madness, it will not hesitate to beat a hasty retreat if it feels outmatched.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, Boreas must hit with its slam attack.

Suffocate (Ex): If Boreas pins a living opponent that requires air to survive, it can suffocate that opponent. The creature cannot breathe and begins to suffocate as described in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* (see pg. 88) for as long as the pin is maintained.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—see invisibility; 3/day—*cloudkill*, *detect magic*, *dispel magic*; 1/day—*control winds*. These abilities function as the spells cast by a 9th-level sorcerer. The save DC, where applicable, is 16.

Acid Vulnerability (Ex): Boreas takes double damage from acid attacks unless the attack allows a save, in which case it takes double damage on a failure and no damage on a success.

Aura of Chaos (Su): Boreas' *aura of chaos* manifests as a multi-layered field of chaotic energy. As the eolian moves closer to an intelligent creature, the victim experiences the *aura* as three successive "tiers." Tier One has a radius of one mile and causes a mild personality shift towards impulsive behavior. Creatures with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher within Tier One must make a Will save (DC 16) every ten minutes or have their alignment temporarily shift to chaotic. The other portion of the victim's alignment remains the same; therefore, good creatures remain good, evil creatures remain evil, and neutrals remain neutral. Victims who are chaotic to begin with experience no unusual effects.

Tier Two has a radius of a half a mile and causes increasingly destructive and erratic behavior in

BOREAS

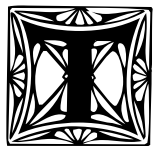
intelligent creatures. Victims act on bizarre whims and negative emotions, as repressed lusts and grudges bubble to the surface. All creatures with an Intelligence of 3 or greater within Tier Two must make a Will save (DC 16) every minute or have their alignment temporarily shift to chaotic evil. This occurs regardless of the victim's original alignment, while chaotic evil individuals experience no change.

Tier Three has a radius of one hundred yards and causes behavior that is clearly demented. Victims must make a Madness save (DC 16) every round they stay within Tier Three, though once the save is failed, victims are not forced to make more saves. A failed madness check results in a completely frenzied personality disorder. The character becomes violent and nigh uncontrollable. PCs so affected are not completely lost, however. A victim who has failed a Madness save may make a Wisdom check to make a willful grasp at sanity. If the Wisdom check is successful, the victim may retain control of his character for a number of rounds equal to his or her Wisdom score. Afterwards, the victim reverts to insanity, but may make the Wisdom check again in 1d6 rounds. Each failed Wisdom check imposes a cumulative –1 penalty on future Wisdom checks.

The effects of all three Tiers are cumulative last as long as the victim remains within the applicable Tier. For instance, a victim who leaves Tier Three no longer has to make Madness saves (and eventually regains control of his character as he has already failed a save), but is still subject to the effects of Tier Two and One until he leaves them as well. Once a victim leaves a Tier, its effects fade away in 1d10 rounds.

The *aura of chaos* is a mind-influencing enchantment effect. Curiously, those under the influence of the *aura* do not detect as charmed or under the influence of magic.

THE BAD WIND



his adventure introduces the PCs to the threat of Boreas and its *aura of chaos*. Because the threats the characters will face primarily calls for quick-thinking and ingenuity, the experience level of the party can cover a wide range of levels. A low- to mid-level party, preferably with an average character level around 4th or 5th is probably ideal, however. The threat of death at the hands of Boreas is perhaps too high for lower-level characters, while high-level PCs may have the power and resources to slay the eolian outright. No particular classes or equipment is required for the PCs to successfully complete the adventure. A range of arcane and divine magic may be useful, as the

PCs will inevitably test the efficacy of different types of spells on Boreas.

Though this adventure takes place in Nova Vaasa on the shores of the Nocturnal Sea, the scenario can easily be moved to any coastal town, whether elsewhere the Realm of Dread or in another campaign setting. If the DM wishes to transplant Boreas to a world outside of Ravenloft, he or she should develop an alternate explanation for the *aura of chaos* and Boreas' insanity, such as a magical experiment gone awry.

Adventure Background

Boreas is about to make landfall on the tiny seaside hamlet of Mavalga, in the domain of Nova Vaasa. A violent thunderstorm has been gathering for several hours out in the Nocturnal Sea, and is now heading towards Mavalga. Boreas is coming with the storm, and its *aura of chaos* is slowly descending over the town. The PCs are in the unfortunate position of being in Mavalga as the eolian arrives, and therefore subject to the *aura of chaos* and all its mad results. Fortunately, the PCs will not be completely ignorant of the bizarre events that are about to unfold. An ally is about to arrive in Mavalga as well, a mariner and monster hunter by the name of Josef Zhitof. With his assistance, the PCs may be able to drive off the Bad Wind. If they can withstand the *aura of chaos* long enough, that is.

Technique of Terror

Since both the plot and mood of this adventure depends heavily on the weather, a great way to set the atmosphere is through sound. Instead of using music, however, the DM might consider sound effects. Nature-oriented and New Age shops frequently carry CDs of seamless, ambient sounds from nature, including rainstorms. An ideal soundtrack would be a storm that builds gradually from distantly rumbling thunder to pounding rain. Of course, if the DM can actually run this adventure on a stormy night, so much the better!

The Adventure Begins

As the adventure opens, the PCs should be arriving in Mavalga, a tiny village of about two hundred humans and a handful of gnomes. It is of course up to the DM to decide the circumstances of their arrival. They may simply be passing through, or the village may be the first civilization the characters have seen in some time, and therefore a chance to rest up after recent adventures. As the characters approach the village, the DM should probably alert them to the

approaching storm, hinting that Mavalga might be a good place to ride out what looks to be a fierce squall:

Out to sea, a thunderstorm is brewing, gray and cruel. The storm is rolling quickly towards land. You can already see pale violet lightning flickering amid the thick clouds. Rain hangs in a grainy, sheet-like haze beneath the swollen thunderheads. Even from here, you can already see that the Nocturnal Sea is churning violently beneath the storm's fury. When it makes landfall, the storm promises to be savage. Fortunately, you spy a tiny seaside village on the road ahead. It looks as if fortune is with you today.

Mavalga (hamlet): Conventional; AL LN; 100 gp limit; Assets 1,045 gp; Population 209; Isolated (human 98%, gnome 2%).

Authority Figures: Captain of the Guard, male human War2.

Others: Adp4 (1), Adp2 (2), Adp1 (4), Bar2 (1), Bar1 (2), Brd3 (1), Brd1 (2), Clr1 (1), Com9 (1), Com4 (2), Com2 (4), Com1 (163), Drd1 (1), Exp5 (1), Exp2 (2), Exp1 (5), Ftr4 (1), Ftr2 (2), Ftr1 (4), Pal1 (1), Rgr1 (1), Rog2 (1), Rog1 (2), War1 (9), Wiz2 (1), Wiz1 (2).

Tier One

As the PCs arrive, the first Tier of Boreas' *aura of chaos* has just descended on Mavalga. The DM should secretly roll a Will save for each PC every turn, to determine if their alignments become chaotic. PCs so affected should be informed of such privately, and instructed to play the alignment to the best of their ability, but without overtly alerting anyone not yet affected. Victims are unaware that anything unusual has happened, and cannot perceive their own shift in behavior. Therefore, players should be discouraged from having their characters react with alarm or suspicion.

The PCs should have the opportunity to look around the little village and do as they please for a bit. Mavalga has all the basic services the PCs may require, but it is primarily a fishing village. The PCs can find an inn, tavern, blacksmith, dry goods store, and other simple establishments, but nothing more elaborate. The locals worship the Lawgiver, a god of divine right and oppression, but there is no formal temple in the village. Businesses are still open, though it is obvious that the locals are preparing for the storm. A few citizens are dutifully shuttering the windows of their homes and shops from the outside. A handful of fishermen, just reaching the waterfront, are rushing to secure their vessels and unload their tackle.



Once the PCs are in the village, the DM should read the following text aloud:

Offshore you notice a ship, larger than the village's humble fishing boats, apparently racing just ahead of the approaching storm. The stiff wind is pushing the vessel along swiftly with the waves. Occasionally the ship hits a rough spot and its bow rises dangerously into the air, only to come crashing down. Whoever helms the ship is barely going to make landfall before the storm strikes.

This is the *Bulwark*, the vessel of Josef Zhitof, who has been hunting Boreas for nearly a year now. The ship, unfortunately, will arrive just barely ahead of the eolian.

At this point, the effects of the *aura of chaos* are not particularly noticeable. As the PCs interact with the locals, the DM should subtly hint that folk seem more touchy and extroverted than one would expect. Strangers alternately react with excitableness, hostile insults, or embarrassing romantic suggestions. Curiously, all make a point to mention "the storm" when talking to the PCs, as if the weather is weighing heavily on their minds. The DM should also frequently bring up the coming storm, by indicating the stiff wind

BOREAS

blowing in off the Nocturnal Sea or the sharp thunderclaps punctuating the approaching rumbling. If one of the PCs becomes suspicious and inspects the locals with *detect magic* or similar magic, he or she will discover nothing unusual.

If the DM wishes, he or she can roll on the following table every few minutes to establish brief encounters with locals who are under the *aura of chaos*' influence. The villagers are mostly 1st-level human or gnome commoners, and all are now chaotic in alignment.

Roll (1d8)	Encounter
1	A horse breeder purposely bumps into the PCs, and then promptly spews forth some insulting rhetoric about their foreign heritage.
2	A seamstress approaches a male character unsolicited and flirts shamelessly with him.
3	A young child throws horse manure at the party, laughing to himself as if it were his own private joke.
4	A business owner refuses to serve the party, ignoring them languidly as if he can't be bothered with their needs.
5	A young fisherman approaches the PCs and demands—calmly and matter-of-factly—an object from one of them which he covets.
6	A housewife asks the PCs to watch her toddler for a moment, then does not return.
7	A horse cart nearly runs the PCs over in the road, and the teamster then chastises them for being “in the way.”
8	A local wise woman pokes the PCs curiously with her wooden cane, muttering offhandedly about their dress and appearance.

Tier Two of the *aura of chaos* overtakes Mavalga forty minutes after the PCs arrive in the village. Only 2% or so of the villagers have resisted the *aura of chaos*' effects by this point. Characters who have not yet become chaotic in alignment are still subject to Tier Two's more radical alignment shift.

Tier Two

The DM should now begin making saving throws for the PCs every minute, to determine if their alignment shifts to chaotic evil. Again, notify affected PCs privately, and remind them that chaotic evil characters are not necessarily psychotic. Chaotic evil characters should be played as impulsive, selfish,

remorseless, and resentful of anyone who tells them what to do.

The wind begins to pick up now, and casual conversation outdoors becomes difficult over the whistling gale. The DM should have NPCs speak their dialogue loudly, asking “WHAT?!” repeatedly. Periodic thunderclaps, deafening in volume, also drown out conversation.

At this point, the *aura of chaos* begins to strongly influence not only the disposition of the villagers, but physical events. Mysterious accidents begin to occur, all of which have a suspicious tendency to spark chaos and violence among the villagers. While there are no hard and fast rules for how this phenomenon occurs, the DM is free to devise any kind of strange event he or she can imagine, from the aggravating to the catastrophic. These crises should occur one after the other, every few rounds or so. If he or she is so inclined, the DM can roll on the following table to determine what accidents occur. Every accident has two outcomes depending on whether the PCs assist: one desirable, one undesirable. Each undesirable outcome will negatively affect the PCs' eventual confrontation with Boreas, though the party does not know this yet.

Roll (1d6)	Encounter
1	Lightning strikes a building in the village, which causes a small fire to break out. The building's owner pleads with other villagers to help him, but they callously tell him to deal with his own problems. Desirable: The PCs assist in putting out the fire. Undesirable: The PCs do nothing. The fire will spread, creating a dangerous maze of blazing buildings and debris. The battle with Boreas will be restricted to a tiny, 30 foot by 20 foot patch of land on the waterfront, with fires burning all around.
2	A fishing boat breaks free of its moorings and grounds itself next to the docks. An argument breaks out between the owner and one of his deckhands, who is accused of tying the knots improperly. Desirable: The PCs calm the pair down and assist getting the ship back in the water and properly secured. Undesirable: The PCs do nothing, or do not help move the boat back. Josef's cog will take 2d4 more rounds to find a safe place to pull up to the docks, and Josef will not reach the PCs until after Boreas arrives.
3	A horse cart full of vegetables blows over in the street, spilling produce everywhere.

The owner frantically tries to pick his merchandise, but children begin throwing and stomping on the vegetables, creating a slimy mess of the waterfront.

Desirable: The PCs pick up the mess and stop the children from destroying the merchandise.

Undesirable: The PCs do nothing. The mess the children make eventually becomes a hazard during the battle. PCs must make a Reflex save (DC 14) or fall prone for every round they take attack actions or move faster than walking.

- 4 A stable door comes unlatched and several horses get loose. Spooked by the approaching storm, they trample villagers and gallop randomly through the streets.

Desirable: The PCs assist the stable owner in rounding the animals up and returning them to the stable.

Undesirable: The PCs do nothing. The frightened animals will get in the way during the battle with Boreas, even attacking them in their panicked state (10% chance per round).

- 5 An argument over perceived slights erupts into violence near the edge of the village, involving 2d6 adult men. Women and children begin fleeing in the direction of the waterfront.

Desirable: The PCs forcibly or peacefully break the up the fight.

Undesirable: The PCs ignore the fight, or simply try to protect the women and children from harm. The waterfront will be clogged with innocents when Boreas arrived, and fighting in the middle of a frightened crowd is not easy. Assume that for the first three rounds, all creatures involved in the battle have one half cover.

- 6 A heavy tree branch breaks loose and falls on a villager, pinning him to the ground. No one seems to hear his pleas for help or his cries of pain.

Desirable: The PCs assist in freeing the man, which requires a Strength check DC 28. The PCs may cooperate on this check.

Undesirable: The PCs do nothing, or are unable to free the man. The man will be freed later by a group of villagers who are not yet chaotic evil. He will come looking for the PCs once Tier Three overtakes him, and attack them during the battle with Boreas (see below).

As a consequence of these events, the atmosphere in the village begins to take on the feel of an emergency state. The PCs should be peppered with these small crises, so that the village appears to be suddenly going to pieces all around them.

PCs can potentially take any number of actions during this time. If the majority of the party has retained its original alignment, the characters will probably try to stop the accidents that are unfolding. If they elect to flee Mavalga, the DM should have the party run into a villager who has retained his original alignment. The poor soul will plead with the PCs to help with one of the above accidents. To keep the party from becoming entirely chaotic evil and fighting their way out of the village, the DM should probably let at least one PC retain his original alignment, if only to give the party a moral center while under the *aura of chaos* influence.

Tier Three will descend on Mavalga twenty minutes after the arrival of Tier Two. Just before this occurs, the *Bulwark* finally pulls up to the village's docks. The ship's small but skilled crew (six 1st-level human experts) has managed to slow the vessel's approach to avoid grounding it or colliding with the docks. Josef, however, does not wait for the *Bulwark* to be properly moored. He leaps from the cog's deck to the docks, dashing towards the village. His goal is to drive off Boreas through any means. Once he spies the PCs, he will recognize them for adventurers and enlist their help.

What looks to be the captain of the vessel dashes towards to you, a look of simultaneous excitement and desperation on his face. Athletic and lean, he sports a thick, dark mustache and wears studded leather armor over woolen sailor's clothes. The captain offers a handshake and an encouraging smile as rain finally begins to fall, heavy drops swathing the village in a hissing haze. He shouts to be heard over the wind and rain:

"Adventurers! Just what I could use! Name's Josef Zhitof! Something very bad is about to arrive in this village! I need your help to send it right back where it came from!"

Josef Zhitof: Male human Ari2/Ftr3; CR 4; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 2d8+3d10+10; hp 39; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 armor); Atk +7 melee (rapier, 1d6+3), +6 ranged (light crossbow, 1d8); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft.; AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Climb +7, Gather Information +5, Jump +7, Knowledge (monster lore: elementals) +6, Profession (sailor) +6, Spot +5, Swim +7,

BOREAS

Wilderness Lore +6; Dodge, Expertise, Mobility, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather, rapier +1, light crossbow, 10 bolts, *amulet of the centered self*.

Languages: Balok, Vaasi.

Note: Josef's *amulet of the centered self* is a powerful magic item that renders the wearer immune to mind-influencing effects and automatically dispels existing mind-influencing effects when it is donned. It is one of the few magical items that can protect an individual from the *aura of chaos*.

Tier Three

Once Tier Three descends on the village, chaos reigns. Nearly all of the villagers become raving lunatics. Their manic behavior cannot be controlled without physically or magically restraining them. Most will ignore the PCs, though there is a chance (5% per round) that one will attack a random hero in a frenzied fit. Though mostly 1st-level commoners, mad villagers may (at the DM's option) receive a +2 enhancement bonus to their Strength. It should be obvious by now that the villagers are under some outside influence, and DMs may want to make powers checks for PCs who callously injure or kill villagers.

The DM should make a Madness save for the PCs each round. Failure means that the unfortunate character becomes useless, descending into a hysterical manic state. The player is still free to roleplay the character for fun, if so desires, though productive actions are basically impossible. Once a PC fails a Madness save, he may, at the DM's option, make a Wisdom check to hold on to character for a little longer. If he succeeds, he may continue to act normally for a number of rounds equal to his Wisdom.

After this, he reverts to insanity. The DM may allow this Wisdom check again periodically, such as every 1d6 rounds. Every failed Wisdom check, however, imposes a cumulative –1 penalty to future Wisdom checks.

If the PCs themselves are all failing their madness checks, Josef can provide a remedy. If he sees a PC who is insane, he will use his *amulet of the centered self* to give them another chance at sanity. Josef quickly removes the *amulet* from him neck and (hopefully with the help of any sane PCs) places it around the insane PCs neck. The *amulet* instantly removes the insanity and alignment shift caused by the *aura of chaos*. Josef then hastily returns the *amulet* to his own neck. The PC must still make Madness saves once the *amulet* is removed, however. Although Josef is also concerned for the villagers, he believes that dealing the imminent arrival of Boreas is the more pressing issue. And arrive Boreas does:

Out of the haze of pouring rain comes an eerie, flickering shape. A mass of rippling wind, visible only as a distorted outline in the air, darts about the waterfront. It moves with an organic ease, even on the brutal winds of the storm, and seems to quiver with manic energy. Eerily, you think you can just make out a face in its shimmering outline. Then, to your horror, the wind-thing begins attacking the mad villagers, who are buffeted about like rag dolls by its touch.

Josef's primary goal is to drive Boreas back out to sea as quickly as possible, and thus keep the deaths of innocents to a minimum. He is unconcerned with the details of the attack, merely wanting to put enough fear into the eolian to make it flee. He does ask, however, if the PCs have any magic or unusual weapons at their disposal. Josef has been pursuing Boreas for nearly a year now, attempting to uncover any weaknesses the



eolian may have. He is always eager to see new tactics tried against the creature. Josef does know that acid-based attacks are quite effective against Boreas, and informs any spellcasters present of such.

Boreas does not perceive Josef and the PCs as a threat, ignoring them until they attack it. There is a 5% chance each that a member of the party or Josef will be immediately attacked without provocation, however, as Boreas randomly assaults any creature in sight. Although Josef has attacked the eolian before, Boreas cannot tell humanoid creatures apart very easily; it does not, therefore, single Josef out as its “arch-enemy.” Because of the limited visibility and pouring rain, all participants in the battle have one-quarter concealment.

Boreas has no overriding goal beyond killing everything in its path, but will attend to those that attack it before moving on to innocents. Thus, once the PCs draw the creature’s attention, they will have it until one side is defeated or flees. The eolian sticks to the open area of the village’s waterfront, but darts up into the sky and down again to avoid attacks. Since Boreas is highly chaotic, the DM is free to shift the creature’s tactics to deal with particular circumstances. If the party is low-level, or already injured for some reason, Boreas might flit from one opponent to the next, without concentrating on killing any particular individual. If there is a warrior with plenty of hit points in the party, however, the DM might want focus Boreas’ attacks on that PC, just to illustrate the brutality of the creature. The DM should not be afraid to truly punish the PCs physically, in any case. Boreas is a dangerous opponent and should be portrayed as such.

Since this adventure is meant to be an introduction to Boreas, the PCs are not supposed to destroy the eolian. Once it loses more than two-thirds of its original hit points, Boreas will probably flee, though nothing is certain with such a chaotic creature. If the eolian believes it is close to slaying one of the PCs, it may continue to attack relentlessly, heedless of the danger to itself. If by chance the PCs do manage to actually slay Boreas, the DM should not begrudge them their victory.

Boreas flees out to sea, moving faster than he arrived, since it is no longer sticking close to a storm. All three Tiers of the aura of chaos recede in ten to twenty minutes, and their effects vanish 1d10 rounds thereafter. At the same time, the storm begins to clear:

The receding thunderheads overhead finally break, and as the rain slows to drizzle patches of azure sky peek from behind the clouds. Sunlight greets a village soaked by rain and frayed ragged by brutal winds. The real damage, however, can be seen on the face of the villagers, overcome with shock, shame, and

grief. But though battered and beaten, it looks as if Mavalga will survive.

Award the party 1,500 XP for successfully driving off Boreas, and an additional ad hoc award ranging from 300 to 2,500 XP depending on their intelligence, ingenuity, and heroism in dealing with the “accidents.”

Recurrence

Ideally, Boreas escapes, returning out to sea until it finds another thunderstorm to its liking. Provided the deaths of innocents were kept to a minimum, Josef will herald the battle as a success, particularly if some new knowledge of Boreas’ strengths or weaknesses was uncovered.

If the PCs seem interested in this new nemesis, the DM may want to draw them into Josef’s quest to destroy Boreas. Josef knows little about Boreas (which he calls simply “The Bad Wind”), other than the effects of the *aura of chaos* and the creature’s violent tendencies. Josef is an adventurous Borcan noble with an honorable and kind heart, and would make a fine NPC ally and companion. He sails Ravenloft’s seas, following Boreas’ movements and waiting for it to make a landfall. Josef is particularly interested in any legends about powerful acid magic or acid-based magic items, as he believes they may be the key to destroying Boreas. If the PCs join Josef’s quest, they may also need magic to protect them against the *aura of chaos*. A series of adventures might involve tracking down such arcane lore and then confronting the Bad Wind again.

If the PCs seem disinterested in pursuing the Bad Wind right now—or are simply glad to escape this incident with their lives—the DM is still free to bring the threat of the eolian back in the future. Perhaps the *aura of chaos* is growing in strength (or size). The PCs might discover somewhere down the road that the creature they had a brush with years ago is becoming a dire threat to all the civilized realms in the Land of Mists. They may have no choice but to confront the Bad Wind again.

CREDIMORI

By Spencer M. Lease

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

-Franklin Delano Roosevelt

BIOGRAPHY

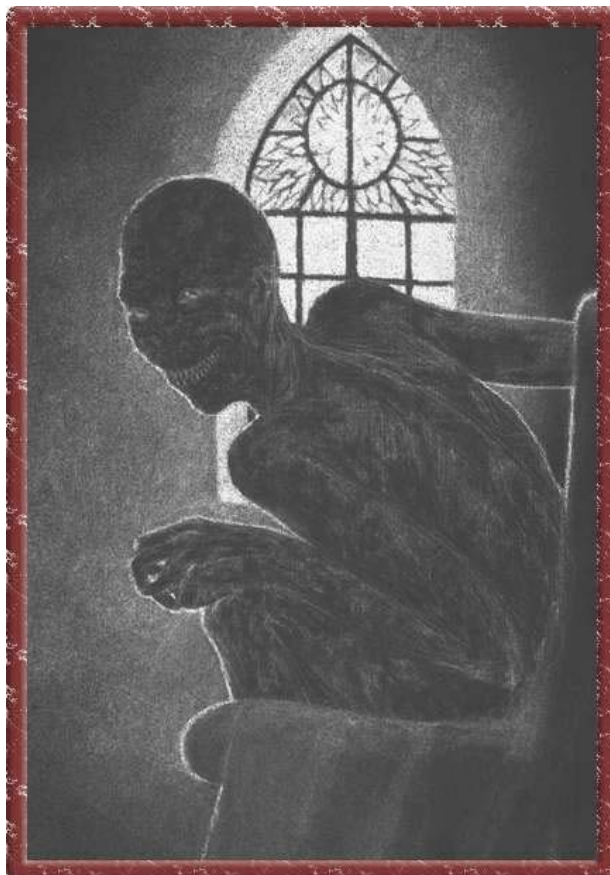
Bigotry is all too common in the lands of Ravenloft. The ignorant masses fear and loathe that which they do not understand – the Vistani, the wielders of arcane forces, demihumans and even other human cultures. At certain times, in certain places, this fear translates into violence. Even in times of “peace,” entire classes and races are quietly oppressed by those in power. Ravenloft is a world of prejudice and fear. It is not, therefore, terribly surprising that a powerful entity has come forth to claim dominion over such traits.

The Vistani—all too often the first targets of those manipulated by this fiend—call it “Credimori,” which translates roughly as “creator of fears”. Many scholars believe that this Credimori is a figure of legend, a mythical god of terror and darkness; those who care to listen to what little the Vistani have to say on the subject know that nothing could be further from the truth.

Ravenloft’s nomads are not the demon’s only targets: it also inspires crusades against demihumans, scholars, magicians and countless other innocents. Its manipulations are subtle enough that, after the fact, its pawns blame only themselves. And as the demon’s victims suffer under the weight of the atrocities they faced or committed, Credimori continues its travels through the land, leaving despair and betrayal in its wake.

Appearance

In its true form, Credimori is hideous, with bloated and blotchy skin, a mouth full of sharp teeth, and clawed hands. Its ugliness is a reflection of the psyches of bigots everywhere. However, Credimori generally does not appear in its true form; instead, most



observers see it as a member of the most powerful social group in the area—male in a patriarchal society and female in a matriarchal one. These illusory forms vary widely, but the disguised demon always has an honest face and demeanor, and is by all accounts someone you can trust with your very life.

Phylactery

Credimori’s phylactery takes the form of a painting of two smiling men shaking hands while an angel looks on. Close examination reveals that the man on the right is stabbing his “comrade”; the attacker’s grin is quite malicious while his victim’s is rather forced. Additionally, the angel is very subtly sinister in appearance. It should be noted that Credimori did not have a phylactery before it arrived in Ravenloft and is still confused by it; therefore, the demon tends to ignore it and probably wouldn’t care at first if it disappeared.

Credimori, the Creator of Fears

Ikisitora: CR 12; Medium-size Outsider (Evil); HD 10d8+20; 75 hp; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd. 40 ft.; AC 23 (+4 Dex, +9 natural); Atk 2 claws +10 melee (2d6 + poison); or 1 bite +10 melee (1d10 + poison); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; SA poison, spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 20/+3, vulnerability to holy items, spell-like abilities; SR 22; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +10; Str 21, Dex 19, Con 17, Int 30, Wis 21, Cha 30

Skills and Feats: Bluff +20, Concentration +8, Disguise +25, Gather Information +30, Innuendo +10, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (religion) +15, Listen +10, Search +15, Sense Motive +15, Spellcraft +15, Spot +10; Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Reality Wrinkle: 20,000-foot radius

Land-Based Powers: None

Corruption Index: 0

Background

Credimori hails from a world where demons like it, known collectively as the Ikisitore, are extremely common. Its home is a bastion of hatred, and the intolerance of the native mortals has fed its kind for millennia. Yet as content as Credimori was on its native plane, the demonic population was growing rapidly, and the fiend realized that soon there wouldn't be enough "food" to go around. It cast its consciousness throughout the planes, searching for a new home. Seven years ago, it found one.

Roland of Tepest was an Inquisitor who threw himself fully into the cause. His fanaticism was legendary - there were those even among his fellow crusaders who felt that he went too far at times. Yet despite his enormous success in bringing down dozens of the "little beasties," Roland was never satisfied, for he knew he was capable of much more. Thus, when a glorious "angel" appeared to him and offered him the power to change the world with his bare hands, he jumped at the chance.

In the following weeks, Roland grew fiercer than ever. Finally, Wyan himself declared that the Inquisitor was in league with dark forces, and ordered his execution. But the crusaders had waited too long. They arrived at Roland's cottage just as Credimori completed its transposition with him. Several men died in the battle that followed, and Credimori escaped into the Mists. All records of Roland were destroyed, and only a handful of Inquisitors remember him now.

The demon soon began to realize the position it was in. Credimori was now trapped in the Land of Mists, unable even to project its consciousness away from the demiplane. At first it was depressed and bitter, but then it realized that thousands of mortals were trapped with it, and in these lands of evil and superstition, fear and bigotry were everywhere. This was paradise for an Ikisitora.

Credimori began its career in Ravenloft by going after easy prey, such as the Vistani, who were already viewed with suspicion. Recently, however, Credimori has noticed that the influence of scholars such as Rudolph Van Richten is beginning to change Ravenloft for the better—slowly, yes, but surely as well. The demon is determined to stop this before it gets out of hand.

Personality

Credimori's mission in life is the creation of fear and intolerance. It accomplishes this by turning those who might otherwise form mutually beneficial alliances and friendships into bitter enemies. It revels in the death and spiritual degradation of innocents and eagerly anticipates the day when it can cause a massive war of bigotry that will rage through all the lands of the Core—and several nations beyond. Credimori itself is biased only against scholars, as it believes that their work may lead to its downfall; on the other hand, the demon has no great love for mortals in general, and tends to see them only as sources of power and sustenance.

It should be noted that as all Ikisitore are androgynous, Credimori views itself as neither male nor female, and will assume either form when necessary.

Combat

The demon is a master with the sword and the dagger. It prefers the dagger, despite its lack of a magical one, but if it must carry a sword for some reason, it wields a +3 *unholy longsword*.

Credimori gains power by witnessing acts of intolerance. Every time it sees a major act of bigotry, it may choose to do one of the following things:

- ❖ increase one of its attributes by *one* point,
- ❖ expand its reality wrinkle by twenty-five feet,
- ❖ use one of its spell-like abilities once more than is normally allowed,
- ❖ gain the land-based power of whatever domain it is in,
- ❖ enhance its venom so that it causes death within three rounds unless neutralized, or

❖ gain one level in any class.

All of these changes last until the next sunrise. (The DM must decide what qualifies as a “major act of bigotry,” but—as an example—a murder committed out of sheer intolerance would certainly count.)

Credimori can be harmed by +3 magical weapons and greater, but it is especially vulnerable to holy weapons dedicated to deities of love and peace. The demon takes twice the usual amount of damage when hit with such weapons. Additionally, when Credimori is within ten feet of any exposed holy item dedicated to such a deity, it takes 1d4 points of damage per round.

Credimori’s final great weakness is tolerance. If someone under the demon’s influence acts kindly toward the object of their hatred, even inadvertently, Credimori’s power is broken and it is forced to flee the area. As soon as it has fled at least ten miles, it collapses into a coma for 1d4 weeks. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to escape the demon’s influence in this manner.

The fiend’s reality wrinkle is very subtle. Everything simply seems much more sinister. Buildings loom over passersby, shadows are a bit longer, even the sun is somehow . . . changed. All in all, it’s an extremely disturbing place.

Spell-like Abilities: At will—*polymorph self*, *detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *major image*, *mirage arcana*, *persistent image*, *read magic*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. Twice per day, it may cast *energy drain*, *prismatic sphere*, *polymorph other* and *shape change*, as an 18th-level sorcerer. Save DCs, where applicable, are 20 + spell level.

Poison (Ex): Credimori’s claws and fangs deliver venom on impact. This poison is identical to deathblade (as described on page 80 of the *DMG*). All of the standard antidotes (such as *neutralize poison*) are effective.

Perverted Charm (Su): At will, Credimori inflict a *perverted charm* upon a victim. This is similar to *charm monster*, with two important differences. First, in gaining one person’s trust, the caster causes them to become extremely hostile toward another person or type of person. (For example, their neighbor, the Vistani or elves.) Second, only priests and paladins get Will saves (DC 25) against this ability – but anyone who has traveled with them for over two months is also entitled to a Will save. (Thus most adventurers will get a chance to make a Will save against this spell if there’s a priest in their party.) Once per day, Credimori can create a *mass perverted charm*, which is simply the *mass charm* version of *perverted charm* and causes those charmed to become hostile towards an entire race, culture, religion, profession or philosophy.

The Children of Credimori

Once per month, Credimori may conduct a ritual that begins the transformation of a willing mortal into one of its “children”. If Credimori does not conduct the ritual in a given month, the power carries over to the next; thus, the demon may choose to wait a few months and then transform several mortals at once.

The Children of Credimori are the demon’s faithful minions; it is linked telepathically with all of them and controls them through these links. The transformation of an ordinary mortal into one of Credimori’s “children” is a five-step process, much like the process of transposition that brings a demon to Ravenloft. (In fact, some have speculated that the Children are young or crippled members of Credimori’s own race . . . but this theory has not yet been proven.) The first step is taken immediately after the ritual that begins the transformation; the rest follow as noted.

Step One: The subject grows uglier (-1 Charisma and +1 to their Outcast Rating when visible) but becomes very persuasive (+2 racial bonus to Bluff checks). The subject’s base attack bonus rises by one point, and he gains the ability to cast *charm person* three times per day as a second-level sorcerer. He may also receive simple one-word telepathic commands from Credimori.

Step Two: (One month after initial transformation.) The subject continues to lose any beauty he once possessed (-2 Charisma and +2 to their Outcast Rating when visible), but becomes very suave indeed (+3 to all Charisma based skills when their true form is hidden from sight). The subject loses the ability to cast *charm person*, but may now cast *perverted charm* seven times per day and *change self* twice per day as an 8th-level sorcerer, and *perverted mass charm* once per month as if he were a 16th-level sorcerer. His attack bonus again increases by one, and he may now receive more complex telepathic instructions (up to 10 words) from Credimori. The victim’s CR also increases by 1.

Step Three: (Three months after initial transformation.) The subject becomes bloated and warty (Charisma of 3 and +5 to their Outcast Rating when visible), but if he is able to disguise his form, he gains a Charisma of 18 (or is unchanged if already higher than 18). The subject may cast *change self* five times per day and *perverted charm* thirteen times per day as a 9th-level sorcerer, and *perverted mass charm* once every three weeks as a 16th-level sorcerer. He gains another point of attack bonus, an SR of 10, and damage reduction 5/+1. He may receive commands of

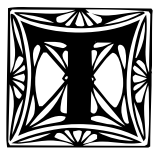
any length and complexity from Credimori but may resist them with a successful Will save (DC 25).

Step Four: (Five months after initial transformation.) The subject's Charisma is now 3 whenever he is visible, but 21 when he is disguised or hidden (unless it is already higher than 21, in which case it is not changed). The subject may cast *change self* seven times per day and *perverted charm* once per hour as a 10th-level sorcerer, and *perverted mass charm* once every two weeks as a 17th-level sorcerer. His base attack bonus increases by two points. Credimori's control begins to solidify, and the subject must beat a DC of 30 on a Will save to resist his commands. The victim's CR increases by one.

Step Five: (Seven months after initial transformation.) The transformation is now complete. The subject has a Charisma of 25 (or higher if it had already exceeded 25), but is repulsively ugly. He may cast *change self* at will and *perverted charm* once every half-hour as a 10th-level sorcerer, and *perverted mass charm* once per week as an 18th-level sorcerer. He gains another three points of attack bonus, SR 18, and damage reduction 15/+2. Credimori's control is now complete, and the demon is aware of everything its servant thinks and does; the new "child" is powerless to resist its commands. The subject's statistics (other than Charisma) remain as they were, and he not only retains any and all class abilities (save those that would be lost due to alignment violations), but he continues to advance normally. However, his alignment is now neutral evil. The victim's CR increases by two.

Before Step Five is reached, the subject may still be redeemed. A *holy word* or *banishment* spell will free the victim and cause 1d4 points of damage to Credimori itself. Once Step Five is taken, however, only a *wish* can free the unfortunate mortal—and even that has only a 10% chance of succeeding.

THE INHERITANCE



his is an adventure for 4-6 PCs of levels 10-12. This adventure is extremely generic in terms of setting and characters, which is quite intentional. With a little work it can easily be tailored to fit any campaign.

The PCs have recently received a letter from an old friend of theirs, the renowned wizard and scholar Alan Lumieres of Greendale. In his letter, Alan mentioned that there was trouble in Greendale, and begged them to come at once. Ordinarily, their friend's doodling surround the text; this time, however, the page was undecorated apart from one drawing at the top: a mystic sigil like nothing any of the characters

have seen before. As the adventure begins, the PCs are just about to arrive at a clearing outside of town where they are to meet Alan.

Ideally, the PCs should be carrying magical weapons; they will need +2 or better weapons to fight the Children of Credimori and +3 or better weapons for the demon itself. There should be a 12th-level wizard or 11th-level priest in the party, as one of these will be needed to activate the Mystick Cage. Finally, there should be at least one priest or paladin in the party; only priests, paladins and their companions are allowed to make saving throws against Credimori's *charm* powers.

The Adventure Begins

The forest is dark and quiet as you approach the place where you are to meet your friend Alan. A small sliver of moonlight – the only illumination available – falls at your feet from the slim crescent overhead. You can see the clearing through the trees ahead – it seems about thirty feet across, with an ancient, gnarled tree at its center. As you watch, a portly robed figure steps out from behind the tree. You cannot see his face, but you're certain it's Alan.

Suddenly, loud, crashing footfalls break the silence of the night. A small party of armed and armored men bursts into the clearing. One of them steps forward and snarls.

"Alan Lumieres of Greendale," he says coldly, "you are under arrest for illegal use of occult forces and communion with occult entities. You are also convicted in absentia of obstructing a lawful search of your home through use of an infernal barrier."

"There is nothing lawful about this situation, Roderic. As for my house, if you wish to enter it, you need only *find the key*." He leans against the tree in the center of the clearing and sighs. "Still - I will come with you quietly, for the sake of the friendship I, at least, still value. Lead the way."

If the PCs wait a few moments before quietly moving into the clearing (as they will hopefully do), they will be able to avoid the soldiers. If they make too much noise while the party is still in the immediate area, however, the guards will confront them at once. Alan will gasp in dismay when he sees the heroes, and the PCs will be commanded by the captain of the guard to identify themselves, state their business and explain their relationship with Alan. If they identify themselves as the wizard's friends, or if they act in a suspicious manner, the soldiers will attack, trying to arrest them. If, however, they can come up with a convincing cover story, and avoid mentioning their friendship with Alan, they will be welcomed to Greendale and escorted

gently into town. Move directly to the middle of *Rumours*, where the PCs are taken to the Lamordian's Head.

Roderic Meadowgard, Captain of the Greendale Town Guard, Male Human Ftr10: CR 10; Medium-size humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 10d10; hp 74; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd. 20 ft.; AC 21 (+8 armor, +2 shield, +1 Dex); Atk +14/+9 melee (1d10+6/crit 17-20/x2, bastard sword); or +12/+7 ranged (1d8+4/crit x3, *mighty [Str 16] +1 composite longbow*); AL LE (enchanted) or LN (normally); SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +6, Gather Information +5, Intimidate +5, Intuit Direction +2, Jump +5, Listen +5, Search +4, Sense Motive +5

Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Exotic Weapon (bastard sword), Great Cleave, Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword)

Possessions: 34 gp, full plate armor, large steel shield, *mighty +1 composite longbow*.

Personality: tough but fair, hostile toward scholars & wizards.

Greendale Town Guards, Human Ftr4 (4): CR 4; Medium-size humanoid (5 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 4d10; hp 32; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd. 30 ft.; AC 17 (+5 armor, +1 shield, +1 Dex); Atk +9 melee (1d8+5/crit 19-20/x2, masterwork longsword); AL LE (enchanted) or LN (normally); SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +7, Jump +5, Search +2, Tumble +3

Feats: Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

Possessions: 12 gp, chainmail, masterwork longsword, small steel shield.

The PCs will hopefully exercise caution and wait until the guards have left before silently entering the clearing. Should the PCs think to search the clearing and make a successful Search check (DC 20), they will find a sigil identical to the one on Alan's letter carved into the trunk of the ancient tree. The first PC to touch this sigil or cast any spells on it (including *detect magic* or *read magic*) will have it transferred to the palm of his hand, where it will glow softly for a moment and then vanish.

Just then a soft grinding sound is heard coming from within the tree. A large section of the trunk swings aside to reveal a spiral staircase descending into the earth. This staircase leads to a secret tunnel, which

in turn leads to Alan's basement. The door will stay open for five minutes before closing automatically; it may be reopened if the PC with the sigil on his hand presses his palm against the trunk while the sigil is visible. When the PCs are in the basement, move on to *Secret Research*. If, however, they simply journey on to Greendale, they can find lodgings at the Lamordian's Head. Go on to *Rumors*.

Secret Research

You find yourselves in a huge, cavernous cellar. Tables covered with strange tomes and equipment are scattered throughout the room, and shelves line the walls. In the center of the cellar is a massive structure composed of thick, curving wooden beams. A platform stands within the structure, and an iron box is suspended above it. Several vials of crystal clear water sit on a table nearby and a tiny chest sits next to them. At the far end of the study is a set of stairs leading up to a stone door set in the ceiling.

This is Alan Lumieres' secret basement laboratory, where he was preparing to fight Credimori who has taken up residence in Greendale disguised as a wandering prophet named Roland Shadowsbane. The structure is a Mystick Cage, and the vials are filled with holy water—more than enough to fill the groove carved into the Cage for that purpose.

The chest represents a variation on the spell *Leomund's secret chest*. When the PC with the (now invisible) sigil on his hand touches it, it is replaced by a larger box containing a copy of *Van Richten's Guide to Demons*. This copy of the *Van Richten's Guide* is written in a language shared by Alan and the PCs, and aside from the detailed information provided by Van Richten himself, it contains Alan's notes and theories about the demon in Greendale. See Credimori's profile and the section entitled "The Truth" in the next section; Alan has figured most of this out—he even knows what Credimori's phylactery looks like—but he doesn't know the demon's name or its true nature. In fact, Alan believes that the fiend may be Elsepeth, a succubus described by Van Richten in his book. He admits that this new attack seems somewhat out of character for Elsepeth, but perhaps she's simply changing her tactics.

The stone door in the ceiling is magically sealed, but if the PC with the sigil holds his hand up to the door, the stone will move aside. The PCs will then be able to ascend into Alan's surface laboratory, where he conducts less volatile experiments. The door will close and seal itself behind them, but can be reopened through the use of the sigil. There is nothing else relating to Credimori in Alan's house, and the PCs

won't have much time to explore anyway. Once they enter the house proper, they'll be able to hear the townsfolk shouting outside; mere moments later, the mob will break into Alan's home.

Rumors

Suddenly, the house trembles, and the walls glow blue; this blue light surges toward the doors and windows before vanishing entirely. A clear, commanding voice speaks from the front of the house: "There. I have defeated the sorcerer's locks. Now please leave me be for a time, my friends – I have much to do."

With shouts and cheers, the townsfolk outside rush into the house, smashing bottles and toppling shelves as they go. You recognize the man at their head as the leader of the group that arrested your friend.

"Who are you?" he demands. "What are you doing in this haven of evil?"

If the PCs can come up with a valid excuse for their presence (perhaps they were Alan's prisoners, or they touched a strange object and found themselves here), the townsfolk will accept them, though they'll view any obvious wizards among them with suspicion. If the PCs cannot "prove their innocence," the mob will attack. (Roderic, the captain of the guard, is indeed at their head and is profiled in *The Adventure Begins*.)

Standard Native of Greendale, Com5: CR 5; Medium-size humanoid (5'); HD 5d4; hp 14; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +3 melee (1d6/crit x2, club); AL NE (enchanted) or N (normally); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Craft (varies) +5, Handle Animal +4, Profession +5, Swim +3

Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative

Possessions: 12 sp, various seeds, an occasional tool or two

If the PCs are accepted by the townsfolk, they will be taken to the local inn, the Lamordian's Head. This is a very simple establishment and need not be detailed extensively; the lodging and meals are of common quality and cost the standard amount. The PCs may ask any questions they wish as long as they're discreet and polite about it. If they seem to be looking for trouble, they'll get exactly that.

What the Townsfolk Know

About four months ago, a wandering prophet named Roland Shadowsbane came into town along with his disciples and began preaching his doctrine –

that humans may know peace only by shunning the wholly unnatural – namely magic and most sciences. At first the people of Greendale were wary of this new preacher, but eventually the majority of them embraced his beliefs. A simple chapel was erected, and once it was completed, the trials began. Slowly, carefully, the wizards and scholars of Greendale are being captured, tried, and executed – and the town is surely better for it. In fact, four convicts will be executed tomorrow night in front of the chapel. Alan will not be among them – his trial will take place in eight days, soon after Roland raises Captain Meadowgard to the office of priest. Roderic, Roland and two of his priests will be going out of town to conduct the ceremony in three days' time.

The Truth

Roland Shadowsbane is, of course, the demon Credimori; the "priests" that accompany him are all Children of Credimori; further, Captain Meadowgard will become one of them unless his initiation is stopped or its effects countered after the fact. The fiend has decided to begin its crusade against scholars here, and will not rest until the town is plunged wholly into the darkness of ignorance.

If or when the PCs attend the execution (and they will be encouraged to do so by the people of Greendale), move on to *The Execution*.

The Execution

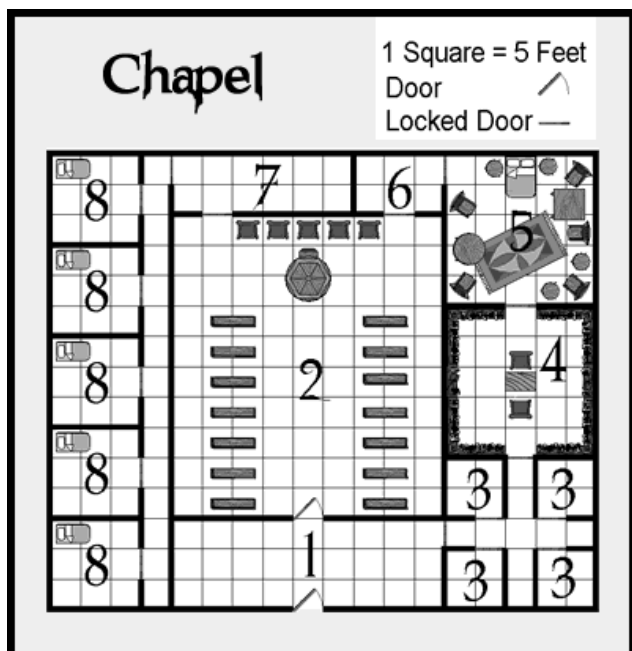
The small square in front of the chapel blazes with torchlight, and through the crowd you can see a wooden platform supporting four wooden stakes. Four men and women are tied to the stakes; books are piled at their feet. These so-called convicts seem very frightened indeed.

Suddenly, a handsome, dark-haired man clad in simple blue robes steps onto the platform, followed by four similarly attired men of varying appearance. The leader carries a torch; the rest carry gongs. The party stops, and the acolytes ring their gongs.

In a clear voice, the leader says, "And these words shalt thou keep with thee always..." The crowd responds instantly: "Thou shalt not suffer the unnatural ones to live." The leader sets fire to one of the stakes, and the man bound to it screams and writhes in intense agony. The priest does not seem to care.

This process is repeated again, and again, and again, until all of the convicts are surrounded by flame and their screams drown out all the other sounds in the area.

Trying to rescue the unfortunate scholars is a truly foolish thing to attempt; the PCs will be forced to fight



almost all of Greendale's inhabitants to get to them. If they find a way to rescue them without drawing the attention of the crowd, however, Credimori will stop at nothing to avenge the slight, making them the new targets of his campaign of hatred.

After the executions, the acolytes will retire to their beds. Credimori/Roland will linger a while longer, and the PCs will be introduced to him by one of the townsfolk. The "prophet" will look deeply into each of their faces for a moment, stiffening slightly when he gazes upon wizards and paladins, and may (at the DM's discretion) attempt to cast *perverted charm* on the PCs.

Within a few days, the heroes will have the opportunity to infiltrate and investigate the chapel when almost no one is there, as Credimori and two of his Children will leave to perform the ritual to transform Roderic. The key to the chapel map assumes that they do so. Otherwise, they will have to contend with four Children of Credimori and the demon itself within the chapel. It should be noted that all locked doors in the chapel may be picked on a successful Open Lock check (DC 25). The locks are not trapped, but they are nearly impossible to break. The doors themselves are "good wooden doors" as described on page 108 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

1. Entry Hall. A more or less empty room where patrons gather to chat as they are entering and leaving the meeting hall.

2. Meeting Hall. Where weekly services are held. There are seven rows of pews and a pulpit at the far end, with five chairs behind the pulpit.

3. Office. The offices of the lesser "priests," where they use their *charm* powers to "lead those who have gone astray back to the light." They are fairly nondescript, containing a desk, two chairs, and little else.

4. "Roland's" Office. Where Credimori itself "helps" important townspeople who have lost their faith - in actuality, it schedules regular counseling sessions with most of Greendale's prominent citizens and uses these opportunities to renew its enchantments. A desk and two chairs sit in the center of this room; shelves line the walls, sagging under the weight of hundreds of tomes. These are, in fact, blasphemous texts, and any PC who reads any of them must make a madness check (DC 25). These books leave no doubt in any character's mind that Credimori is truly evil. However, they do provide some useful information on magical theory and planar travel.

5. Credimori's Bedchamber. This is a truly luxurious room, with a canopy bed, beautiful wooden tables and chairs, and assorted gaudy trinkets. Credimori's phylactery hangs on the wall next to the bed, and any PC who read Alan's notes will recognize it for what it is at once. It's easy enough to steal, but the PCs may have to be very clever to sneak it past the townsfolk.

6. Executive Changing Room. This is where Credimori prepares for the weekly services. The room contains a water basin and several blue robes.

7. Changing Room. Where Credimori's "priests" prepare for services; contains several basins and a great many robes.

8. Priests' Rooms. Where the Children of Credimori sleep. Though there are currently four Children at the chapel, a fifth room has been set aside for Roderic, who will soon join them. The rooms contain beds, chamberpots, etc.; they also contain journals describing atrocities committed by the Children, which a brief search will turn up.

Even when nearly everyone is gone, two Children remain in the chapel, and the PCs are bound to encounter them - most likely in one of the priests' rooms.

Children of Credimori, Male Human Ftr6: CR 9; Medium-size humanoid (5'); HD 6d10; hp 45; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (+5 armor, +3 Dex); Atk +16/+11 melee (1d8+3/crit 19-20/x2, +1 longsword); SA *perverted charm* (once every half-hour), *perverted mass charm* (once per week); SQ damage reduction 15/+2, SR 18, *change self* (at will); AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 3/25.

Skills: Climb +5, Bluff +15, Climb +10, Gather Information +10, Jump +4, Listen +7, Move Silently +5

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Possessions: 120 gp, chainmail, +1 longsword

Once the PCs have stolen the phylactery, returned to Alan's basement and activated the Mystick Cage, move on to *Confronting Credimori*. Note that the heroes must use Credimori's name to summon him. They can find this in one of his Children's journals after a considerable amount of searching. If they can't find it, the Mystick Cage ritual fails to summon and trap the demon. If they try to summon Elsepeth instead, nothing happens (unless the DM is feeling particularly malicious).

Confronting Credimori

The air around you is filled with a roaring sound as the phylactery vanishes, only to be replaced by a hideous monster in the same instant. Free from the demon's illusions, you now see it for the ugly thing it is, the vilest creature ever to walk the land. This demon seems to be the physical embodiment of hatred, of prejudice; it is as if the soul of every bigot in the world has been combined to form one terrible beast.

The demon growls at you, revealing a mouth full of sharp, uneven teeth. "Who dares summon the great Credimori?" it cries - and the battle is joined!

Once Credimori is inside the Mystick Cage, all its *charms* are broken, and the townsfolk return to their senses. Even Roderic is freed: the magics transforming him into a Child of Credimori were still young, weak and easily dispelled. The older Children, cut off from their master, flee the area.

The PCs must now battle the fiend. Even without its innate magical powers, it is a formidable foe, and the battle will (and should) be very hard, especially with the Cage continually drawing on the characters' strength. Do not hesitate to kill a character if you deem it necessary, and do not show any mercy. The PCs must pay *dearly* for even the tiniest hint of victory - and most likely Credimori will simply knock them out and escape, temporarily defeated but far from destroyed.

The people of Greendale must now deal with the consequences of their actions. It will be a long time before these wounds heal, but the town can and will recover someday. Alan is freed along with the other surviving prisoners, and he, at least, forgives the townsfolk - who now see the wizard and his friends as heroes.

Recurrence

Credimori may be down, but unless it was actually killed, it's far from out. The demon is quite shaken by its recent experiences and now fears adventurers as well as scholars. The PCs may find that they're not welcome in some of the towns they come to in the coming months - and Credimori will certainly be keeping an eye on them wherever they go. The demon will return to strike at everything they hold dear, and probably at the worst possible time.

Even if Credimori is killed off, it might be able to come back. Perhaps its phylactery was not wholly destroyed (if the PCs even tried to destroy it), and even if that's not an option... well, no one really knows what the Children of Credimori *are*. Perhaps the fiend is, in a way, truly immortal, literally able to live on through its "children".

There are a number of alternative ways to bring Credimori into your campaign. First, you the demon has a lot of targets that it pursues rather frequently, so the PCs aren't limited to helping scholars.

Additionally, the Vistani gave it its name; perhaps the PCs could learn about the fiend from one of them.

Finally, there's the "strange bedfellows" idea: perhaps the PCs fall in with the Inquisition in Tepest and end up hunting down Credimori with Wyan's blessing... better the devil you know, after all.

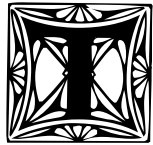
FRANÇOIS DE PENIBLE

By Stuart Turner

"It is not true that suffering ennobles the character; happiness does that sometimes, but suffering, for the most part, makes men petty and vindictive"

—W Somerset Maugham
"The Moon and Sixpence" (1919)

BIOGRAPHY



ransposition is usually a process that ends in the death of the mortal involved. For Francois de Penible, however, it is a process of transformation that will allow him to experience sensations he could never imagine in the mortal world.

Appearance

When in public, Monsieur de Penible appears every bit the aristocrat. As is the style in Dementlieu, he wears dark, tailed coats and woolen pants with white, silk shirts. The outfit is usually accompanied with a black top hat, and always includes black leather gloves. His straight, dark brown hair is kept short and parted neatly on the right.

Underneath the clothing, de Penible's skin is a collection of scars. From long white knife wounds to wrinkled burn scars, his skin speaks volumes about the pain and suffering he has inflicted upon himself. The scars on his hands are particularly dense, the white marks forming a tight network of lines that would defy the skills of any palm-reader. Francois' face is clear of scars, however, and is the only part of his body that he allows to be uncovered in society.

Phylactery

As Francois' transposition is not yet complete, he does not have a phylactery.

Francois de Penible

Human Male Ari5 [Transpossessed with Kyton (Devil)]: CR 5; Medium sized human (evil); HD 5d8+15; 38 hp; Init +0; Spd 30 feet; AC 18 (+8 natural); Atk 2 claws melee (1d6+1); SA Gift of chains; SQ Damage reduction 5/+1, cold resistance 10, darkvision 60'; SR 10; AL NE, SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +10, Diplomacy +10, Escape Artist +8, Listen +9, Profession (writer) +9, Ride +8, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9; Iron Will, Toughness.

Reality Wrinkle: None

Land-Based Powers: None

Corruption Index: 0



Background

Francois de Penible grew up comfortably in a well-off family in the city of Mortigny, in Richemulot. A man of thought rather than action, Francois was not typical of the practical Richemulot residents, and often found himself being an intellectual observer of his people.

The key conclusion that Francois came to was that the people of Richemulot were entirely too comfortable with their lives. By failing to experience the hardship and pain that he had heard of in neighboring lands such as Falkovnia, they had become complacent and unappreciative of the comfortable lives they led. When hard times *did* fall on someone, they were usually unable to cope with the trauma and found themselves forever ruined. Francois saw this is a terrible flaw in the character of his contemporaries, and so set about educating people as to the fullness and richness of life's experiences.

Francois began writing to support this cause, attempting to explain that pain, sorrow and other negative experiences were indeed worth experiencing, if only to increase enjoyment of the rest of existence. He spoke at functions and dinner parties, attempting to convince others that suffering had its own virtues.

Frustration soon set in, however, as he began to realize that the polite applause and kind words he received were the extent of his audience's reaction to his ideas.

Convinced of his view, Francois set off to travel and experience for himself some of the suffering he had heard about. After a brief sojourn in Falkovnia (which only strengthened his resolve) he reached Port-a-Lucine. Here, he was shocked by the dichotomy of the society—rich aristocrats living side-by-side with the poor and destitute, the former seemingly oblivious to the pain and suffering of the latter. He decided that this would be where his views would have a chance of prevailing.

Francois quickly insinuated himself into the Dementlieu aristocracy, and began presenting his views. Much to his pleasure, he quickly became popular among the gentry and was increasingly asked to participate in gatherings, dinner parties, and balls. He began writing and releasing books on his viewpoint, which became the fashionable interest of the season.

It was not long before frustration returned, however, as it dawned on Francois that the praise he received was nothing but a case of “the emperor's new clothes.” Though many had bought his works, few had actually read the content. On talking to professed supporters, he discovered they had done nothing to discover the depth of pain or anguish among the lower classes. Talk of pain had become a fashionable

plaything of the wealthy to help assuage any lingering sense of guilt they possessed.

Since the beginning of his crusade, however, a sinister change had been occurring in Francois' mindset. His strong belief in his views, and stronger desire to see his work have an impact, led to him find other outlets for his passions. In his frustration, he decided to prove his theories and began to inflict pain upon himself. Initially his experimentation was fairly minor—cutting his own skin, or holding his arm over a candle—but some careful acquisitions made in Falkovnia led to experimentation with various stronger forms of self-inflicted torture.

Had his secretive pursuits ended with masochism, this story would have ended here. Unfortunately, increasing annoyance with the aristocracy of Port-a-Lucine led him to take the next, dangerous step into sadism. He became forceful and brutal with his lovers, and arranged unfortunate painful accidents for his friends—always making sure he would be present to experience their pain.

Francois' revelation came when he discovered a volume of the *Madrigorian* in one of the vast unread libraries of his colleagues. Within, it spoke of the “masters of pain”—beings that brought unknowable agony upon those who deserved such an experience. It also described a device of summoning which could be used to contact these beings and call upon their services. Francois began seeking the device pictured in the *Madrigorian*. After months of search, he acquired it through an underhand deal with a Falkovnian smuggler, and set about carrying out the rituals described in the *Madrigorian*.

Francois has now carried out three rituals using the device (see “The Kyton Device” below) and has learned that it is actually transforming him into one of these “masters of pain,” to be taken to their realm when the transformation is complete. Yet as his mind has become more and more twisted in pain, his heart has become more and more infatuated with a young lady—Louise Chantelle. Knowing that he will be taken from Port-a-Lucine upon completion of the rituals, Francois has decided there is only one solution his heart will accept. He will have to take Louise with him.

Personality

Francois was once a thought-provoking intellectual, but the transformation he is undergoing has turned him into a cruel-hearted and sadistic monster. Although he rationalizes his actions with the same logic he used when he began his crusade, he no longer truly believes in any of it. Instead, he now believes that pain and terror are cleansing experiences that must be felt by all.

FRANCOIS DE PENIBLE

In Dementlieu society, de Penible is able to hide behind the philosophy he espouses and the social skills he acquired before his transformation began. To the casual listener, he is a passionate, driven man who is committed to the education of the wealthy about the plight of the poor. His conversation rarely strays too far from the subjects of his writings, and so those who talk to him frequently can find him quite a bore.

Only those who get to know him well begin to see his true nature. Francois will fixate on any story revolving around pain, and constantly ask the teller about his or her experiences. He will ask unsettling questions about suffering, seemingly drifting off in reverie while listening to the answers.

Combat

Francois de Penible has completed the third stage of the transformation into a kyton using the *kyton device* (described below). Through this process, he has gained a number of the abilities and defenses of a kyton, as well as some of the techniques of kytons.

Francois prefers to avoid direct combat unless he is confident in his ability to dominate his opponents. His preference, in line with the increasing kyton influence, is to induce fear and terror in his opponents using the *gift of chains* before a confrontation. How best to do this will depend upon the subject, but will usually include stalking followed by a long, suffering torture while Francois continually reasserts his dominance over the subject.

Claws (Ex): Once a day, Francois has the ability to grow barbs and hooks from his hands as a melee weapon, giving him two attacks each delivering 1d6+1 hit points of damage.

Gift of Chains (Su): De Penible's preferred method of attack uses the kytons' *gift of chains*, an ability that gives him the ability to completely control the movement of any chains within a 20-foot radius. He can make any such chains grow in length by as much as 15 feet, and sprout barbs and razor-sharp slivers of metal. If attacking with these chains, he gets two attacks per round at his normal attack bonus, inflicting 1d8+1 points of damage each.

Natural armour (Ex): Because of the chains infused into de Penible's body, he has a natural armor class bonus of +8.

The Kyton Device

The *kyton device* is an artifact that comes from the third layer of Hell. There, the city of Jangling Hiter is ruled by the kytons, a mysterious race of humanoid devils that are almost completely wrapped in barbed chains, leaving only their lower face and neck exposed.

The *kyton device* is the little-known method of reproduction for these sadistic creatures.

The device is a ring of blackened iron, almost 2 feet in diameter. Its outer edge is sharp and jagged, from which numerous metal barbs and sharp slivers extend. At three evenly spaced points around the circle, a small loop of metal is attached to the ring, providing a means of attachment. Within the ring, a web of linked chains cross each other, and join so tightly that almost no movement in the chains is possible. At the center of the device, the chains form the edges of a pentagon.

When an individual uses the *kyton device* in the correct fashion, it begins a process very similar to that of transposition, as described in *Van Richten's Guide to Demons*. As with transposition, the subject gradually takes on the features and abilities of a kyton. The difference, however, is that the individual is not swapping places with an existing fiend—he or she is instead being transformed into a kyton themselves. At the completion of the process (when the individual has reached Stage Five), the *kyton device* becomes a very small portal to the city of Jangling Hiter in the Nine Hells, through which the new kyton is drawn.

This device is, then, one of very few means of escaping the Demiplane of Dread. It will only work on a fully transformed individual, however, so the cost of escape is high.

To use the device, the subject must complete a diabolical ritual. While most texts from the prime planes describe hugely elaborate requirements, involving sacrificial animals, black candles and ancient verses, in truth there are only a few basic components to the ritual that must be completed:

The *kyton device* must be suspended horizontally, six feet off the floor, using the three metal loops around the ring.

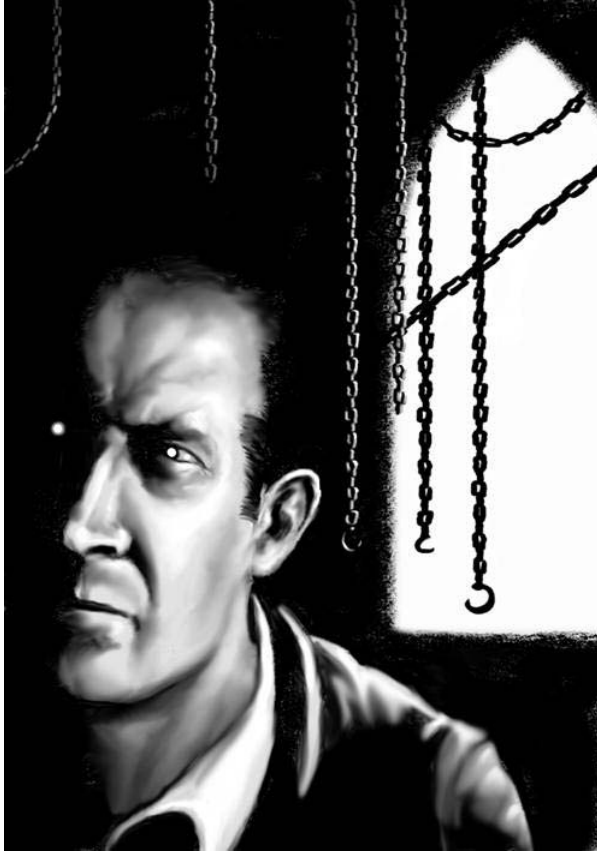
A subject must sit beneath the device, and endure at least two hours of painful torture (not necessarily willingly).

No individual may perform the ritual more often than once every two months. To attempt the ritual more often is invariably fatal.

As the ritual reaches its climax, the small pentagon at the center of the Device begins to glow an unearthly gray, at which point barbed chains will leap out from the center of the pentagon and attach themselves to the subject. The subject is suspended from the device for a full minute, during which he or she gazes directly into the *kyton device*, witnessing all manner of unspeakable things. At the end, the chains retract and the subject falls to the floor, unconscious.

Each time an individual performs a ritual using the device, he or she moves one stage further through the five stages of the transformation (comparable to the five stages of transposition). The effects of each stage

FRANCOIS DE PENIBLE



of the transformation are described below. Note that the abilities are cumulative as the transposition progresses.

Stage 1: The subject gains the ability, once per day, to grow barbs and slivers of metal from the palms and fingers of their hand, granting two attacks per round of 1d6 damage each. This is an extraordinary ability. They also gain darkvision to a distance of 60’.

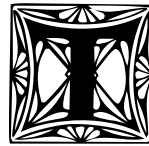
Stage 2: The subject’s body becomes infused with the chains that will later dominate their appearance, and so is granted AC 18. At the DM’s discretion, any attack that *almost* hits can actually strike the subject, but the blow bounces off with a sharp metallic clink. A minor wound may be opened in the subject’s skin, exposing a link of chain, which may be grounds for a horror check for the attacker. The subject also gains cold resistance 10.

Stage 3: The subject gains the *Gift of Chains*—the supernatural ability to control any chains by will alone. The ability extends to all chains in a 20-foot radius, and gives the subject complete control over the actions of those chains. The subject can even make chains grow by up to 15 feet, and sprout barbs and blades. When attacking with this ability, the subject gets two attacks, each capable of inflicting 1d8 points of damage. The subject also gains spell resistance 10, and damage resistance 5/+1.

Stage 4: The transformation becomes much more obvious at this stage, with at least 40% of the subject’s body becoming wrapped in barbed chains. The subject gains immunity to cold and *regeneration* at the rate of 1 hit point per round. He or she also gains the ability to reattach severed limbs within 5 rounds; chains lash out from the subject’s stump, burrow into the severed limb, and literally drag it back into place. The barbed chains hanging from the subject’s limbs grant him or her two melee attacks per round, doing 1d8 damage each. The subject’s damage resistance increases to 10/+2.

Stage 5: The subject becomes a kyton. A portal to the Nine Hells is opened, and the newly created devil is sucked through.

DARK DESIRES



his scenario is designed to take place as part of a larger arc in a campaign. Ways of introducing the characters of Francois de Penible and Louise Chantelle to your campaign are discussed below under

Background, followed by a short scenario that introduces the tragic relationship between these two NPCs. It is, however, entirely possible to use this as a stand-alone adventure with a few small adjustments to the introductions of each of the major characters.

The adventure is designed for three to five characters of level 2–4. While notionally set in the city of Port-a-Lucine, the adventure could be placed anywhere in Ravenloft or any other campaign setting, with minor changes.

Adventure Setup

The DM can obtain the greatest impact from this scenario if Francois and Louise have been introduced to the heroes well before the events described under **The Adventure Begins**. A level of personal attachment to the two NPCs will make the revelations regarding Francois’ evil plans all the more horrific and powerful.

Monsieur de Penible should be introduced to the heroes in a neutral fashion. It is important not to forecast de Penible’s evil nature too early, for this will lessen the impact of the revelations to come. Instead, he should be portrayed as an aristocratic intellectual with some curious ideas. Possible ways for the heroes to encounter Monsieur de Penible in the game months leading up to this scenario include the following:

- ❖ The heroes may meet de Penible at an aristocratic function. Monsieur de Penible should be introduced by a trusted friend of the heroes as “one of the few educated men of Richemulot,” and may

FRANCOIS DE PENIBLE

discuss his opinion that the aristocracy “don’t truly understand suffering they way the poor do.”

- ❖ During a dinner, function, or visit to friends in Port-a-Lucine, conversation may turn to the latest work by de Penible, “The Pain of Plenty,” in which he discusses the inability of the well-off to truly appreciate their position, as they fail to understand the trials and tribulations of those less wealthy.
- ❖ Monsieur de Penible may become a good friend of another NPC well known to the heroes, creating opportunities for further encounters.

At this stage, de Penible has barely begun his transformation into a kyton, and so there should be little opportunity for any hero to pick up on the changes he’s going through.

Louise Chantelle is best introduced to the heroes in a social situation. She should be portrayed as a kind-hearted, compassionate, innocent young lady who has only recently made her debut on the social scene. Ideally, she can be a potential love interest for one of the heroes, which will even further increase the impact of the revelations to come. Alternatively, you can substitute a female NPC already well liked by the heroes, instead of introducing a new character to your campaign.

Some potential methods of introducing Louise include the following:

- ❖ Louise’s wealthy father, Gerard, may be a merchant, landowner, or moneylender whom the heroes must interact with during other adventures.
- ❖ The heroes may encounter Louise at a cultural function, such as the opera or at an art gallery.
- ❖ She may be encountered in the hospice where she often works, demonstrating her great compassion.

In the early stages, it is best to ensure that Francois and Louise are encountered separately, so they are not immediately associated with each other. As the time for this adventure approaches, however, it is appropriate to drop some hints to the players about the growing relationship between the two. At this point, de Penible has completed the third stage of his transformation, and has fallen in love with Louise. Louise has, in turn, begun to fall for de Penible. At this point, she has no idea of the depths of his depravity. Instead, she believes he is a tortured soul with incomparable understanding for the pain and suffering of the poor, a cause she greatly relates to.

Some potential clues to this relationship might include in the following:

- ❖ At a function or party that both Francois and Louise attend, both leave early (but separately).

- ❖ If the heroes are good friends of Louise, she may discuss one of de Penible’s writings with them, commenting on the “depth of understanding he obviously possesses.”

The following adventure takes place not long after Francois de Penible completes the third stage of his transformation. Knowing that his transformation is only months away from completion, he is very aware of his need to introduce Louise to the wonders of the *kyton device*, so that she may join him in the worlds beyond.

The Adventure Begins

At the start of this adventure, the heroes are in Port-a-Lucine. The heroes become involved in the affair between Monsieur de Penible and Louise when Louise’s father, Gerard Chantelle (Male Human Ari2), contacts them. Gerard’s note is short and to the point:

I wish your assistance in an urgent matter regarding my daughter, Louise. Please contact me at 17 Rue Messier as soon as possible. Your discretion is appreciated.

Yours sincerely,
Gerard Chantelle

Upon visiting Gerard’s home, the heroes will find that Louise is not home, but Gerard hurriedly ushers them inside with a concerned look on his face. After a few quick introductions (if necessary) Gerard will nervously relate his concerns to the heroes.

“I am gravely concerned about the welfare of my daughter, and would like you to follow her. You see, in recent weeks I have been unsure of Louise’s whereabouts many times. When pressed, she would say she had been working at the hospice or some such—but I know for a fact that this has not always been the truth.

“Two nights ago I became even more concerned when I saw long, red scratches on the back of her shoulder. Again, I asked, but she just adjusted her dress and claimed it was nothing.

“Last night, she did not come home.

“I believe she is seeing someone of whom I would not approve. I want you to find out what ruffian is doing this to her. I swear, if she’s fallen for one of those brutish peasants she insists on treating with such kindness . . .

“I’m sure you can understand that discretion is required. I will not allow our family to be scandalized by her misguided affections.”

Gerard's anger is obvious, but contained. He has managed to convince himself that Louise's compassion for the poor as led her to enter a relationship with one of the lower classes—something he does not approve of in the slightest. He expects the heroes to investigate Louise's situation out of their friendship with her, but if pressed he is willing to pay for their services.

On questioning Gerard further, the heroes can learn the following:

- ❖ Louise regularly assists at the hospice run by the Church of Hala among the laborer's tenements of Port-a-Lucine.
- ❖ Gerard regards her constant work with the poor as a sign of weakness.
- ❖ She has taken to locking her room when she leaves the house. Their cleaner keeps complaining that she has not been able to clean Louise's room.

This news will most likely lead the heroes to one of two actions. If they choose to investigate Louise's bedroom, see **The Bedroom** below. If they choose to visit the hospice of Hala, turn to **The Hospice**. It is quite possible that the heroes will think of alternative options, such as talking to Louise's friends, or the servants of the Chantelles. The DM is encouraged to go along with these ideas, and generate encounters as appropriate to the situation. As long as the heroes are eventually directed towards the abattoir just outside the city walls, the exact method of their investigation is not important.

The Bedroom

The door to Louise's room is locked, but can easily be opened by a successful Open Locks roll. Inside, the room is just as one would expect any young lady's room to be—beautiful material drapes the bed, and delicate trinkets grace her bedside table and desk. The room is neat and tidy, with no obvious signs of unusual activity.

There are two drawers in the desk. The first is easily opened, and contains writing materials and paper, along with some ribbons and jewelry. The second drawer has a simple lock, which can be picked with an open locks check (DC 19). Inside are two items: a diary and a barbed fishhook.

Upon inspection, the fishhook has traces of blood on the point. If the heroes are searching the room in great detail, they will find small traces of blood on the floor of the room. If the heroes read the diary, they find a series of entries towards the end where Louise expresses her growing attraction towards a man she met only a few weeks ago—Francois de Penible. The last entry, dated only two days ago, is the most disturbing:

I left the hospice early today to meet with him. He took me back to his residence, which turned out to be only a small, squalid room not far from the hospice. I will have to apologize to him for my actions, however. He said he had something to show me, and removed his overcoat revealing layers upon layers of scars and wounds all over his arms! I held my hand to my mouth and shuddered at the bloody, twisted sight, and could only flee his room with shock!

As I ponder upon it now, though, I wonder if this could explain his great compassion for those who endure great suffering? Can one really gain such understanding from such horrific experiences, as he must have endured? While the sight turned my stomach, I must admit to being intrigued. I will have to return and ask his forgiveness for being such an easily frightened woman.

There is no mention of the exact whereabouts of Monsieur Penible's residence.

The Hospice

The heroes can easily find the hospice, run by the Church of Hala, among the laborer's tenements of Port-a-Lucine. Nestled among the claustrophobic accommodations of the poor, the hospice attends to those who cannot afford treatment from the rich doctors of the aristocracy.

Upon asking for assistance, the heroes will be directed to Sister Eliza, who is happy to answer their questions regarding Louise. With some probing, the heroes can learn the following:

Louise has been a valued assistant for some years at the hospice. Some had even been hoping that she might join the Church of Hala.

In recent weeks, she has been less frequent in her visits to the hospice. When asked why, she has been distinctly evasive.

If the heroes raise suspicions that a violent man is courting her, Sister Eliza will note that Louise did visit yesterday to collect some of her belongings. At that time, one of the sisters noticed a small, but apparently deep, cut in her hand. Assistance was offered, but Louise said she had no time and left.

If Monsieur de Penible is mentioned, Sister Eliza will note that he lives locally, for he occasionally brings wounded peasants to the hospice. She also notes that Monsieur de Penible must have an interest in the healing arts, for he often remains at the hospice and watches the treatment of such patients. She is able to give the heroes directions to his house, should they request them.

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The de Penible Residence

Whether from the information from Sister Eliza, or from another source, the heroes will most likely make their way to the home of Monsieur de Penible, in the hope of either finding Louise, or searching it to get an idea about her whereabouts.

Francois' residence is actually nothing more than one of the squalid rooms in the laborer's tenements, a secret he has kept well in recent weeks. This sorry state has not always been the case, but he quickly learned that his activities would draw much less attention in this quarter of the city. Francois resides on the second floor of the tenement building, in a single-room apartment. The door to the room is locked. No other residents of the building will answer the heroes' questions, preferring instead to close their doors and remain out of harm's way. Few, if any, are aware of the truth behind Francois.

The room contains very little in the way of furniture, and offers very little sign of the wealth de Penible must have once enjoyed. A single, unmade bed sits underneath the small window. A range of good-quality clothing is draped over a pair of simple chairs in the room, looking quite out of place in this squalor. A simple table at the other end of the room is covered with scattered pieces of paper, quills, candles and oddly shaped pieces of metal. The metallic fragments range from simple razor blades to more complex spring-loaded devices with jagged jaws. Close inspection reveals traces of dried blood on almost all of these devices, and on the wooden floorboards.

The parchments and paper lying about the table contain all manner of sketches made by Monsieur de Penible. While many are unintelligible, others clearly depict chains attached to human flesh, sharp barbs digging through skin. Heroes searching through the documents will soon find one that catches their attention—a sketch of a woman that is clearly Louise

Chantelle. Underneath, he has scrawled, "I know you will join me on the other side . . ." The next piece of paper contains a sketch of a woman kneeling, her hands bound by what appears to be chains, looking upwards with an expression of agony on her face. Drawn above her is an image of the *kyton device*.

Elsewhere in the paper lying on his desk, the heroes can find a map of Port-a-Lucine, on which a cross is inked on top of an abattoir, just inside the city gates. This is where Francois has decided to attempt to begin Louise's transformation, so that she may join him on "the other side."

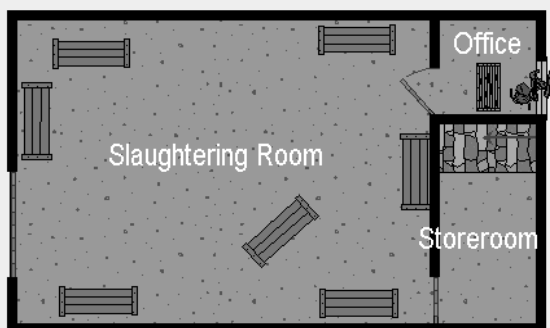
Ceremony of Suffering

When running this section of the adventure, careful attention should be paid to generating the correct mood. While the nature of de Penible's tortures is certainly disturbing, the true horror of this situation is Louise's apparent interest in pursuing the same transformations that de Penible has endured. The focus should be saving Louise from damnation, rather than the destruction of de Penible. De Penible knows that the maximum amount of terror will be extracted from the heroes by letting them see her transform, so in his arrogance he will not confront them until they have found the cellar where the ritual is being performed.

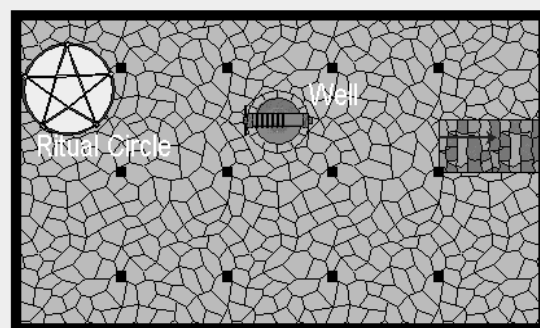
If the heroes approach the abattoir and knock to gain entry through the large doors at the front, they will receive no answer. The owner has been tortured and murdered by de Penible so that he might use the building in peace. If the building surrounds are searched, the heroes will find that the shutters on the back window (leading into the office) have been smashed open. Otherwise, the heroes can open the front doors with a simple Open Locks roll (although there is a significant chance of the PC being noticed if this is done, since the building faces a well-used street).

A map of the abattoir can be seen below. It is a simple building, consisting of a large slaughtering

Abattoir (Ground Level)



Abattoir (Cellar)



room, a storage room, a simple office and a cellar. The strong stench of stale blood and meat permeates every inch of the abattoir. This foul stench results in a –2 penalty to all horror checks made within the building.

The Slaughtering Room: This large, open space is obviously designed to allow carts to bring in livestock, and to allow carts to be loaded with carcasses for delivery to butchers. Chains hang from various locations in the ceiling, ending in large, rounded hooks from which meat can be hung. The room is currently empty of livestock, but several carcasses still swing from the ceiling, awaiting salting. Large cleavers and knives rest on the benches distributed around the room. Each is stained with what must be dried blood, as is the stone floor of the room. Flies buzz lazily around some of the more recent pools of dried blood. The door to the office is open, but the storage room door is closed.

The Office: Containing little more than a desk and a chair, this is where de Penible assaulted the owner of the abattoir. There are obvious signs of a struggle here—the chair has been overturned, the candles knocked over the table, and the shutters smashed into pieces.

The Storage Room: This room is primarily used for the storage of meat for short periods, and thus it has no windows. Numerous chains hang from the ceiling at various heights, many of them bearing the carcasses of cows or sheep. On the other side of the room, stairs lead down into a cellar.

Despite the lack of a breeze, the chains begin to swing lazily as the heroes enter the room, creating an eerie jingle as hooks strike each other. Heroes that press forward towards the stairway will be surprised by a grisly sight swinging towards them, for behind some of the carcasses the abattoir owner has been strung up on his own meat hooks. Hooks pierce his two palms, his limp body dangling between. His skin shows hundreds of cuts, as if razors had flayed his flesh—a sign of the torture de Penible must have inflicted upon him before his death. The first hero to come face-to-face with this sight is a candidate for a horror check.

As the heroes pass through this room, de Penible will use his *gift of chains* to make a single attack against them. The DM should make a single attack roll against one of the heroes. If successful, the hero unexpectedly finds one of the chains brushing up against his or her open skin, the jagged edges tearing painful cuts in their flesh (for only 1d6 points of damage).

The Cellar: The stairs lead down into a cellar that sits beneath the entire abattoir building. Columns are evenly spaced throughout the room, and are surrounded by a range of rusty, metallic detritus, from old butcher's knives and cleavers to devices used for slaughtering animals and coils of chains. In the middle

of the room, an old well leads down to the underground rivers of Port-a-Lucine.

No light is admitted from outside the cellar, and as the heroes enter the room, the only light source other than their own is at the other end of the cellar, where a macabre scene is revealed:

At the other end of the room, three long chains stretch from the walls of the cellar, holding a black, metallic circle taught about six feet above the floor. On the ground, a circle of five-foot radius is marked out with red candles, each of which is wrapped in a chain over which the red wax drips and melts.

Kneeling in the middle of the circle is Louise, caked in sweat, her face pointed upwards towards the black metallic device that hangs above. Her arms are held out before her, suspended only inches above two tall, red candles. Even from here you can see the angry, reddened flesh just above the flames. Piercing the skin on each of her forearms are two large hooks, attached to a chain that reaches down to two metal weights lightly resting on the ground. As you watch, she shudders and lifts her arms slightly from the burning flames—only to make the hooks pull sharply at her flesh, a trail of blood dripping down the rusty chain.

As she peers upwards, her irregular breath reminds you of sobbing—or is that laughter?

This sight is worthy of a horror check, particularly for any hero potentially romantically involved with Louise. She has almost completed her two-hour ordeal, and is near the end of her physical endurance. Five rounds from this point, the *kyton device* will begin to activate, and attempt to infuse Louise with the essence of the kytons.

Most likely, the heroes will rush to Louise's aid. As they approach Louise, however, she will see them and beg them not to interfere:

"No, please—I . . . I beg you, don't come closer! I have . . . so much to learn from this!"

Louise's glazed eyes seem to both confirm her wish and yearn for escape at the same time. Her face is a twisted mesh of pain, determination and revelation that is nothing less than confusing.

Monsieur de Penible (who has been hiding among the shadows and detritus at the other end of the cellar) will shortly make his presence known by using his *gift of chains* to attack one of the heroes. One of the chains hanging from the walls will leap out and extend towards one of the heroes (typically the one that presents the most obvious physical threat), growing sharp slivers of metal and barbs as it attempts to strike

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any exposed flesh. Upon gathering the attention of the heroes, the corrupted aristocrat will say the following:

“Shocked, are you? Shocked that pain can be such an inviting lesson to those of us willing to be taught?” The man before you begins to roll up his sleeve, revealing an arm networked with scars, angry red burn marks, and scabby wounds. “Louise is a wonderful student.” The man’s hands begin to drip blood, as shiny metal points seem to push themselves through his scarred skin. His voice wavers with the pain, but he continues. “We will show them that pain is the only lesson that needs to be learned . . .”

The heroes’ best chance of saving Louise from transformation is to prevent her pain, thus nullifying one of the requirements for the ritual’s success. This could be done by casting *cure light wounds* on her (or similar), or simply by extinguishing the candles under her arms, allowing her to rest. However:

The heroes must be delicate when dealing with Louise—forcing her into any sudden movements will make the hooks tear her flesh, sending her into waves of agony just before going unconscious. If this occurs, she will still have fulfilled the requirements of the ritual, and the transformation will continue after five rounds.

De Penible will obviously attempt to prevent the heroes from reaching Louise by attacking them with his chains—this may include using the chains to trip them up or restrain them.

De Penible will use whatever means possible to keep Louise in pain and thus complete the ritual. If her pain is somehow prevented, de Penible will use one of his chain attacks to try and snare her and keep her in agony.

The heroes may believe that the circle of candles has an impact on the ritual, but destroying these items will have no effect on the transformation.

If the ritual reaches completion, the pentagon at the center of the *kyton device* will glow an odd gray, bathing the room in a dull light. This is the last opportunity for a hero to save Louise—if she is pushed out of the circle, or if the hero shields her with his body, that hero will instead be the subject of the ritual. If not, Louise will be subjected to the painful events described earlier under “The Kyton Device,” and will have begun her journey into hell.

If the battle turns against de Penible, he will attempt to flee either into the well (and into the underground waterways) or via the stairs into the abattoir. If fleeing through the building, his ability to maneuver around chains without any loss in movement rate should give him a head start from the heroes.

Louise Chantelle, Female Human Aril: CR: 1; Medium-sized human; HD 1d8+1; hp 9; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d2 natural weapons); AL NG; SV Fort +0 Ref +0 Will +2; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +5, Heal +4, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +7, Perform +5, Ride +4, Spot +3; Alertness, Skill focus (Heal).

Recurrence

There are many opportunities for the characters and events in this scenario to lead to future adventures. If the heroes search the cellar of the abattoir, they will find the copy of the *Madrigorian* de Penible used to perform his ceremonies, which will also explain what he is attempting to achieve through this sadistic torture. The heroes will undoubtedly be keen to track down this monster and prevent him from completing his goal.

If Francois de Penible has escaped, then he still has two more rituals to perform before he escapes Ravenloft to the lower planes, and he will certainly be determined in his efforts to complete the process. If the heroes have taken ownership of the *kyton device*, de Penible will attempt to reclaim his most prized possession.

If Louise has been saved from the first stage of transformation, de Penible is unlikely to simply give up on the love of his life. As he works towards completing the fourth and fifth stages of transformation, he will continue to try and find ways to turn her to his viewpoint.

If the heroes were unable to save Louise, and she has begun the terrible transformation into a kyton, she is resting precariously on the edge of damnation. The evil of the kytons has already begun to infuse her, and warp her sense of compassion into anger and hatred. Can the heroes find a way to reverse the transformation before she learns too much about the ways of pain? The rules for Redemption in *Van Richten’s Guide to Demons* can be used for this process.

Similarly, if one of the heroes has suffered the first stage of transformation, redemption will most likely be sought—unless that hero is already on a darker path . . . For more information on the planar city of Jangling Hiter, see the PLANESCAPE® *Planes of Law* boxed set.

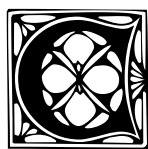
KRAXZAT

By Andrew Hauptman

He jests at scars, who never felt a wound.

—Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

BIOGRAPHY



Children can be both a blessing and a frustration to their parents. Sadly, some parents experience only frustration, anger and disappointment with their children, and reply with emotional or physical violence. Others—monsters in a very real sense of the word—prey on children, deliberately and maliciously torturing the young. In the Lands of the Mists, adults who take advantage of their greater strength and status to harm those under their care are all too common.

Who will protect the children from their abusers? Who will ensure those who wrong the innocent are suitably punished?

Appearance

In his natural form Keegan stands 7 feet tall. He is large and massively well built. He always wears a black cape and double-breasted suit. A tall black top hat lies perched atop his disheveled, mop-top of blood-red hair, with the brow pulled down almost low enough to cover his pale, pupil-less eyes. He has pitch-black skin that is pockmarked and scaly, with abnormally long, pointed ears that jut out to the sides of his hat. Even at his towering height he seems slightly hunchbacked.

In his human form Keegan stands just over 5 feet tall, with a long gray beard and mustache. He dresses in a simple gray tunic and pants, with fancy high-topped boots.

Phylactery

Since Keegan is half-human, he does not have a phylactery in the same sense as full-blooded demons.

His mother's locket, however, serves as an object of fascination to him. He is obsessed with this last reminder of his mother and keeps it on his person at all times. When he is alone he will spend hours staring at it in fascination, trying to feel some sense of the mother he never knew. If this item is ever stolen, he will not rest until he recovers it. He is able to track the locket as if using a *locate object* spell.

Kraxzat

Male Half-human/half-fiend Sor6: CR 8; Medium-sized Outsider (chaotic, evil); HD 6d4+18; 36 hp; Init +4 (+4 Dex); Spd 30 feet; AC 18 (+4 Dex, +1 natural, +2 *bracers of armor*); Atk +7 melee (2 claws 1d4+4), +2 melee (bite 1d6+4); SA Spells, spell-like abilities; SQ Spells, spell-like abilities, darkvision 60 ft., acid, cold, electricity and fire resistance 20, immune to poison, Powers checks; AL CE, SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 20, Con 17, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 19.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +13, Climb +13, Concentration +13, Hide +14, Intimidate +13, Move Silently +14, Pick Pockets +10, Profession (merchant) +5, Sense Motive +10; Back to the Wall, Combat Casting, Spell Focus (evocation).

Reality Wrinkle: 12,000'

Land-Based Powers: None

Corruption Index: 0

Background

A few years ago a lone woman turned up at the steps of a monastery, already in labor and ready to give birth. Her son was born, but at the cost of his mother's life. The monks decided to raise the child themselves, and gave the boy his mother's locket as a keepsake. A few years later the cambion's inhuman nature started to manifest. The monks tried to kill the child, who fled the monastery. The cambion child felt hatred at the monks' betrayal, and swore that he would never trust any adult again.

The cambion relocated to the streets of Karg (or another city as needed by the DM) where he used his developing powers to create for himself the human guise of a street urchin. He ran the streets with other young orphans, gleefully stealing what he needed to survive. He was popular with the other orphans

KRAXZAT

thanks to his powers, and led a street gang, the Blood Demons. The cambion assumed the demonic-sounding alias “Kraxzat” to make others fear him.

The success of the Blood Demons drew the attention of other gangs who were stronger and deadlier. One day Kraxzat returned home from a successful thieving venture to find all of his gang killed after long, slow torture. Filled with fury, Kraxzat went after his friends’ killers. None escaped alive.

Eventually, driven by his murderous lust and his desire to protect children, he became a dark fatherly figure. The Dark Powers granted him new powers to aid him in his work. Eventually the cambion met the real Keegan Greymane, a humanitarian and retired adventurer. Kraxzat killed Keegan and took his place. He continued Keegan’s work in a darker vein, running his orphanage by day and leading his “Wild Pack” by night (see **The Wild Children**, below).

However, Kraxzat’s power came with a price. He was transformed forever into an adult form, a fitting torture for one who hates all grown-ups.

Personality

Kraxzat lives for revenge, pure and simple. Every night he leads the Wild Pack on wild sprees, attacking any adults they find wandering the streets (usually soldiers or vagrants), or breaking into the homes of adults who are known to mistreat children. However, his first concern is still for his children, and he will do anything, even endanger his own life, to protect or save them.

Kraxzat lives in Keegan’s orphanage by day, coming out at night to lead the Wild Pack on their wilding sprees as his revenge upon grown-ups, whether they deserve it or not. Ironically, the only way he can protect the children he cares for is by drawing forth the Wild Children and using them to attack the adults who torment and harm the children, thus bringing them into further danger. If one of the Wild Children is injured or “killed” he takes swift revenge, fighting to the death.

Combat

Kraxzat is a vicious combatant, using a mixture of spells and natural abilities to cow his opponents. He glories in the torture and death of adults, and becomes only more malignant when he encounters a superior force.

Despite his undeniably black soul, however, Kraxzat cares deeply for his wild children, and will never intentionally let them come to harm. Should anyone kill one of the demon’s charges, they will be

hunted relentlessly until the Wild Pack is properly avenged.

Spells Known (cast 6/7/6/4): 0—*arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, flare, ghost sound, resistance, read magic*; 1—*burning hands, chill touch, enlarge, grease*; 2—*blur, Melf’s acid arrow*; 3—*vampiric touch*. Save DC is 14 + spell level.

Spell-like abilities (Sp): At will—*locate object*; 3 times per day—*darkness*; once per day—*desecrate, polymorph self*. All spells are cast as a 6th level sorcerer. Save DC is 14 + spell level.

Powers Checks (Su): Kraxzat has drawn the attention of the Dark Powers through his vile manipulation of children and the corruption of their innocence. Although such behavior is common among demons, Kraxzat genuinely believes that he is protecting them, and this willful blindness has drawn their dark gaze.

Three times per day, Kraxzat can *charm children* (as *charm person*, although it only affects children of any humanoid race). For one hour after he uses this ability, adults feel a faint unease around the demon, adding 1 to his OR. He is also granted the ability to *create wild children*, although his touch makes all non-*charmed* normal children make a Fear save (DC 13).

The Wild Children

Wild children are the sad legacies of society’s cruelty towards children, warped by their suffering and demonic attention into vicious avengers. Kraxzat has an innate ability to sense any child within his reality wrinkle that has suffered abuse or neglect. He seeks out the child, *charms* them, and offers them the power to avenge themselves on their tormentors. The child is led on a violent rampage that culminates with the death of their tormentor; the blood of the child’s victim seals the pact with the demon and transforms them into a wild child.

During the day, a wild child is indistinguishable from any normal child, both in appearance and abilities. At night, however, the wild child’s tarnished soul rises from its comatose body as a willing minion for use in Kraxzat’s violent schemes. The soul is an emaciated, bestial version of the child’s normal form, with sickly gray skin, marred by open sores, pockmarks and patches of coarse hair. Their long, tapered fingers and toes bear sharp claws and their eyes glow a sickly yellow. They can, however, assume their normal form at will. In human form, or during the day, they can only be distinguished from normal children by a *true seeing* or more powerful spell.

Wild Children can speak with child-like voices or with a hollow, grave-like voice, and they always

take great delight in teasing and tormenting their victims as they kill them.

Killing a wild child kills the child's comatose body as well, perhaps causing a Horror save for those who realize what they've done. Kraxzat's evil enchantment can be dissolved harmlessly, however, by *dispel evil* or the demon's death.

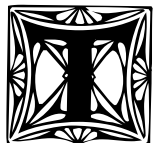
Wild Child (night form): CR 1; Small Outsider (chaotic, evil); HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex); Atk +4 melee (2 claws 1d3+3); SA Sneak attack +1d6; SQ Assume *shadowform* at will as a full-round action, DR 5/silver, darkvision 60 ft., cold resistance 10; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +2, Climb +5, Hide +10*, Move Silently +5; Improved Initiative.

* Wild children gain a +5 racial bonus to Hide checks.

The above statistics represent wild children that were once human. Those made from other humanoid races could conceivably have different powers.

SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN



his adventure is designed for character levels 3–5 (about 20 total levels). A mixed party of experienced and well-equipped adventurers with at least one or two magical weapons is recommended. The adventure is planned to place in the city of Karg in Necropolis, but can be easily adapted to fit into any other city, either in the Land of Mists or in another campaign world.

The adventure should at different times make the PCs suspicious of both their employer and the man they are hired to investigate. The best horror value will come from the fear of the unknown (the ambush at the warehouse) and the knowledge that they have to race against time to stop a great evil from claiming the soul of an innocent child.

Adventure Summary

John von Marsten, a wealthy merchant, hires the PCs to find his son Wilhelm, who disappeared last night and has not been seen since. He suspects business rivals of kidnapping the child, though no ransom request has yet been made. The PCs are to find and rescue the boy, for which they will be paid a handsome sum of money.

Wilhelm (he prefers “Willie”) has not been kidnapped, but has run away. John is a very traditional man, and wants his son to grow up to be strong, not a sissy. To enforce his will John punished the boy often, usually whenever he showed more interest in his books and poetry than in sports, business studies, and other “manly” activities. Willie tried to hide his creative interests, but his father always caught him. Willie's resentment towards his father is strong, but he is too small and meek to fight back on his own.

Willie's street urchin friends brought him to Kraxzat at the orphanage, who charmed the boy. The cambion convinced Willie to join his “Wild Children” in their violent escapades. Tonight Willie will become a full member when he kills his own parents at the stroke of midnight, which will release his soul as a new Wild Child.

The party must find out what has happened before midnight, when Kraxzat will lead the pack to attack his own parents and kill them. If they fail, then Wilhelm will be lost forever to Kraxzat as his soul joins the ranks of the Wild Pack.

The Adventure Begins

The DM should create a reason for the PCs to visit Karg, perhaps related to a character's background or goals, or simply for the opportunity to seek out a new adventure. One or more of the PCs should hear of a series of brutal murders that have occurred in the area. Most appear to have been honest family men, (although a few women have been murdered as well), and no further information can be discovered from the local authorities (who are too busy doing their jobs to waste time on a group of adventurers!).

A local contact tells the PCs of a mission requiring adventurers to retrieve “stolen valuables.”

It is mid-afternoon as you make your way through the twisted streets of Karg. The driving rain of the last few days has given way to a slow, steady drizzle that strikes your cloak. You find the home of John von Marsten, a prominent merchant whose name you have heard occasionally in conversations about the marketplace. He lives in a two-story mansion on Gold Street. Outside on the street you see a few grimy beggar children running around playing a game of tag.

The manor itself looks strong, surrounded by a high brick wall on the perimeter of the property. Cracks roam over the gray stone walls like living spider-webs, the stones pitted with holes from the bitter storms they have endured over the years. Along

the rooftop leering, hunchbacked gargoyles sneer down at you from their high perches, seeming to pass judgment over you as you approach the heavy columns that hold up the front porch.

If any PCs want to give money to the children, the urchins will certainly accept it. If it is a silver piece or more, a swarm of 12 or more will descend on the character, begging at the tops of their voices, scuffling for the original coin and trying to pick the hero's pockets. If there is trouble the children disperse quickly.

Under the porch lies a set of heavy oak double doors set with heavy brass knockers. An immensely tall thin man opens the door wearing a butler's uniform. He says nothing as he ushers the party into the foyer. He takes coats, hats and cloaks, and then leads the party to the study, where their host waits.

The tall, gaunt butler leads you down the hall past several paintings of barrel-chested men with dark hair, mustaches, beards, and muttonchops. The gold frames are of high quality, easily worth a hundred gold apiece. This treasure is well guarded, for you see many armored guards, all wearing tabards bearing the standard of the von Marsten house (a tense panther, ready to pounce on its prey), stationed in pairs throughout the mansion.

At the end of the hall, the butler knocks on a closed door made of heavy polished oak. "Your guests, Master," he says in a low, deep voice. There is no answer from within, but the butler opens the door and silently waves you inside.

This room is as lavish as the rest of the mansion, with velvet and gold trim everywhere you look. A number of high-backed chairs surround a large oblong mahogany table, with a wet bar and buffet table resting to the side near the chairs. At the head of the table a large, powerful man rises to greet you.

John von Marsten greets each PC with a firm handshake and offers them whatever beverages they desire. Then he gets right down to business:

"I apologize for being abrupt, but I'm afraid I don't have the luxury of time to waste. My son is missing, and I need you to find him quickly. The lad disappeared from his room last night, and hasn't been seen since.

"The idiots at the local police station were baffled by the case, and their investigations have turned up nothing. I told them to check out my rivals in the business world, and I wouldn't be surprised to find that one of them is holding my son hostage. But my rivals are many, and as far as I can tell the police

were either too busy to check them all out or didn't believe me. All I can tell you is that the boy couldn't have left on his own. My wife and I would have heard him go down the stairs—they creak terribly—and his room is on the second floor with no means available to climb down to the ground—and even then, the window in his room was locked all night. There's no way he could have gone out that way without opening it, or anybody else, for that matter. I suspect that magic was used—many of my rivals have pet wizards at their disposal. That's why I've sent for you.

"I am prepared to pay each of you 500 pieces of gold for your services, plus expenses, if you find my son and return him to me, alive and well. If you should find him dead or permanently injured, you will receive 100 gold each for your efforts, provided you return him to us. There will be an extra 1000 gold for bringing me his kidnapper—or murderer—dead or alive. Do you have any questions?"

Von Marsten will answer any questions the PCs pose within reason, though he will refuse to discuss his business dealings (he does trade). He is concerned for his son's safety, though he does not show it. To him, this is simply one more piece of business, to be conducted swiftly and efficiently.

Von Marsten really has no idea who has taken his son. He will allow the PCs to examine the room and the mansion grounds to aid their investigations. The only places they will be forbidden to enter are his office and his bedroom (where his wife Marta is resting).

Other information the party may discover is listed below:

- ❖ "I have many enemies—enemies who would gladly exploit my son's kidnapping for ransom. Even those that would balk at kidnapping Wilhelm would try to take advantage of my distraction to move against me in other ways. I can ill afford such a cost, and I don't trust them to return my son in any event. Hiring you is the quickest, most cost-efficient solution to my problem."
- ❖ "Young Wilhelm is a fine lad, if a bit odd—spends too much of his time with his nose buried in one of those damned storybooks of his. Needs to get his head out of the clouds and his feet planted firmly on the ground. A good businessman spends his time working in the real world, not fantasizing."
- ❖ "Wilhelm has never run away before, though at times he's mentioned a desire to go off and explore far-away places—rubbish, of course, since most places in the Land of Mists aren't

worth seeing. Besides, he will take over the family business when he grows up.”

- ❖ “Wilhelm is 9 years old, a skinny child with sandy-colored hair and brown eyes. He wore navy-blue nightclothes the night he disappeared.” John can show them a portrait he had commissioned of the family for Wilhelm’s birthday last year—he looks much the same today.
- ❖ “My wife Marta is upstairs resting. I gave her an herbal sleeping draught to calm her down. She was becoming too emotional and unladylike.” (This may make the players a bit suspicious, particularly after John forbids any PCs to enter the bedroom to see her. He cares for his wife greatly, but is overprotective to a fault.)
- ❖ “No one unusual was seen around the manor grounds last night. Many people pass by on the street at all hours.”
- ❖ “The doors leading into the house were all locked, as well as the windows. There are no shrubs or trees around the house. There was no sign of breaking or entering.”
- ❖ “One of my rivals shows a keen interest in children: Keegan Greymane, a trading merchant in charge of Zephyr Express, located at the Comfort House orphanage. He has an excellent reputation in town as a humanitarian. Most of his dealings are legal, though he supposedly tends towards the shady side, hiding behind the facade of an innocent orphanage. He takes young orphans off the streets and put them to work as runners and messengers in exchange for food, clothing, and shelter. Comfort House is about 45 minutes away, close to the wharves and docks by the Vuchar River.”
- ❖ If the party tries to do excessive questioning or socializing, John tells them in no uncertain terms to get to work—that’s what he’s paying them for!

If the party decides to search the grounds, go directly to **Searching the Grounds**. If the PCs wander the city go to **Out of the Mouths of Babes**.

Searching the Grounds

Wilhelm’s room

This room is immaculate and well decorated. Paintings and scenes of large, muscled men in armor with swords dominate, along with a few family portraits. The general theme is manly strength and resolve. The bookcase is loaded with math and finance books, plus a few texts on history. A large roll top desk dominates one wall. There are no toys in

this room (do not mention this unless the party thinks to ask), though there is a chessboard with pieces that seem dusty from disuse. The set is worth about 500 gp. A four-post bed lies along one wall, obviously slept in and not made.

There is a walk-in closet full of fine clothing. Under a loose floorboard in the closet in Wilhelm’s room is a small cache. Hidden within it is a dog-eared collection of fantasy and poetry books. Inside a collection of ghost stories is an important clue, a bookmark with the name of a local bookshop: “*Gezeppi’s Books: Everything that fits the print.*” It is three blocks away on Szoltarstraat.

If shown Wilhelm’s hidden books, John throws them in the trash and suggests that the PCs get back to some real work before he changes his mind about hiring them. The PCs may retrieve the books if they wish, they will prove useful later in the adventure.

The Window

Wilhelm snuck out the window. He sat on the ledge, pushed the window shut, and pulled the latch to the locked position with a knotted string, which he then pulled until it broke off, leaving a few string shavings on the inside. The windowsill is a bit loose from supporting his weight—*only* mention this if the players ask or fiddle with the ledge.

From there, Willie hoisted himself up onto the roof via an overhanging awning, crawled a short distance to the corner, and shimmied down the drainpipe to the right of the window to the ground. The remains of the string rest on the ground under some grass (Spot check DC 17).

Outside

Characters with the Track feat can easily discover tracks heading from the drainpipe towards the outer wall (or vice-versa). More is impossible to tell due to the recent rain.

The Outer Wall

This wall surrounds the house at a height of 8 feet. While slick from the rain (–2 circumstance penalty to Climb checks), it is relatively easy to scale (DC 12). Willie has learnt to scale the wall through long familiarity and his small size allowing him to find cracks that others couldn’t. However, the wall bears no clues about his escape, only the expected wear from the elements.

Gezeppi’s Books

Gezeppi’s Books is a small one-story shell nestled between two other, equally decrepit, shops. Only the faded calligraphy of the sign gives away the

location just as you are about to pass it by. A rotted, creaky set of wooden stairs groans under your feet as you walk up them. Hung on the doorknob is a small sign bearing the message “Closed” with a small etching of a man fallen asleep in a rocking chair with a book upon his lap, with a few telltale “Zs” rising from his mouth. A few weak rays of light creep out underneath the door.

This door is locked. The owner, Anton Gezeppi, is tallying up the day’s sales and checking his stock. Anton is old and thin, stooped over with a bad back. His rectangular, wire-rimmed glasses are poorly made and keep sliding off his nose, though he never thinks to replace them; thus, he squints a lot. Anton walks slowly, dragging his left leg as he walks with a gnarled wooden cane.

Anton will hesitate to let anyone in unless they can somehow assure him of their good intentions. Anyone who talks about books will earn his respect. He will prove easy to talk to, if a bit nervous (an old man in Ravenloft is an easy victim). He asks what the PCs might be looking for—he gets all sorts of old (nonmagical) books and has fair prices, but few of his books will interest most PCs.

“Yes, I know young Willie—a nice boy, loves his books, he does—quite the bookworm! Funny, though—when his father brings him in, the lad always gets books about math, money and such, but when he comes in on his own, he always goes straight to the fiction! Heroes and monsters, knights in armor and beautiful damsels in distress, that sort of thing. Of course, I guess you folks know more about that kind of thing than I, being who you are!”

If the PCs saved the books from Willie’s room, Anton identifies them as books bought from his shop by Willie. Gezeppi is at a loss to explain where Willie could have gone. He knows that the boy sometimes reads stories to some of the children from the Lower City, and likes to play sackball (a street version of football) with them, but he has no idea what any of their names are. He is even unsure if they are simply poor children or street urchins.

After the party gets the basic information, Anton will politely ask the PCs to leave, as he still has to close shop.

From the Mouths of Babes

Move onto this scene when the PCs have finished investigating, or are otherwise at a loss for something to do.

The sun is far in the west, its light screened out by the heavy black cloud cover. You notice a grimy little girl, about eight years of age, come towards you from a small crowd of children who stare at you from a distance. She is dressed in ragged clothing and has mud-caked, rusty hair that flies in all directions. Cautious but unafraid, she draws near and begins to speak:

“You’re the ones who’s lookin’ for Willie, aintcha? Jimmy, that’s me chum, he tol’ me he saw you down at his pop’s place pokin’ around. So’s I tol’ him, ‘Tell Keegan! He’ll know what to do!’ So he did, and Greyman—his name’s really GreyMANE, but I like GreyMAN better—he tol’ us you were okay, an’ to help out if we could, so we did, and here we are!”

The child’s name is Rachel, though everyone calls her Red in deference to her rusty hair. She is the spokeswoman for the children and she is a boisterous girl despite her poverty; she speaks with a fast, clipped voice and sometimes has to be interrupted. She will tell the party all about her friendship with Willie, and how mean his Da is to him. Willie was always talking about going away on adventures like in his books and taking all of his friends away with him to a place where kids could be free to run and play and have fun forever. She is also a wild child, sent by Kraxzat to lure the PCs into an ambush.

If asked about Keegan, she praises him: “He’s a dad to us all. A lot of us wouldn’t have made it okay without him.” If asked, she will take the party to meet Keegan. If not, she remembers an old warehouse by the docks where the kids sometimes went with Willie to play dungeon, and can lead the party there (it is on the way to Keegan’s, about a half-hour from here). Go on to **The Double-Double Cross**.

If the party wants to see Keegan first, go to **An Evening with the Grey Man**.

An Evening with the Gray Man

Although the orphanage is a veritable den of evil and the center of Kraxzat’s criminal ventures, nothing truly wicked occurs here for fear of discovery. Kraxzat isn’t afraid of the authorities exposing him, but he finds it convenient to have a stable, safe base of operations and doesn’t want to endanger his wild children unnecessarily.

Mrs. Witherspoon, the housekeeper, is an innocent dupe, who was hired recently by Kraxzat to keep up his masquerade. She has never met the real Keegan, and never suspected anything amiss.

The Comfort House is a modest but spacious old brownstone building at least 80 years old. Red and her friends lead you up the steps to the door. She knocks a simple pattern that is answered before you enter. Inside you are instantly overwhelmed by a rush of dirty, rag-clad young children who, seeing that you are safe if you are in Red's company, rush over to you and shower you with hugs, kisses, and about a million questions.

Soon a thin, elderly woman with curly silver hair comes in and offers the children chocolate chip cookies to get rid of them. She is Mrs. Witherspoon, the housekeeper and cook. Red tells her why the PCs are here. After offering the PCs milk and cookies, she takes them (and Red) into the office.

Seated at a cluttered desk is a wiry old man with a long grey beard and mustache, wearing a simple grey tunic. As he looks up at you, his blue eyes sparkle with a hint of youthful wit that belies his great age. "Well, you probably know who I am by now, so I won't fuss over the introductions. Keegan Greymane at your service." Red frowns at him, and he corrects himself for her: "GreyMAN." Satisfied, she nods her approval.

Keegan is pleasant and listens carefully to the PCs. He says he is concerned about Willie. He has never met the boy, but his children speak so highly of him that Keegan feels like he is one of the family. He will be glad to assist the party in finding him. If asked about John Von Marsten, he becomes perturbed. Keegan considers him a poor father, rarely spending time with the boy, and then scolding him whenever he does. He can't understand a father as wealthy as Von Marsten making so little effort to do right by his own. Beyond this, he knows little of Von Marsten, as he has no dealings with him--it is said that he does a lot of shady dealings.

Before the talk can go any further, another child bursts into the room, with the following message:

"Mister Greymane! Mister Greymane! I saw those men at the Dungeon again! They had a green bag with them, and I'm sure I heard Willie's voice from inside. They must've got him sir! You gotta help them!"

The boy (Salindro) stutters nervously if he has to answer any questions from the PCs, but is quite at ease (although excited) talking to Keegan. He will

need some calming and prodding. He speaks quickly and trips over his own tongue constantly.

Keegan suggests that the PCs investigate if they do not offer to do so. He says he will try to alert the police, but they've been very busy of late and are much farther away than the party (who will get there in 15 minutes if they hurry). Go to **The Double-Double Cross**.

If the party should actually attack Keegan or the kids for some reason, the children scatter as Keegan defends himself with a shortsword and dagger. The children fetch the police, who arrive in 3 minutes to arrest them. Keegan will tumble and dodge until he can dive under the desk, then *polymorphs* into a mouse and scampers clear. If the heroes should actually *kill* one of the children, however, Kraxzat will give them no quarter, screaming abuse and attacking furiously until the offender is killed. It is the DM's decision how to handle the adventure from here, as it is unlikely to follow the established plot once the PCs are hunted criminals.

The Double-Double Cross

If the party has not yet been to Keegan's, have them meet Salindro the stuttering boy, who feeds them the same story about the men and the warehouse told above.

The warehouse is old and abandoned. Through a dirty window the PCs can see seven adult figures crouched around a lit lantern. There is a cargo door that is rusty and squeaks, plus service entrances at the front and back. All doors are locked, but the locks are of poor quality and old (+4 circumstance bonus to picking or breaking them).

There are a number of crates stacked throughout the warehouse. The ceiling is about 30 feet off the ground; there are rafters along the roof, though the party will not be able to find anything up there unless they actually go up and look. Hiding in the rafters are a group of wild children in *shadowform*. They remain silent and undetectable until the PCs have dealt with the thieves. Then, they will kill the PCs while Kraxzat and the rest of his Wild Pack induct Willie into their fold.

A Listen check (DC 15) allows the hero to distinguish the words of the thieves. They are discussing the money they'll get from their latest job and go into lewd detail regarding how they will spend their share of the money. Sadly, they are simple art thieves sheltering from the rain, not kidnappers. If the PCs attack, they try to defend themselves and flee (with their loot) at the first opportunity. At least one should be captured for the PCs to interrogate.

KRAXAT

Thieves (7): Human Rog2; CR 2; Medium-sized Humanoids (Human); HD 2d6+2; hp 11; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +3 studded leather armor, +1 Dodge); Atk +3 melee (rapier 1d6+1), +5 ranged (light crossbow 1d8+1); SA Sneak attack +1d6; SQ Evasion; AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +4, Climb +6, Disable Device +7, Hide +7, Intimidate +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +7, Pick Pocket +7, Search +7, Spot +5; Improved Initiative, Dodge.

Possessions: Masterwork rapier, light crossbow (20 bolts), studded leather armor, 3 potions of *cure light wounds*, 2 potions of *darkvision*.

The leader, a Dementlieuese art merchant fallen on hard times named Jacques Lesaard, will talk to save his skin, admitting that they are art thieves. He refuses to accept the immorality of his actions and lectures the party about how shameful it is that the idle rich hoard away such fine masterpieces as these, hiding them from the public view.

The thieves offer to give the party an equal share of their booty if they will let them go unharmed. (They have plenty of stolen art stashed elsewhere, and aren't too concerned about losing tonight's haul). They offer the PCs a green sack, which contains stolen paintings of nude women (erotic but tasteful) as a sign of their good faith. The paintings are worth about 1000 gp altogether. They have never heard of Willie or Keegan Greymane.

The Ambush

Just as the PCs realize that they have been misled, a crystal vial drops from the rafters and smashes next to the fire, unleashing a ball of *darkness*. The wild children use the distraction to swarm down from the rafters and attack the PCs. There are half as many again as there are PCs.

Do not describe the attackers visually until the party manages to actually see them in regular light. This means either dispelling the *darkness* or moving out of the area.

The children attack and kill the helpless thieves first, then work on the PCs until either they or the party are all killed or subdued, laughing and tormenting their attackers with giggly, raspy voices. Play them like cruel children who enjoy mutilating animals.

Kraxzat has underestimated the PCs' strength. He assumes they will be killed easily; otherwise, he would never endanger his children this way. (If they truly are endangered, have a squad of city guard arrive to help them). When the wild children are

slain, they take one round to dissolve into a thick, black cloud of brimstone while expiring.

One child will shriek out the following before dissolving:

"Well, yuh got us, bigguns, but our pal Willie's gonner get his! A nice, big hunk o' flesh he'll be gettin'! His ole' man, he sure got a lot of it, he's so big..."

Make sure the PCs hear this very clearly; they need to understand that Willie is somehow connected to these bestial children and that his father is in danger.

Home is Where the Heart Is

The way back to Von Marsten's mansion is a blur of wind and rain, taking forever even at a dead run through the mud-soaked streets. As you approach the building, a flash of lightning reveals that the front door is slightly ajar.

Inside the foyer is the corpse of the butler, standing straight at attention by the stairwell. His eyes closed and he is impaled on the banister from behind. It may not be obvious at first glance that he is dead. He appears calm, peaceful, and serene. The scene is cause for a horror check.

Before the party can react a crashing sound, like breaking glass, comes from down the hall. The door to the dining room is slightly ajar:

This once gracious dining room has become a scene of violence. On the far side, an unconscious woman is tied across the kitchen doorway. Two small terrors, like the ones you fought in the warehouse, are using her for target practice with the finest Von Marsten chinaware. Her body is covered with cuts from shards of glass and ceramic. Half the dining room table is laid flat against the wall; tied to the other half across the room is the injured, half-conscious form of John Von Marsten. Standing over him, brandishing a large kitchen knife, is a glassy-eyed boy who matches Willie's description. His small body is trembling terribly, so much that he can barely hold on to the knife.

Around him stand six more of the tiny terrors, and by Willie's side is Keegan Greymane, who sports a look of wicked approval upon his features. The old man turns to see you, his surprise at seeing you all alive quite obvious to everyone. "Where are my children? What have you done to my children? My children!"

Immediately Keegan's form melts away, blurring in a way that makes the PCs' heads ache, reforming into the cambion's true form. He and the eight Wild Children attack. Kraxzat casts spells while six of the wild children leap forward and attack directly and the other two pelt the heroes with crockery (1d3+3 damage). Kraxzat is consumed with rage, and will not retreat from this combat until he or the party is dead. He preferentially targets anyone who tries to interfere with Willie.

Willie will hold his position without the direct prodding of Kraxzat. If one of the PCs tries to talk him around, the boy can make another Will save to resist Kraxzat's charm. He gains an additional +4 bonus if the PC also presents one of Willie's favorite books to him to remind him of his longing to be a hero.

When Kraxzat is slain the Wild Children stop, stare at their deceased "father", and howl like banshees, driving everyone to their knees in pain as they cover their ears. Then they dissolve into a brimstone-fouled cloud of black mist. The mist swirls madly around the room and then dissipates. In the orphanage, Kraxzat's children wake from their comas as normal children as their souls return.

Epilogue

The children themselves remember nothing of their shadows' demonic experiences. Willie tearfully explains to the party how he had run away from home, only to be found by Kraxzat and *charmed* into serving him. He also apologizes to his father for disobeying him. For his part, John Von Marsten has learned the error of his ways. He and his wife hug their son and tell him not to worry about it, promising that things will be a lot different now. He thanks the party, paying them the full amount owed, plus an added bonus of 1000 gp.

In case the players are worried about the children, John offers to take over the orphanage and keep it going. For now, though, he will put the children up for the night—starting with a reading of Willie's favorite bedtime story.

Recurrence

If the DM desires, he can run some or all of the events described in Kraxzat's Background as a longer campaign arc rather than a one-shot adventure, beginning with the monks (perhaps a branch of the Order of Guardians) charging the PCs with destroying the fiend before he fully manifests his powers. Later, the DM might start with the PCs

meeting the cambion while he is a young gang leader, or just after his friends are murdered by his rivals. The PCs might end up dealing with Kraxzat's revenge plot against the other gang, either trying to stop the multiple murders of the gang members, or unwittingly aiding Kraxzat in his revenge!

If the DM wants to keep Kraxzat alive, he can have his mother's locket become a true phylactery, which would allow Kraxzat to come back from the dead to challenge the PCs again, or start a new pack of Wild Children.

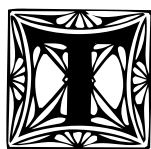
MARASMOS

By William James Cuffe

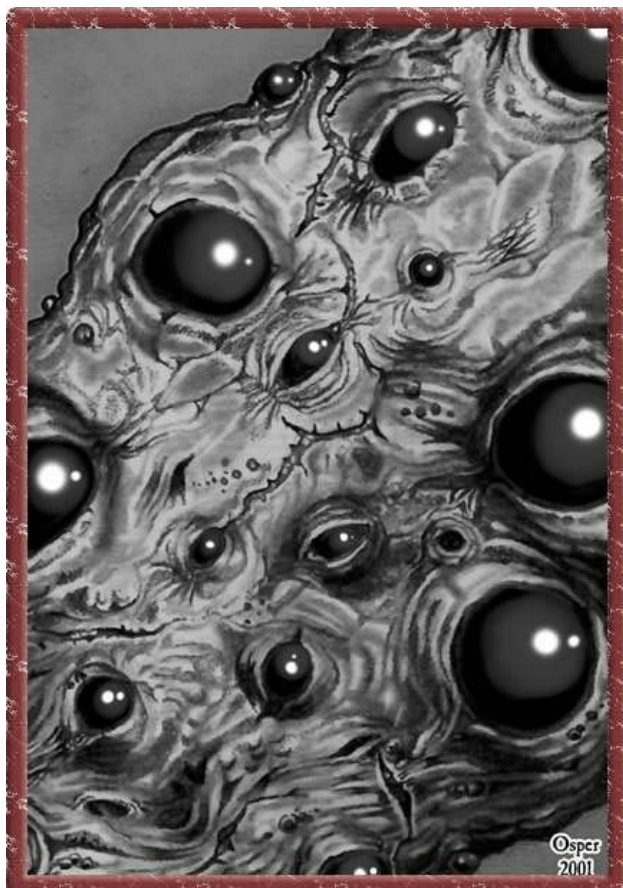
*Disease can never be conquered by
emotion's wailful screaming or faith's
cymballic prayer*

—Sean O'Casey

BIOGRAPHY



he Cult of Suppuration hides in the dark shadows of the Land of the Mists. Members of this secret cult work slowly and carefully to spread the foul disease that marks them as servants of the fiend



Marasmos. For their infection is much more than a simple plague—it is the very taint of evil, a sliver of demonic substance slowly festering in, feeding off, and transpositioning itself with its human hosts. With every new abscess and pustule that forms on its victims, Marasmos' hold over them increases. With time, the host is completely transpositioned by the Lord of Suppuration, decaying into a miniature version of the demon, totally dominated by it. And all the while, the infected work, forming sects to spread Marasmos' malign influence further and carry out its plans.

These plans are nothing short of completely consuming all life in the Demiplane of Dread.

Appearance

In its natural form, Marasmos is little more than a festering blob of weeping pustules and gangrenous decay. Swollen, globular eyes, colored a milky black, protrude at random from its slimy mass and constantly wave around it with unblinking malice. The demon's body is covered in a cracked, leathery crust. Frothy green corruption oozes continuously from the deeper cracks in its foul hide, leaving an acidic trail behind it like a slug.

Phylactery

The infection of Marasmos is the demon's phylactery. As long as any trace of the infection remains in the body of a single victim, the demon can live on. Any intelligent, living creature can succumb to the disease, and there is no telling how many infected individuals the Cult of Suppuration has sequestered away to respond to a worst-case scenario.

Marasmos, the Lord of Suppuration

Alkiliith (Tanar'ri): CR 16; Large Outsider (chaos, evil); HD 11d8+66; 105 hp; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 20 feet, 2' in gaseous form; AC 22 (+2 Dex, +11 natural); Atk 4 slams +14 melee (2d4+3+ acid); Face/Reach 10' x 5'/5'; SA Acid, spell-like abilities; SQ Damage reduction 20/+2, alternate form, immune to poison, gases, electricity and acid, cold and fire resistance 20; SR 18; AL CE, SV Fort +13, Ref +9, Will +10; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +15, Concentration +16, Hide +13, Innuendo +13, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Listen +16, Move Silently +12, Search +13, Spot +15, Sense Motive +14; Cleave, Great Cleave, Multiattack, Multidexterity, Power Attack.

Reality Wrinkle: 22'. See below

Land-Based Powers: Cause Insanity (Dominia), Cause Hunger (G'Henna), Corrupt Life (Invidia), Inner Turmoil (Nova Vaasa), Poison Touch (Borca)

Corruption Index: 21

Background

The first appearance of Marasmos has been traced back to the Dead Man's Campaign of 650 BC. How the demon entered Ravenloft is unknown, but the terrible suffering and disease caused in the chaos of war could have seduced an alkilith well. Now, it is utterly ingrained into the fabric of the land through innumerable power rituals. It does not appear perturbed by the prospect of never returning to the Abyss; the tanar'ri's sole ambition is to consume the Demiplane of Dread with its putrefying infection.

Personality

Although Marasmos is intelligent, it rarely shows it, except in its method of clandestine infection. Its ever-consuming thought is to devour all flesh, to slake its ravenous, unending hunger for the living of the Land of the Mists. It is uncaring and random, infecting the innocent and the corrupt equally and putrefying them slowly from within. Only those who are Pure, having never had cause to make a Powers Check, are immune to the Lord of Suppuration's diseased touch. Of course, truly pure individuals are exceedingly rare.

More than any other demon, Marasmos is completely alien to the world of humanity. The alkilith refuses to parley or form alliances even with other powerful chaotic evil beings. It exists only to destroy and defile.

Combat

In its natural form, Marasmos is a terrifying opponent. Simply seeing its grotesque bulk is enough to turn the stomach of even a seasoned adventurer; knowing that this abomination is not only alive but sentient is cause for a Horror save. Those overwhelmed by revulsion suffer swift and messy deaths from the demon's acidic touch. The alkilith can attack four times each round with pseudopods exuded from its grotesque body.

Although Marasmos is intelligent, it is alien and otherworldly, and does not appreciate tactics in the same form as mortals. In the middle of a battle, Marasmos may suddenly ignore its humanoid victims and begin attacking a patch of ground or an animal. Those under its control might try to assuage the suspicions of a group of heroes, only to attack them as soon as they turn their backs. The Lord of Suppuration is not stupid, and will never endanger itself or its plans to conquer the world. However, it understands the world completely differently to mortals, and the Dungeon Master should make this apparent through its actions and those of its minions.

Acid (Ex): Marasmos' leprous hide constantly secretes a powerful acid. Those smeared with this caustic slime (through touching Marasmos or being hit by one of its pseudopods) must make a Fort save (DC 21) or take 1d6 acid damage every round for 1d6 rounds, when the acid is exhausted. At the DM's discretion, the victim's equipment may be affected as well.

Alternate form (Su): This ability takes one full round. At will, Marasmos is able to transform into a cloud of foul, stinking vapors and back again. In this form, the demon fills an area 20' x 20' x 10', and has the effect of a *cloudkill* spell on anyone within it. If struck by a *gust of wind* or similar effect, Marasmos suffers 1d6 points of damage per level of the caster with no saving throw.

Metal Vulnerability (Ex): Due to a failed power ritual, Marasmos is vulnerable to precious metals that don't tarnish, such as gold and platinum. Although nonmagical weapons made from these metals are unable to harm Marasmos, touching them is painful to the demon, and neither it nor any of its minions will allow it to come into contact with them.

Spell-like abilities (Sp): At will - *cause disease, hold person, stinking cloud, deeper darkness, desecrate, detect magic, dispel magic, enervation, unholy aura, unholy blight, magic circle against good* (self only), *putrefy food and drink* (touch), and *command* (oozes and fungi only). All spells cast as an 11th level sorcerer. Save DC is 14 + spell level.

The Suppuration

Marasmos is normally encountered as a disease, rather than as an alkilith, however. This terrible malady is spread by skin contact between a carrier and a victim—even casual, unintentional contact, such as a handshake or brushing against a carrier in a crowd, is enough to result in infection. Through this momentary contact, a tiny fragment of Marasmos' dispersed evil is transmitted to the victim, where it begins to consume their soul and body. They can, however, be cured by *remove disease, dispel evil*, or similar spells.

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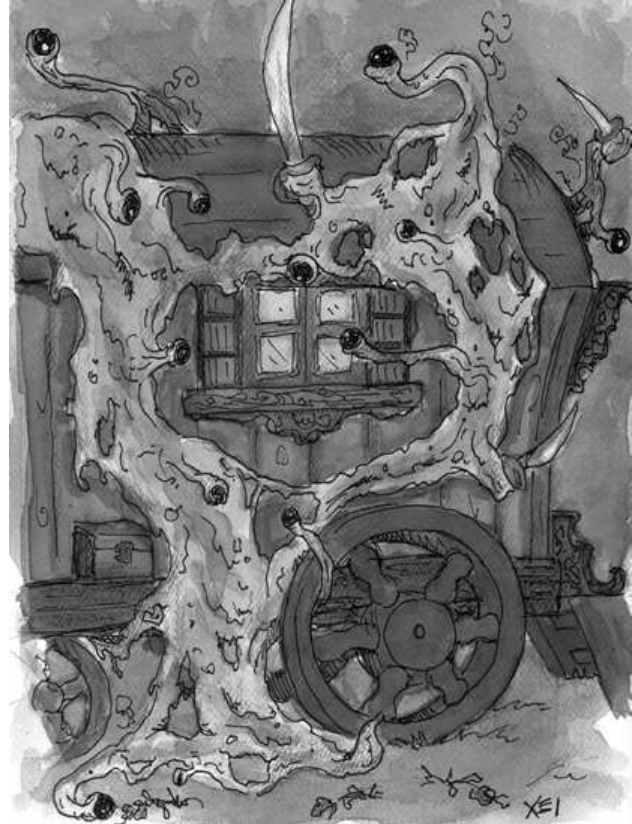
The disease progresses in a form similar to the process of transposition. Victims advance a stage by either failing Powers Checks, or through Marasmos' conscious efforts to overwhelm them. If Marasmos makes this effort, victims must make a Will save (DC Marasmos' Wis check) every day after the initial infection, and every time they are reinfected. If they fail, Marasmos gains a little more influence over them, and the disease advances a stage.

Stage One: Victim suffers flu-like aches, runny sinuses, rashes, blotchy skin, and watery eyes. They often experience nightmares as well. Marasmos has no control over the character's actions yet, but the character is contagious.

Stage Two: Large areas of the victim's skin become mottled. In one or two patches, hard, dark "tumors" form just beneath the skin, particularly around the glands. Wounds tend to get infected. Marasmos start to exert influence on the victim's mind; the victim feels feverish and starts feeling an obscene hunger for rancid food and drink. The victim may also start to find any image of beauty or innocence unpleasant. These urges aside, victim can still be a PC. Due to the fever, the character suffers a -1 competence penalty to all ability and skill rolls. Most people casually infected by Marasmos will be at this stage; only important or evil characters are worth the effort it takes for Marasmos to transform them further.

Stage Three: By now, the infection is obvious. The victim's eyes turn dark and featureless—the same color as the tumors. Several of these globules break through the victim's badly discolored skin, and "peek out" under their own volition. Several more globules form beneath the skin. The victim's blood is also discolored, and slightly luminous. Marasmos' control over the victim increases; their alignment shifts one 'space' closer to evil. Marasmos is privy to all of the victim's senses and thoughts and can relay such to its other bodies. Marasmos can force the victim to perform specific actions at any time; victims may make a Will save (DC 17) to resist such commands. The victim is in constant pain, but they do gain cold resistance 10, damage resistance 5/precious metals and become immune to acid.

Stage Four: The victim is a weeping sore, their entire body covered in the rash. Their skin may be mottled green and brown; it may glisten. Slime oozes from cracks in their skin. The victim is almost completely under Marasmos' control. If they are not already, they become a CE NPC, but they are allowed a Will save (DC 19) to resist taking any action totally against their original nature (like killing a loved one). Although the pain remains intense (-2 competence penalty to all die rolls), their increasingly fiendish nature makes them



immune to acid and electricity, and gives them cold and fire resistance 10, and damage resistance 5/+1.

Stage Five: The victim dissolves into a slimy pile of corruption, becoming an alkilyte.

It should be noted that those infected by the suppuration experience a small reality wrinkle - 1" per stage of disease. They also find themselves repelled by sanctified ground and holy symbols, suffering 1 hp damage per stage each round they are in contact with them. Alkilytes suffer 5d4 damage per round. Neither holy ground or holy items present any particular barrier to the alkilith itself, however.

When enough of Marasmos' corrupt essence congregates in an individual, the demon tears itself free from them as a miniature version of itself, an alkilyte. This process involves the death of the person involved. Alkilytes are also created by the premature deaths of their hosts. If a cultist is killed in all but the most destructive ways (by immersion in holy water, or being burnt to death), the alkilyte is freed from their bodies in a number of rounds equal to 6 minus the number of the stage they were at. (For example, a cultist at stage five of the disease would take [6 - 5] or 1 round to transform into an alkilyte when killed). This is probably cause for a Horror save.

Alkilyte (Demon): CR 4; Small outsider (chaos, evil); HD 1d8+6; 10 hp; Init: +2 (Dex); Spd 20 feet; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 nat); Atk 1 pseudopod +4 melee

(2d4+3 + acid); SA Acid, spell-like abilities; SQ Merge, damage reduction 5/+1, immune to poison, gases, electricity and acid, cold and fire resistance 20; SR 13; Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: As Marasmos

Advancement: 2-5 HD (Medium), 6-10 HD (Large)

An alkolyte's reality wrinkle is equal to its HD in feet.

Spell-like abilities (Sp): A 1 HD alkolyte is able to cast *cause disease*, *putrefy food and drink* (touch) and *deeper darkness* at will.

Merge (Ex): Each time two or more alkolyte meet, they can converge into a single, greater alkolyte. Their HD and current hit points are added together. The demon's attack bonus and saves should be recalculated according to this new total. In addition, the alkolyte gains 1 extra pseudopod attack when it reaches 3 HD, 6 HD, and 9 HD. It's natural AC bonus is equal to its number of hit dice. It's SR equals 13 + 1/2 its total HD. The demon's damage reduction increases to 10/+1 at 6 HD, and 20/+2 at 11. It gains new spell-like abilities according to the table below:

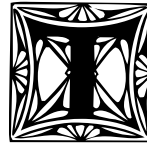
Hit Dice	Ability gained
2	<i>detect magic</i> , Cause Hunger
3	<i>command</i> oozes and fungi
4	<i>desecrate</i> , Corrupt Life
5	<i>hold person</i> , Alternate Form
6	<i>stinking cloud</i> , Hallucinations
7	<i>dispel magic</i>
8	<i>unholy blight</i> , Poison Touch
9	<i>enervation</i>
10	<i>unholy aura</i> , Cause Insanity

Alkolytes cannot survive outside of a host for long. For every 10 minutes after reaching full transposition, an alkolyte permanently loses 1 HD. Alkolytes that have not melded with other alkolytes, having blobs only 1 HD just shrivel up and die. Upon reaching 11 HD however, Marasmos is able to maintain its existence outside of a host, and in all respects has become a fully functioning alkylith.

The goal of a Suppuration cult is to further Marasmos' aims. In reality, there is no actual cult—all hosts are controlled or strongly influenced by Marasmos itself, and it will co-ordinate the individual hosts' movements with each other. What one host sees, Marasmos sees. Further, hosts can utilize Marasmos' various powers much like joined alkolytes. By joining hands and combining reality wrinkles, the more powerful abilities of Marasmos can be brought to bear on the unprepared adventurer. Using the same progression as for joined alkolytes, each cultist that

continues the chain of bodily contact boosts the available powers up one stage (thus, three linked cultists have the powers of a 3HD alkolyte).

TOUCH OF CORRUPTION



his adventure, designed for 4 to 6 characters of 10th to 12th level, takes place in Neufurchtenburg, a city in the domain of Lamordia (or an equal mid-sized town of the Dungeon Master's creation), where a branch of the Suppuration Cult is preparing to enact a power ritual. It is important to remember throughout this adventure that any casual contact with a Cultist will infect the PC, without a save. Marasmos wishes to gain the land-based power of *regeneration*. With that ability, it could regenerate itself from the brink of extinction. If the Cult of Suppuration succeeds, the Lord of Corruption would be virtually unstoppable.

However, all is not lost. Marasmos' corruption index is 21, meaning that one more power ritual, whether successful or not, is its last chance to gain the Lamordian land-based power of *regeneration*. The Cult is being very secretive, very protective, and excruciatingly careful . . .

The Adventure Begins

The town's healer was one of the first individuals infected by the suppuration infection. Fortunately, the man was of strong will and struggled against the tanar'ri's influence, keeping it at bay as he chronicled the disease's effects and progression in his journal. After a series of particularly terrifying nightmares that destroyed his sanity, he learned the true nature of the infection, and the true name of the demon: Marasmos!

Fearing a future where the demon succeeded in its plans, the healer fled to Necropolis, the birthplace of the plague, to seek out the Church of Ezra. On the verge of death, the healer collapsed at the feet of the Anchorites and released his diary, spelling out the calamity.

Without delay, a mixed party of Bastion Raines' anchorites and those selected from a visiting Home Faith delegation traveled to Lamordia under the cover of missionaries, in order to investigate the situation and set up a Church of Ezra in a land notable for its lack of sacred ground.

Their reception was not warm. The Lord of Corruption, being telepathically linked to all of its infected hosts, was waiting for the anchorites' arrival. While unable to simply decimate the missionaries, it was able to do worse—it infected Toret Abel, head of missionaries and the only anchorite able to cast the

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enchantment needed to activate a Mystick Cage. Abel succumbed to the taint of Marasmos, and defected.

Unable to continue, the anchorites holed up in their church awaiting the arrival of a new Toret. They are far from docile, feverishly penning scrolls, praying to Ezra while chanting Marasmos' true name, and finishing construction of the Mystick Cage.

Fresh Air and Fortune Telling

The adventure begins with the heroes on the road to Neufurchtenburg. Even at a distance of several miles, it is clear that something is wrong in the village: several thick plumes of smoke rise from the bleak moor around the village.

As the heroes get nearer, it becomes obvious that this smoke is rising from large pits dug into the moor and along the roadside, and the wind brings the smell of burnt flesh and charred bones to their noses. The pits are mass graves where the bodies of the dead are dumped and cremated in an effort to control the disease. Bouquets of posies and roses have been laid in the dirt around the pits as well—a clear warning that Neufurchtenburg has been struck with plague.

About half a mile out of town, just as they are passing the oldest pits, the heroes encounter the first of Marasmos' defenses.

A mangy, disheveled tent of garish reds and purples squats to one side of the road, away from the pits. Moth-eaten and in need of repair, light can be seen spilling out from between rents and tears.

"Hold, weary travelers!" you hear calling from behind the tent flap. "If you value your lives, you should proceed no further!"

Within the tent is Madame Norella, a Vistana who has been infected with the suppuration. She spins a tale for the PCs of how she was driven out of town by the populace. They believed she was a witch, and was the cause of the disease that plagues the village. She adamantly denies this, claiming that her *dikeshas* have revealed that the corrupt missionaries who appeared a month ago and began to construct their evil church are the true causes.

Norella will usher the PCs into her tent and offer to tell their fortunes for the paltry sum of a few copper pieces. She will not accept any other coins, and will refuse to touch electrum, gold or platinum. (This is due to Marasmos' vulnerability to precious metals. The DM should make much of Norella's reluctance to handle these metals, as it is one of the only clues to Marasmos' vulnerability in this adventure).

Norella examines the palms of each of the heroes in turn—infesting them with the suppuration as she

does so. After a moment's thought, she proclaims that the clerics are preparing to decimate the town in an unholy ritual, and the adventurers are doomed to share this fate unless they leave immediately. Of course, the concepts of honor and self-sacrifice are totally foreign to Marasmos, so it believes this warning will drive the heroes away.

Hopefully, the heroes will not be frightened by Norella's false prediction. If so, Norella will become annoyed. She will attempt to place the Evil Eye and then sneak attack them, starting with any clerics or paladins. Such holy men would be a severe hindrance to Marasmos' plans, so it hopes to kill them before they can do too much damage.

If the PCs wish to flee at this or any later point in the adventure, they are free to do so. However, it will spell the death of Neufurchtenburg, and almost certainly the ultimate corruption of everything in Ravenloft. If the heroes have been infected, it is only a matter of time until Marasmos totally overpowers them.

Madame Norella (Stage Three)

Vistani female Rog 6/Sor 4: CR 10; Medium sized humanoid; HD 6d6+4d4+10; 43 hp; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 feat); AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 armor); Spd 30 feet; Atk 1 dagger +9 /+4 (1d4-1); SA Evil Eye, Sneak Attack; SQ Uncanny Dodge, Evasion, Cold resistance 10, Damage reduction 5/precious metals; AL NE; Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +10, Balance +12, Bluff +11, Concentration +7, Escape Artist +12, Forgery +10, Handle Animals +11, Innuendo +10, Intuit Direction +10, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +7, Wilderness Lore +10; Ambidexterity, Improved Initiative, Two-weapon fighting Voice of Wrath (+4 to Curse rolls), Weapon Finesse (dagger).

Special Abilities: Evil Eye (Victim must make a Will save (DC 19) or be paralyzed 1d4+1 rds, affected by *fear* or *dominate person* for 1d4+1 rds, or *suggestion* for 1 day).

Spells: (6/7/4) Daze, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Ghost Sound, Prestidigitation, Read Magic; Change Self, Charm Person, Identify, Locate Object.

Possessions: Dagger of venom

Among the Ill

As you enter town, signs of the infection are grossly evident. An innocent babe is infected with the disease; a pustule has consumed half her face and sealed over one eye. An old beggar lies helpless in the streets, sweat running from his body and rambling feverishly. A young mother scratches large flakes of

skin from her rash-covered body. They lodge under her nails and scar her skin with sores and scabs. Even animals have been affected. The normally hearty Lamordians eye you with aching sorrow and jealousy for your health. They seem to have resigned themselves to their fate.

More than a third of Neufurchtenburg's population has been infected by the suppuration. Most of these are only in the first or second stages of the disease, and remain in control of their bodies. Some of these citizens beg for release from their hellish affliction. They can be completely cured with a *remove disease* or *dispel evil* spell. Euthenizing infected hosts, while merciful, may in an immediate Powers Check, as well as infection.

No alkilytes will form from these hosts. In order to avoid suspicion, Marasmos has prevented this from occurring. Only those who died alone, out of public view, have been allowed to form alkilytes, which quickly slithered away or expired. The heroes may hear rumors about these 'disappearances' but with the villagers' other problems are unlikely to get many details. Either the villagers are ignorant of the truth, or are completely under Marasmos' control. Either way, most people can reveal only that the anchorites appeared soon after the town healer disappeared, and the plague began around the time they started building the church on the outskirts of town.



The Sickness Spreads

Soon after the PCs begin asking questions, Mayor Piotr von Teln and his entourage arrive. All are powdered and perfumed to hide the taint of the suppuration. After introducing himself and shaking hands with all the heroes, von Teln begs them to help the officials rescue their village, by driving away the anchorites and healing the townsfolk. In return for their aid, the mayor invites the group to attend a gala being held at his estate that night, where he will speak to them in depth about the troubles burdening his city.

At the party, the mayor and the defected Toret continue to try to convince the heroes that the anchorites are villains. They say that the missionaries are the ones spreading the plague, in order to bring about the Time of Unparalleled Darkness when Ezra will destroy the Legions of Night. They slew the town healer to stop the townsfolk healing themselves, a deed which caused Abel to defect. The evil clerics intend to make their move tomorrow at noon, during the Festival of Autumn.

During this dialogue, Toret Abel appears particularly unwell. His face twitches and streams with sweat, as the Toret tries to fight Marasmos' control. He loses, but the internal conflict may be noticed by perceptive PCs (Sense Motive, DC 18).

Von Teln offers the PCs 1,000 gp each to protect the Festival dance (which is actually the Cult of Suppuration's power ritual), preferably by killing or driving away the anchorites. Of course, he has no intention of fulfilling this.

During the meal, Marasmos uses its ability to *putrefy food and drink* to taint the food with its own malaise, then forces the PCs to eat it using *Cause Hunger*. The wine tastes of vinegar, the meat is gamy, the cabbage rotten, but the adventurers are forced to wolf it down regardless. Those who haven't yet been infected do so; those who have advance another stage. A successful Spot (DC 15) means the PCs notice two councilors near them clasp hands moments before they are struck with hunger.

Mayor Piotr von Teln (Stage Four)

Human Male Ari7: CR 6; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 7d8; hp 30; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 feet; AC 16 (-1 Dex, +7 half-plate); Atk +7 melee (1d3+2 slam); SQ Cold resistance 10, Fire resistance 10, Damage reduction 5/+1; AL CE; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11, Ride +9, Sense Motive +11, Spot +11; Run, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Bluff), Toughness.

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Toret Alain Abel (Stage Three)

Human Male Clr 11 (defected): CR 8; Medium sized Humanoid; HD 11d8; hp 50; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 feet; AC 9 (-1 Dex); Atk +8/+3 melee (1d8 heavy mace); SQ Cold resistance 10, Damage reduction 5/precious metals; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +10; Str 11, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 17, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +14, Diplomacy +12, Heal +12, Knowledge (religion) +9; Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell, Scribe Scroll.

Notes: As Toret Abel has abandoned Ezra, he no longer receives spells, cannot turn or rebuke undead, or use any metamagic or item creation feats.

8 Councilors (Stage Three)

Human Ari 4: CR 3; Medium sized Humanoid; HD 4d8; hp 20; Init +0; Spd 30 feet; Atk +3 melee (1d3 slam); SQ Cold resistance 10, Damage reduction 5/precious metals; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Craft (various) +6, Diplomacy +10, Sense Motive +9; Skill focus (Diplomacy), Skill focus (Craft), Great Fortitude.

Surgical Strike

During the dinner, a strike force of Darkonese anchorites attacks, tired of allowing the Legions of Night to control the village. They intend to destroy the mayor and his entourage, weakening Marasmos' hold over the town's power structures. To achieve this, they will focus their attention on von Teln and the defected Toret. They are willing to lose half their number, as long as they kill them.

Just before the first councilor is killed, they will shout something about a curse and dissolve into an alkolyte. The other councilors will take up the cry, trying to convince the PCs that the piles of corruption are due to an evil spell of the anchorites'. The alkolytes themselves escape into the town, attacking everything they come across, except the anchorites that the adventurers can see.

The strike force consists of 4 third level clerics, 2 fourth level clerics, and one sixth level cleric. See the next section for their statistics.

On Hallowed Ground

The anchorites' temple is located just outside the city walls. It is obviously an old tenement that has been hastily converted. A high wooden fence surrounds the temple. The gates are open and marked with Ezra's sword-and-shield symbol. The ground within the wall has been consecrated; hosts of the suppuration take 1

damage per stage each round that they remain inside. It is for this reason in particular that the Lamordians, even those unaware of the suppuration's true nature, avoid the church.

The church itself is protected by both mundane and magical wards. The building acts as though under permanent *invisibility purge* and *consecrate* spells, and all the doors and windows are protected by heavy bars and locks (Open Locks DC 30). Several slabs of rotting meat are speared on pikes and hung around the church walls. An old Darkonese wives' tale claims the speared meat will draw all malaise into it, sparing those inside. The rotting flesh smells quite pleasant to those carrying the disease.

Should the adventurers explore the grounds, they find a newly consecrated cemetery with one filled plot. The headstone carries the name of the town healer, who was buried here in accordance to local beliefs. If asked about it, members of the Cult of Suppuration will claim the anchorites meant it as a warning to all those who oppose their evil scheme.

If the heroes approach the church, they can hear chanting and the sounds of carpentry from inside. Knocking will eventually bring Warden Benedict. As long as they aren't obviously diseased or aggressive, he will let them in.

The anchorites are all haggard and exhausted, and clean themselves continually. Benedict asks the heroes to wait in the front room until Warden Judas, the church's leader, can see them. He then moves through a door in the back wall, to where the chanting and hammering is coming from. If they listen, the heroes can make out the words of the rumbling chant:

I swear by the mercy of Ezra, and I take to witness all the gods and goddesses, to keep according to my faith the following Oath: to live in common with the son of man and to share my goods with him;

to look upon your children as my own brothers; to impart to the sons of man the boons of Ezra's mercy, should they hold your teachings holy or not.

to prescribe regimen for the good of your children according to my faith and my judgment and never do harm to anyone. To please no one will I prescribe a deadly drug, nor give advice that may cause his death. But I will preserve the purity of my life and my faith.

In every house where I come I will enter only for the good of my patients, keeping myself far from all intentional ill-doing and all seduction, and especially from the pleasures of love with others.

All that may come to my knowledge in the exercise of my faith, which ought not to be spread abroad, I will keep secret and will never reveal.

If I keep this oath faithfully, may Ezra stem the spread of Marasmos, the lord of suppuration, demonic malaise, the plague of mortal men, the consumer of all

life; but if I swerve from or violate it in any way, may the reverse be my fate and mine alone.

While they are waiting, Warden Judas observes them through a hole in the wall. If they do anything he judges as blasphemous, such as stealing something, or are obviously under Marasmos' sway, he will gather the Darkonese anchorites and drive the adventurers away. He does, however, realize that the anchorites desperately need help, so he is prepared to ignore small infractions or signs of disease. If the heroes don't do anything stupid, he will conduct them into another room, away from the Mystick Cage the anchorites are constructing in the back. At no point will he allow the heroes to touch him.

Immediately after entering the room, the Warden strides over to a water font and begins to clean his hands, scrubbing them with a wire brush until they are raw and bleeding. Only then will he return to the adventurers. He will explain the truth about the situation (the DM may paraphrase as much or as little about Marasmos' history and the adventure background as they see fit), stopping abruptly every few minutes to clean his hands. As a sign of faith, Judas will also cast *remove disease* on any infected heroes, and will show them the dead healer's journal. He will still scramble away from being touched.

Ultimately, if he judges the heroes trustworthy, Warden Judas will show them the Mystick Cage. He will invite anyone with knowledge of carpentry to help, and ask the other PCs to watch the road to Darkon for Toret Gregory, the anchorite being sent from Nevuchar Springs to replace Toret Abel and activate the Cage.

It is important to note that there are no untarnishable metals used in the construction of the Cage. Hopefully, the adventurers will realize Marasmos' vulnerability to these metals (through the actions of Norella or other Cult members, or their own experiences) and address this. The anchorites will hurriedly gather all the gold they can lay their hands on to protect the Cage.

8 Initiates (4 Darkonese, 4 Borcan)

Human Clr 3: CR 3; Medium sized Humanoids; HD 3d8+6; hp 23; Init -1 (Dex); AC 14 (-1 Dex, +5 Chain mail), Atk +4 melee (1d8+1 longsword); SA Turn undead; AL LN or LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +7, Str 13, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +8, Diplomacy +7, Heal +10; Scribe Scroll, Skill focus (Heal), Iron Will.

6 Anchorites (3 Darkonese, 3 Borcan)

Human Clr 5: CR 5; Medium sized Humanoids; HD 5d8+10; hp 36; Init -1 (Dex); AC 14 (-1 Dex, +5 Chain mail), Atk +5 melee (1d8+1 longsword); SA

Turn undead; AL LN or LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +10, Str 13, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +8, Diplomacy +7, Heal +11, Craft (carpentry) +6; Scribe Scroll, Skill focus (Heal), Iron Will.

4 Wardens (2 Darkonese, 2 Borcan)

Human Clr 7: CR 7; Medium sized Humanoids; HD 7d8+14; hp 49; Init -1 (Dex); AC 15 (-1 Dex, +6 Banded mail), Atk +7 melee (1d8+1 longsword); SA Turn undead; AL LN or LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +11, Str 13, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +8, Diplomacy +9, Heal +11, Sense Motive +10; Combat Casting, Scribe Scroll, Skill focus (Heal), Iron Will.

Warden Benedict (Borcan) and Warden Cain (Darkonese)

Human Clr 8: CR 8; Medium sized Humanoids; HD 8d8+16; hp 55; Init -1 (Dex); AC 15 (-1 Dex, +6 Banded mail), Atk +8/+3 melee (1d8+1 longsword); SA Turn undead; AL LN or LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +12, Str 13, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +9, Diplomacy +9, Heal +12, Sense Motive +11; Combat Casting, Scribe Scroll, Skill focus (Heal), Iron Will.

Warden Judas

Human Clr 9: CR 9; Medium sized Humanoids; HD 9d8+18; hp 62; Init -1 (Dex); AC 15 (-1 Dex, +6 Banded mail), Atk +8/+3 melee (1d8+1 longsword); SA Turn undead; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +3, Will +12, Str 13, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +8, Diplomacy +9, Heal +11, Sense Motive +10; Combat Casting, Scribe Scroll, Skill focus (Heal), Power Attack, Iron Will.

Notes: All anchorites have access to the Mists domain. The spells granted by this domain are, in order, *obscuring mist*, *fog cloud*, *gaseous form*, *solid fog*, *mind fog*, *wind walk*, *teleport without error*, *vanish* and *imprisonment*. The granted power is the *shield of Ezra*, a supernatural ability that can be used once per day for 1 round per level. LN anchorites gain damage resistance 15/+1 to all physical attacks, and LE anchorites gain a +10 bonus to Will saves.

Borcan anchorites also have access to the Protection domain, and Darkonese anchorites have access to the Destruction domain.

Saving the Patient

Toret Gregory arrives at Neufurchtenburg 1d8 hours after dawn (somewhere between 7 am and 2 pm).

MARASMOS

The Cult begins the power ritual at noon, taking an hour to complete it.

If the heroes discussed Toret Gregory's arrival in front of any infected hosts, including other PCs, Marasmos has been warned of his arrival. When the Toret reaches the village, a party of 20 Lamordians at the third stage of the disease will attack him. They will try to infect him (Marasmos will then force the disease to progress further) or kill him. If the heroes don't help, the priest will almost certainly be infected, and will then go on to infect the other anchorites.

The Festival of Autumn, Marasmos' disguise for the power ritual, takes the form of a huge, wheeling dance in the center of Neufurchtenburg. More than 50 infected villagers are forced to participate, along with the surviving councilors, while another 50 protect the dancers from interference. A successful Spellcraft check (DC 20) lets the character recognise some of the designs created as magical sigils for summoning and channeling energy. If any PCs remain infected, Marasmos will try to advance their illness to the point where it can force them to join in.

Although the Cult has been planning this day for months to ensure that it runs smoothly, in the hour-long ritual there are many things that can go wrong. As such, there is a 20% chance that the ritual fails due to a mistake on Marasmos' part. The heroes can interrupt with any large-scale distractions. The DM should award a percentage chance of success for the distraction. Throwing burning straw into the square might be only 40%, while a spell like *stinking cloud* or *rain of horror* might be 100%.

If the ritual succeeds, Marasmos gains the *hyper regeneration* land based power, meaning it regains 10 hp per round once reduced below 0 hp, until it is healed. Alkiolytes and Cultists do not benefit from this, but it means that Marasmos can regenerate itself from the brink of destruction. Ravenloft will never be free of its corruption, and in a few decades, it will destroy all life in the demiplane.

If the ritual fails, a massive backlash of energy surges through the Cultists all over Ravenloft. As one, those infected throw back their heads and scream inhumanly, taking 1d6 damage per stage of infection. Those killed explode, and don't form alkiolytes. Almost all of those taking part in the ritual are killed. Those that remain, however, are out for blood.

If the heroes disrupted the ritual, any survivors begin to converge on them, dropping their illusion of humanity and acting as a single entity to tear them apart. Alkiolytes surge from the sewers to devour them with acid. If the PCs don't flee, they are doomed. The only place in Neufurchtenburg they are safe is the Church of Ezra. Even there however, Marasmos is

present: as they pass, the speared meat suddenly sprouts eyestalks, which turn to watch them with insane hatred.

Toret Gregory

Male Human Clr 11: CR 11; Medium sized Humanoid; HD 11d8+22; hp 75; Init +0; Spd 20 feet; AC 17 (+7 half-plate); Atk 19/+5 melee (1d8+1 longsword); SA Turn undead; AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +14; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +14, Diplomacy +12, Heal +12, Knowledge (religion) +9; Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell, Scribe Scroll.

Spell Domains: Mists, Law

Antibodies

Regardless of the success or failure of the power ritual, the Mystick Cage is completed at around one o'clock. If none of the PCs volunteer, Toret Gregory and Wardens Judas, Cain and Benedict enter the Cage. If Toret Gregory was killed or infected, Warden Judas begs a PC to read the spell, as none of the anchorites are of high enough level to do so. If they can't or won't, the Cult storms the temple, defiling and destroying everything within. The anchorites go down fighting to protect their adoptive home.

Since the suppuration is Marasmos' phylactery, an infected villagers or one of the hunks of meat from outside could be used, or even a particularly robust, infected PC with the hit points to spare.

Exactly what spells the anchorites cast are left up to the DM, but Toret Gregory advises his anchorites to memorize as many *sanctuary* spells as possible.

The sounds of the mob outside are deafening. The three Wardens, the Sentire and any PCs involved enter the Cage, and the ritual begins.

Marasmos is sucked out of the Cult members, instantly healing anyone of stages one to three and killing any alkiolytes or anyone at stage three. It appears on the podium in the center of the Cage in all its corpulent horror. Having been trapped before, Marasmos knows what to do. If the Cage has not been protected with precious metals, the demon's first action is to attack the troughs holding the holy water. As its acidic slime begins to break down the Cage, it assumes *gaseous form* and waits. Once the trough is breached, Marasmos oozes free and wreaks its revenge on its would-be captors. If it cannot attack the Cage, it is trapped and vents its frustration on whomever it can reach.

Remission

Neufurchtenburg, once a healthy, growing town, is almost devastated by the plague. Where it once had a population of nearly 1,000, little more than 700 people remain. The village's leaders have all been killed, leaving it without direction. Although the town will recover, it will take many years.

The Lamordians are left with confused memories of Marasmos' domination. However, all 'remember' that the anchorites caused the plague and murdered the healer. A few days after the battle with Marasmos, a mob attacks the temple. Any anchorites who do not flee are lynched, along with any PCs who remain in the temple. Marasmos' actions may not have had the effect it wanted, but it has made the people of Neufurchtenburg even more bitter and wary of religion than before. Their world is a darker and more suspicious place.

Recurrence

Marasmos is likely to escape from the heroes in this adventure. Although it may not destroy the heroes utterly, its alien mind will remember that they destroyed the Cult, and eventually the demon will avenge itself. It will begin to rebuild the Cult, using its *putrefy food and drink* ability to befoul food with the suppuration and then spread out from there. The Cult was destroyed once before, after all, but recovered. It can do so again.

The Lord of Suppuration and its reborn Cult can easily reappear in a number of different domains. Dominic d'Honaire, for example, would certainly be concerned if the Cult began subverting his carefully laid network of Obedients, and could hire the PCs as 'expendables' to remove the threat. Or Marasmos may appear in the sewers of Richemulot. Having infected Louise Renier (or another powerful creature), the PCs are caught between Jacqueline and her sister and must decide which evil to side with.

Finally, for the ambitious, this adventure may ignite an apocalyptic mini-campaign, where Marasmos' spreading evil threatens to wash over the Core like a gangrenous tidal wave. Can the players save the Demiplane of Dread from the taint of corruption?



QUIST

By Andrew Cermak

He had a decided propensity for bullying; derived no inconsiderable pleasure from the exercise of petty cruelty; and, consequently, was (it is needless to say) a coward.

—Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*



BIOGRAPHY



hen the weak are made strong, when the oppressed are given power, the results are not always idyllic. No one knows how to wield the lash like one who has felt its sting. The once-downtrodden imp Quist has been given the chance to hold the reins of power, and may the fates have mercy on those who feel his pull.

Appearance

As an imp, Quist resembles a tiny parody of the classic demonic image. He is small and spindly, with a pair of bat-like wings sprouting from his shoulder blades. His leathery skin is a pale, sickly yellow and seems to be tightly stretched over his gangly limbs. A pair of white horns jut from his forehead, curving back sharply over the crown of his head. A wickedly barbed tail, similar to a scorpion's, serves as his primary defense, but he also possesses sharp teeth which protrude over his bottom lip when his jaw is closed, and long claws which serve to make his thin fingers look even longer.

Phylactery

A weak and insignificant fiend, Quist does not have a phylactery; his life force lacks the strength to continue on after his death.

Quist

Male Imp (Devil): CR 2; Tiny Outsider (evil, lawful); HD 3d8; 16 hp; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 20 feet, fly 50' (perfect); AC 18 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural); Atk 1 sting +8 melee (1d4+poison), 1 bite +3 melee (1d2); Face/Reach 2 ½ ft x 2 ½ ft/0 ft; SA poison; SQ poison immunity, fire resistance 20, see in darkness, regeneration 2, damage reduction 5/silver, polymorph; SR 5; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +15, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Search +6, Spellcraft +6, Spot +4; Dodge, Weapon Finesse (sting).

Reality Wrinkle: 3,000-foot radius

Land-Based Powers: None

Corruption Index: 0

Background

The imp known as Quist began his existence in the depths of the Nine Hells, where he acted as a minor emissary in the service of the pit fiend Zaebo, one of the infamous and feared Dark Eight. Possessed of the same ambition which guides his larger cousins, the Baatezu, Quist was never satisfied with his position as a glorified errand boy. Unfortunately, opportunities for advancement within Hell's rigid hierarchy are rare, and for the lowly imps they are virtually nonexistent. Unable to move ahead, Quist tried to satisfy his desire for recognition and influence through a simple method, one which came naturally to him: lies. By boasting of false qualities and nonexistent accomplishments, Quist sought to elevate himself above his fellow imps.

Unfortunately, Quist was not particularly judicious with regard to the lies he chose to tell. It was not long before he had the incredible audacity to insist that he was a child of Zaebo himself! Zaebo was known to be a lusty fiend, and the possibility of his having an illegitimate child was hardly out of the question, but to suggest that such a mighty and feared tyrant as himself had begot a mere imp was an affront of the highest order.

For his part, Quist found that claiming one of the Dark Eight as a parent provided him with the respect he was looking for, but not for long. His enjoyment of his new status was cut short when he was seized by two of Zaebo's enforcers and dragged before a portal within the pit fiend's estate. This portal had served Zaebo well over the eons; it led to a barren and lifeless Prime world, where those who had earned the pit fiend's wrath could have undisturbed millennia to regret their misdeeds. Neither of the enforcers took any notice of the strange mist that had clouded the portal as they shoved Quist inside.

Expecting to awaken on a desolate rock, Quist was surprised to instead find himself lying in a grassy field within a wooded glade. Instead of taking him to the isolated prison world, the portal had delivered him to Ravenloft.

Quist was delighted to discover that he had circumvented the punishment that had been planned for him, and was even more pleased when he discovered that this strange new world he found himself in was inhabited primarily by humans. Humans, being so fragile, could be bossed, bullied and manipulated with amazing ease. He was no longer one of the weak, laboring in forced servitude to the strong; in this foreign place, he was a being of power. He set out to

find a suitable target to take his impish frustrations out on, and found one in the nearby village of Merecreek.

Using his innate ability to become invisible, Quist spied upon the villagers, learning what he could about the social structure and interrelationships of the villagers, and then set about subjugating them to his will, starting with the village's mayor. After a few days of thorough physical and psychological abuse, Quist had the mayor firmly under his thumb, and so began the reign of the demiplane's tiniest tyrant.

Personality

Quist is a petty and vindictive little monster who has been eagerly waiting for the opportunity to inflict his aggressions on something weaker than himself. In Hell, there was no such opportunity; as an imp, he was subject to the cruel whims of the more powerful devils. Here in Ravenloft, on the other hand, there are scores of defenseless victims to lord over.

Quist is the proverbial bully, cruel and unflinching before those weaker than him, yet cowardly and conciliatory when faced with a superior. If successfully chastened by a greater force, he will become the ultimate sycophant, fawning and groveling before his better, and all the while looking for an opportunity for treachery. His cruelty and craftiness combine with his petty and spiteful nature to make for a dangerous creature to cross.

Combat

Quist is dangerous in combat because of the powerful venom secreted from his barbed tail. This attack is usually so effective that Quist rarely bothers with anything else. His primary goal in combat is always to find an opening to strike with his tail. On the rare occasions that he does not want to completely incapacitate his victims (for example, when torturing a helpless villager), Quist will instead use his sharp claws and teeth.

Due to his relative weakness, Quist is unable to undergo power rituals, and his reality wrinkle is almost unnoticeable.

Spell-like Abilities: At will—*detect chaos*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (self only).

Once per day—*suggestion* (save DC is 13). These abilities take effect as if cast by a 6th-level sorcerer. Due to his disgrace, he is no longer able to *commune*. Ravenloft has warped his natural *detect good* ability into a *detect chaos* ability.

Poison (Ex): Quist's barbed tail secretes a terrible paralytic venom. Victims of his stinger takes initial damage 1d4 temporary Dex damage, secondary damage 2d4 temporary Dex damage. The Fort save DC to resist this is 13.

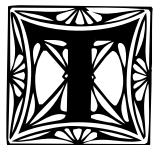
Polymorph (Sp): At will, Quist may transform himself into either a raven, or a tiny viper, as if he were

QUIST

a 12th level sorcerer using a *polymorph self* spell. This transformation is a standard action.

Regeneration (Ex): Quist is unable to regenerate damage from acid and holy or blessed weapons (if silver or enchanted).

LITTLE THINGS



his adventure is set in the village of Merecreek, a small village which Quist seeks to make his own. The heroes, during their stay in the village, will discover that something strange is occurring, which will lead to a confrontation with Quist himself.

Merecreek can be easily placed in any Ravenloft domain or in any campaign world; the names of individuals and places make it particularly appropriate for a domain such as Mordent, but they can be easily changed to accommodate a more exotic setting.

The adventure is designed for four characters of levels 1–3. A silver or magical weapon is necessary for the heroes to be able to harm Quist.

Background

Merecreek was the first village Quist came upon after he began exploring his new surroundings, and it took only a brief period of observation for him to decide it was the perfect place to take up residence. Merecreek is a small village, and for the most part the people are simple farmers and laborers; there was unlikely to be any significant resistance to his depredations.

Quist's spying revealed that the village of Merecreek is governed by a mayor and a small Council of Elders, who jointly decide on matters of importance. The mayor and the members of the council are all highly regarded and well-respected in the community, and if he could control them he could easily control the remaining villagers. Quist set his sights on the mayor first.

Mayor Lawrence Pollard has been the mayor of Merecreek for the past six years. He is well-liked because, for the most part, he lets the villagers do as they please. Sadly, his wife died of fever just a few weeks ago, and Pollard has been deeply depressed since her passing. The people of Merecreek have been understanding, and the Council has assumed most of the duties of governing while Pollard has been in mourning. He had just been starting to come out of his depression when Quist paid him a visit in the night.

Pollard awoke with the imp perched on his chest, its tail snaking in front of his face. He screamed and tried to leap to his feet, but Quist held him down with

surprising strength. A few snarls of warning and shallow scratches from his claws, and Quist had the mayor sufficiently chastened.

Quist made it clear that unless the mayor did exactly what he was told, he would be slain, along with the rest of the people of Merecreek. Pollard, already disheartened by his wife's recent death, lacked the strength of will to stand up to a fiend from hell, and submitted to Quist's demands.

For now, Quist has commanded Pollard to await instructions, while he goes about subjugating the Council of Elders. Quist has only recently begun to spy on the Council members when the adventurers arrive in Merecreek.

The Adventure Begins

The adventurers come upon the village of Merecreek while they are en route to another destination. It is in the middle of fall, and the weather has just recently begun to turn nasty. Rain has been falling for the past few days, and it shows signs of getting worse. Flashes of lightning have just begun to appear in the morning sky when they arrive at the village. A few men still walk the village's muddy paths, making last minute preparations for the coming storm.

Those who are still about are not in much of a mood for conversation. The rain is falling harder and the wind is picking up, and their chief interest is in finishing their business and returning to the warmth of their homes. If the adventurers attempt to question any of the villagers, they will get a friendly but curt response. The villagers will tell them that the roads are being closed off by the sheriff until the storm passes, and therefore the adventurers will likely have to find shelter for the night. They will be directed to what the villagers call "Trafton's place," a large, square house just a short ways down the road. If the adventurers continue on, they will soon come to "Trafton's place."

Shelter from the Storm

"Trafton's place" is the home of Mira Trafton, one of Merecreek's Council of Elders. She had lived there with her husband until his death several years ago. After his death, she found that their home was too large for her by herself, and opened it up to the public. The first floor of Mira's home now acts as a meeting place for the villagers of Merecreek, and the extra rooms are open to boarders. Mira's home is the closest thing the village of Merecreek has to an inn.

Trafton's home is open to all comers, and those who enter will be warmly greeted by Mira herself. Mira is an older woman, in her late fifties, but she

retains the energy of her youth. She is always pleased to have visitors, and will insist that the heroes shed their traveling gear and warm themselves by the fire. She will happily offer them a room to stay in, and will not request payment in return, though she will not refuse it if offered.

There are almost always a few guests in the Trafton home besides Mira herself, so this is an excellent place for the adventurers to ask about the village of Merecreek and its inhabitants. In addition to basic information about the village, the adventurers can gather the following rumors from Mira and her guests, plus any other red herrings the DM wishes to drop:

- ❖ Cole Dwilleg's been acting mighty strangely recently. Nobody seems to know why, but it's pretty clear that he's not himself. (This is true, but there's nothing sinister about it. Dwilleg has fallen in love recently, and is thinking of proposing to the girl. See below for more information on Dwilleg.)
- ❖ The mayor's wife died a few weeks back, and he had a hard time dealing with it. For a time it looked like he might be getting better, but recently he's seemed worse than ever. (As revealed above, this is true.)
- ❖ It's a good thing you arrived in Merecreek when you did. It's well known that goblins haunt this countryside during storms; any one caught traveling during a thunderstorm is unlikely to be heard from again. (This is untrue; Merecreek has never been prone to supernatural depredations until now.)

Unbeknownst to the PCs, while they converse with Trafton and her guests, they are being watched by a third party: Quist, who has been invisibly observing Trafton in order to determine whether she will need to be dealt with. He has come to the conclusion that she was a relatively minor figure in the town and could be saved for a later time—the heroes now have his full attention instead. He does not like the look of them at all, and has decided that they need to be removed somehow. He will bide his time until nightfall, at which point he will take action.

Mira Trafton, Female Human Com1: CR ½; Medium-size Human; HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk –1 melee (1d2–1, unarmed); AL NG; SV Fort +0 Ref +0 Will +2; Str 8, Dex 11; Con 11, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 13.
Skills and Feats: Profession (innkeeper) +7, Ride +4, Knowledge (local) +5; Skill focus (Profession), Skill focus (Knowledge).

Exploring Merecreek

Though these aren't the best conditions under which to be wandering, the adventurers can freely explore the village of Merecreek if they don't mind exposure to the elements. There isn't much to see outdoors, even under the best of weather: a few trees, flowers, and wild grasses. There are, however, a few buildings of interest:

The Mayor's House

The mayor has not been particularly open to visitors the past few weeks, and with a devil lurking constantly over his shoulder he has been even less inclined to conversation. He will be curt with any visitors, and will not under any circumstances let anyone into his home. Characters who spend time talking with the mayor can make a Sense Motive check to see if they notice anything wrong. If they succeed, they will note that the mayor seems nervous about something, but won't be able to tell the origins of his anxiety. If the characters press the mayor about his nervousness, he will ask them to leave. Should they force themselves inside, not only will they not find any outward signs of anything being wrong, but they will be in big trouble with Sheriff Millner.

Pollard is in his forties, with graying hair and thick sideburns. He is on the paunchy side. Under normal circumstances, he is an amiable fellow, but the current situation is far from normal.

Lawrence Pollard, Male Human Com1: CR ½; Medium-size Human; HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d2, unarmed); AL N; SV Fort +0 Ref +0 Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10; Con 10, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 14.
Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (local) +7, Ride +4; Skill focus (Diplomacy), Skill focus (Knowledge).

The General Store

The only shop in Merecreek is operated by Leonard Mackey; the shop also serves as his home. Mackey is a wealthy merchant from Mordentshire (or any large, nearby settlement) who grew tired of his old environs and relocated to Merecreek, a smaller and much more relaxing place to live. He still maintains ties with Mordentshire, and has goods delivered from there every couple weeks. What little prosperity the village of Merecreek has can, in many ways, be attributed to Mackey. It should come as no surprise that he is part of the Council of Elders.

Mackey's shop sells basic food items and equipment. He does not sell any type of armor, nor any type of weapons save for small hunting knives.

QUIST

Mackey himself is a quiet man, but a friendly one. He is in his early fifties, with white hair. He is tall and thin. He has no relatives in Merecreek, and is a private individual.

For the most part, Quist has ignored Mackey. He does not see Mackey as vital to controlling the town, and is content to let him run as shop as normal for the moment.

Leonard Mackey, Male Human Com1: CR ½; Medium-size Human; HD 1d4; hp 3; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk -1 melee (1d2-1, unarmed); AL LN; SV Fort -1, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 9, Dex 10; Con 9, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 10.
Skills and Feats: Bluff +2, Diplomacy +4, Profession (shopkeeper) +8; Skill focus (Diplomacy), Skill focus (Profession).

The Church

The people of Merecreek are devoted to the goddess Ezra, but they have nothing to compare to the cathedrals that are typically built in the goddess' honor. Instead, the church of Merecreek is a building much like any other.

Merecreek's minister is Toret Thomas Healey. Though he does not live at the church, he can usually be found there. Although young for a minister, Healey is regarded as wise beyond his years by the people of Merecreek. His father was the minister before him, and he is proud to carry on his father's work.

Healey will be happy to talk with the heroes on nearly any subject. He does not tolerate gossip, and so will not talk in detail about the personal lives of any of Merecreek's inhabitants, but if pressed he will admit that he is somewhat concerned about Mayor Pollard. He will tell them about his wife's recent death, and the depression that resulted. Having spent long sessions consoling and counseling the mayor, he had thought that he was on the way to accepting the loss, but now he suddenly seems more withdrawn than ever.

Quist has actively avoided Healey so far. He correctly believes that the Toret is the least likely of the Elders to submit to his threats, and he does not want to have to tip his hand by eliminating him just yet. Once the other Elders have been dealt with, he will see about disposing of Healey.

Thomas Healey, Male Human Clr1 (Ezra): CR 1; Medium-size Human; HD 1d8+1; hp 9; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk Light mace +1 melee (1d6+1); AL LG; SV Fort +3 Ref +1 Will +5; Str 13, Dex 12; Con 13, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 15.
Skills and Feats: Concentration +5, Diplomacy +6, Heal +7, Listen +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5; Alertness, Iron Will.

Spells Prepared (3; 1+1): Cure Minor Wounds, Guidance, Resistance; Bless, Sanctuary*.

An asterix denotes a domain spell. Healy has access to the Mists and Protection domains. The granted power for the Mists domain is the *Shield of Ezra*, a magical barrier that grants him damage resistance 25/+5 against metal weapons. It has a duration of 1 rd.

The last remaining village elders are Sheriff John Millner and Doctor William Kinard. Millner has been sheriff in Merecreek for twelve years; he takes his job seriously, and is a strict, no-nonsense individual. Quist is avoiding Millner, whom he senses would be difficult to intimidate. Kinard is a moderately skilled doctor, but not as skilled as he thinks he is. He is in his fifties, and is well known as a grump and a loner.

Sheriff Millner, Male Human War2: CR 1; Medium-size Human; HD 2d8+2; hp 15; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 armour); Atk Longsword +5 melee (1d8+2, crit 19-20); AL LG; SV Fort +4 Ref +2 Will +1; Str 14, Dex 15; Con 12, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 12.
Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +6, Jump +7, Listen +3, Ride +7, Spot +5, Swim +7; Alertness, Weapon Focus (longsword)

William Kinard, Male Human Exp1: CR ½; Medium-size Human; HD 1d6; hp 4; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk -1 melee (1d2-1, unarmed); AL N; SV Fort +0 Ref +3 Will +3; Str 9, Dex 13; Con 10, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 8.
Skills and Feats: Bluff +3, Concentration +4, Diplomacy +3, Heal +5, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +5, Profession (doctor) +7, Search +7, Sense Motive +5; Lightning Reflexes, Skill focus (Profession)

Leaving Merecreek

It is entirely possible that the characters will decide to try and leave Merecreek at this point of the adventure. After all, it is not immediately clear that there is any menace for them to face. Unfortunately for them, leaving Merecreek is, for the moment, easier said than done. As some of the villagers may have mentioned, the Sheriff and his men have closed off the road from Merecreek, in response to the coming storm. What is not generally known is that the roads were closed off by order of the mayor, who had them closed at the command of Quist.

Quist has decided to take advantage of the storm, using it to restrict the traffic to and from the village and thereby reduce the number of possible complications to his plans. Having the roads closed in the name of public safety is a way of keeping all the villagers in one place without attracting too much scrutiny.

Should the characters attempt to leave by way of the road, they will be stopped at the village limits by Cole Dwilleg, the sheriff's deputy. Dwilleg's home is close to the makeshift barricade that has been erected across this end of the road, and he and a few other men are keeping an eye on it. As the PCs approach the barricade, Dwilleg will notice them, and he and his men will walk out to meet them.

Dwilleg is kind man, and will be almost apologetic as he explains the situation to the characters, but he will stand firm. He will make it clear that the road has been closed until the storm passes, to prevent any travelers from becoming lost or injured. He can't allow anyone to leave Merecreek until the storm has passed. They can talk to the sheriff if they have a problem with this, but Dwilleg confides that he is under orders from the mayor, so there's not really anything he can do about it, either.

Cole Dwilleg, Male Human War1: CR ½; Medium-size Human; HD 1d8+1; hp 8; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 armour); Atk Longsword +4 melee (1d8+2, crit 19-20); AL LG; SV Fort +3 Ref +1 Will +0; Str 15, Dex 12; Con 13, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Craft (carpenter) +6, Ride +6, Swim +6; Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

If the characters are persistent, they will be able to get out of Merecreek eventually. The village is not being watched from all sides, after all. In fact, leaving the village is as simple as avoiding the main road. Adventurers who decide to take this way out should be allowed to try, but should be made to pay for it in some way. They have been warned about the storm, after all.

Rough Night

Assuming that the heroes will decide to stay in Merecreek to wait out the storm, they will most likely be staying in Mira Trafton's home. Their rooms will be on the second floor of the house; she can spare no more than two rooms at the moment, so the adventurers will have to share. Once night falls and the heroes have settled into their rooms, Quist will make his move.

He doesn't want to kill the heroes just yet, as he does not want the villagers to suspect that something strange is going on; instead, he hopes he can scare the heroes out of town. He now regrets having barred villagers from leaving during the storm; otherwise, the heroes might have left of their own will. He hopes he can salvage the situation by scaring them sufficiently that they will leave as soon as the storm breaks.

Quist will start off small. Waiting until the heroes sleep, he will change to his raven form and fly to one of the windows. A selected character will be rudely

awakened by a loud staccato rapping sound at the bedroom window. Presumably, the PC will rise to investigate the noise at the window. When he or she does so, read the following text:

Rising from your bed and walking slowly to the window, you peer through the glass and out into the storm-soaked night. You don't see anything through the falling rain . . . but, wait, was that movement? You continue to stare out the window, trying to make out any shapes . . .

Suddenly, there is a rush of movement just outside the window, and you stumble back from the window, surprised. Looking out the glass, you see a raven, rapidly flapping its wings against the stormy winds. You are surprised that it can stay aloft in this weather, much less be able to flutter so deliberately outside your window. The raven turns its head to the side, its eye staring back at you as you stare at it. It holds your gaze for a moment, then turns its head back and raps its beak against the window once. Suddenly, it is gone; though you can't be certain, it seemed like the raven had vanished into the air rather than flown away.

A few hours later, when they are presumably in a deeper state of slumber, Quist will make another attempt to frighten the heroes. He will fly up to one of the windows (if the heroes are staying in multiple rooms, he will target a different room this time). Quist will slowly and quietly open the window and fly inside the room. He will gently alight at the foot of a selected hero's bed, and will assume his snake form. Read the following text to the selected player:

Your sleep is interrupted by the sting of cold wind against your face. Opening your eyes, you see that the bedroom window has been opened. Rain is drenching the corner of the room, carried on the wind.

Your attention is suddenly diverted by the feeling of movement at the foot of your bed. Looking down, you see a dark, sinuous shape reclining. A low hissing sound emanates from it, and a long, black tendril rises up. Your eyes begin to adjust to the darkness, and you can make out dull scales, yellow eyes with slitted pupils, and gleaming white fangs...

This is cause for a fear check. Whatever the results, the snake will suddenly vanish; Quist turns invisible and flies out the window. Assuming the hero is still lucid following the fear check, a successful Intelligence check will reveal that the snake's weight still rested on the bed for a moment after it "vanished."

Quist will not directly bother the heroes the rest of the night, but he will take one additional measure before morning comes. Shortly before dawn, he will

QUIST

steal into Mira Trafton's room. While she sleeps, he will implant a suggestion, to take effect when she greets the heroes in the morning; Mira will be delivering a little message for him.

Unfriendly Tidings

The storm will have spent most of its fury that night; by the morning, the rain will have diminished significantly. Any villagers the heroes talk to will be quite relieved by the storm's sudden break; they had thought it would get much, much worse.

Shortly after they awaken, the heroes will be greeted by Mira Trafton, who will ask how they slept. Whatever their response, Mira's eyes will glaze over, and she will begin speaking in a slow monotone:

What you experienced last night was merely a warning. Leave Merecreek quickly, or prepare yourself for much worse.

The message delivered, Mira will be freed from Quist's *suggestion* spell, and will be disoriented and vaguely frightened. She will not remember delivering the message. If the heroes question her, she won't be able to tell them much; she remembers having disturbing dreams, but cannot remember their content.

After that strange experience, Mira will be rather disturbed in the heroes' presence, and even more so if they have related what happened to them in the night. She is a somewhat superstitious woman, and fears that they have brought the attention of evil spirits upon her home. Though she won't throw them out just yet, she will be distant and avoid them if possible.

Meanwhile, Quist will be invisibly watching the heroes. The roads will be open once more, at the "mayor's request," and he is hoping that they will take this opportunity to leave. Hopefully, the heroes will be sufficiently intrigued or concerned to stay and investigate matters further. If it becomes clear that they do intend to stay awhile longer, Quist will be enraged, and will decide to take things further. Returning to Pollard's house, he will command Pollard to pay Mira a visit while she is away from the heroes. Since she is trying to avoid them, this should not prove difficult.

At Quist's command, Pollard will confide to Trafton that he is concerned about the adventurers' presence in Merecreek; specifically, he is concerned that they have brought the attention of something *evil* upon the town. Since this matches up perfectly with her own recent fears, she will immediately concur with Pollard's professed fears. At Pollard's suggestion, he and Mira will begin to visit the other village elders, relaying their concerns.

Of the elders, Mackey and Kinard will take the mayor's concerns to heart, and from that point on will be cold and distant toward the heroes. Healey will be skeptical; while he certainly believes in spirits of evil, and might be convinced that one is plaguing Merecreek, he does not believe that the heroes are necessarily the source. Millner will humor Pollard and Trafton, but privately he believes their concerns to be groundless.

With four of the six elders now suspicious of the heroes, it will not take long for that suspicion to filter to the rest of the town. The longer the heroes stay in Merecreek, the more animosity they will encounter from the townsfolk. Mira Trafton will request that they leave her home; Healey will offer them lodgings at the church; it is not as comfortable a resting place as Trafton's home, but it is the best they will find in Merecreek now. Healey will also explain the sudden current of distrust against the heroes, and will share his own belief that something evil is plaguing the town and perhaps the heroes themselves. He will request that they stay awhile and look into the matter.

In the meantime, Quist will decide to consolidate his control of Merecreek. He will visit both Mackey and Kinard individually that night, waking them from their sleep, much as he did to Pollard. He will torture both men in the same manner he did Pollard, only this time, to



prevent them from possibly going to the heroes for help, he will claim to be a familiar of a selected hero! By the time Quist is done, both men will be utterly terrified of Quist *and* the heroes. When they encounter the heroes thereafter, they will not be able to conceal their fear. The other villagers will notice that Mackey and Kinard are acting strangely; most will blame the heroes in some fashion, some going so far as to claim the heroes have cursed them!

Assassin

When Mackey and Kinard are firmly under his thumb, and most of the villagers frightened or hostile toward the heroes, Quist will be ready to eliminate them. Too cowardly to risk his own hide, Quist will seek out a patsy, and will find one in Cole Dwilleg. Not only is Dwilleg a strong and healthy young man, a suitable assassin in Quist's eyes, but he also hopes that using Dwilleg will serve as a warning to Sheriff Millner, one of the few villagers Quist fears.

Quist will visit Dwilleg in the night and use his *suggestion* power to send him against the heroes. Under Quist's power, Dwilleg will grab his sword and head to the heroes' resting place, where he will attempt to kill them. He will clearly not be acting under his own will; he will be clumsy and unfocused, and unresponsive to any of the heroes' words. The heroes, who by now will likely have prepared for danger, should have no trouble disarming and subduing him. Should they kill Dwilleg, the DM might be justified in calling for a powers check, depending on the circumstances.

Once the fight is over, assuming Dwilleg survives, he will be free of Quist's spell and will be confused and disoriented. He will not know how he got there or why he would attack the heroes. He will request that they summon Sheriff Millner. Millner will be shocked by the story, but will believe Dwilleg's protestations of innocence. He will now be fully convinced that something sinister is plaguing the town. He will suggest that they speak to Mackey or Kinard, both of whom have started acting strangely. Regardless of whom the heroes decide to speak to first, the terrified elder will reveal everything, sobbing as he speaks of the "winged demon" that assaulted them in the night. As proof, they will show the small tooth and claw wounds that cover their torsos and limbs.

Confrontation

Once the heroes discover that a demon is terrorizing the elders of Merecreek, it likely will not take them long to decide to investigate Mayor Pollard. If nothing else, Millner will suggest they seek him out to warn

him. At this point in the adventure, Pollard will be actively hostile. He will refuse to speak to the heroes, and if they want to confront him they will have to force the issue. Should they decide to force themselves inside the mayor's home, Sheriff Millner will acquiesce; he is determined to get to the bottom of this matter.

Pollard will be outwardly outraged that the heroes have forced themselves into his home, and will demand that they leave. A successful Wisdom check, however, will reveal that the mayor's rage is a mask for fear: He is utterly terrified by the heroes' presence. If none of the heroes make a successful Wisdom check and Millner is accompanying them, he will point this out; he has known Pollard long enough to recognize that he is afraid.

If the heroes try to calm Pollard or to physically subdue him, he will try to maintain his bluster for a moment, but will soon break down into frightened sobs. He will fall to his knees, pleading: "Please, please, you must protect me from it . . . it will kill me . . ."

At this point, Quist will make himself visible, hovering just behind Pollard. His tail will dart out once, striking Pollard behind the neck. Pollard's sobs will suddenly cease as his eyes widen in surprise. His hands will fly to his throat, and he will begin making horrific gurgling sounds. Within seconds, he becomes completely paralysed – even a detailed examination won't reveal that he is still alive. Witnessing the mayor's "death" is cause for a horror check.

The heroes are now faced with Quist himself, but Quist is not particularly interested in fighting a group of prepared adventurers. He will fend off their attacks as best he can, and fight back if necessary, but escape is primary on his mind. He will use his flight and invisibility to stay out of range of the heroes' attacks as best he can, while looking for an avenue of escape.

Pollard remains in this paralysed state for 2 days. Unless the heroes interfere, he will revive during the middle of his own funeral, sitting up from the open casket as Thomas Healy reads his eulogy.

Recurrence

With his invisibility and flight, Quist should be able to make his escape from Merecreek unless the heroes are particularly lucky or clever. However, being the spiteful little monster that he is, Quist will not be satisfied with having escaped; he will want revenge on the heroes for spoiling his fun. Given this, Quist will not flee far; once he is convinced the heroes have stopped actively pursuing them, he will return and shadow them, looking for small ways to make their lives miserable. Should they discover him, he will flee once more, only to return again. They will not be permanently free of the imp until they finally kill him.

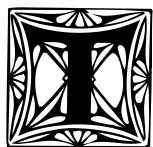
THE STRAW GOD

By Luiz Eduardo Peret

*One soweth and another reapeth is a
verity that applies to evil as well
as good.*

—George Eliot

BIOGRAPHY



he Crop-Watcher's temple stands empty now in Goldendale, stout boards covering its windows and doors. The streets are quiet, but for the cawing of crows and occasional cautious footsteps.

The fields are parched and brown, save for a furrow here and there that grows lush and green. Few people are left, and those that survive do so only because the

Straw God allows it. Goldendale's fields are hungry for fresh blood.

Appearance

In this adventure, the Straw God appears as nothing more than a tall scarecrow. Standing about 7' tall, its body seems to be made entirely of straw, though its facial features are distinct and it moves with the speed and fluidity of life. It drapes its straw form in the blood- and dirt-stained chasuble formerly worn by the Crop-Watcher's priest in Goldendale. Whether this scarecrow shape is the Straw God's true form or not is unknown. No other manifestations are known, however.

Phylactery

As the Straw God is not a demon in the strict sense of the word, it does not have a phylactery. However, it is a nature spirit very much like a dryad, and it is closely linked to a particular feature of the land: an ancient witch hazel tree in the midst of a small grove, the only remnant of an ancient forest that was cleared for cropland. Finding and chopping down this tree is the only way to permanently destroy the Straw God. The Straw God can tell when the tree is harmed, and uses its *transport via plants* ability to come immediately to the scene if someone takes an axe to the tree.

The Straw God

Medium-Size Fey: CR 12; HD 12d6+36; 78 hp; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 feet; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +8 natural); Atk 2 slams +11 melee (1d4+5); SA Spell-like abilities, fear gaze, create spirit crow; SQ Regeneration 2, damage reduction 20/+2, SR 22, fire and electricity resistance 20, immune to cold, acid, and poison; AL NE, SV Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +11; Str 21, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +19, Concentration +17, Intimidate +19, Sense Motive +17, Knowledge (nature) +10, Wilderness Lore +11; Dodge, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave.

Reality Wrinkle: 24,000-foot radius

Land-Based Powers: None

Corruption Index: 0



Background

Liesl Protchen was the leader of a coven of evil witches in the small hamlet of Goldendale. One day her crimes caught up with her, however, and a detachment of soldiers from the nearby city arrived at her doorstep and dragged her off to be executed. When she was burned at the stake, the demon she served—a perverted spirit of nature known as the Straw God—sent a blight on the surrounding land. Crops withered in the fields, leaving the entire region dry and brown.

Liesl's husband Vendi was not the only farmer in Goldendale driven to desperation by the famine. Combined with the loss of his wife, however, the famine drove him to the brink of madness. He neglected his children, spending every waking hour in his fields, pleading with the crops to grow. His neighbors were not surprised to learn he had started hearing voices whispering to him from the dry stalks of wheat, and they shook their heads with pity.

The voice in the wheat told Vendi what he had to do to make his crops grow again. That evening, Vendi entered the Crop-Watcher's temple in Goldendale while the priest was singing his evening prayers before the altar. Swinging his scythe, he slaughtered the helpless old man, then lifted his body and carried it out into his field. Dragging the corpse down each furrow, Vendi watched the priest's blood seep into the ground and revive the withered stalks of wheat.

When the last drop of blood had drained from the priest's body, a humanoid shape seemed to materialize among the waving stalks and step toward Vendi. The scarecrow-like figure stood 7' tall and wore a triumphant smile on its straw face. Stooping to the priest's lifeless body, the scarecrow pulled off the blood- and dirt-smeared chasuble and draped it over his own shoulders before speaking to the dumbstruck farmer.

"You have proven yourself worthy, Vendi—worthy of taking your dead Liesl's place as my high priest," the scarecrow said in its whispering voice. "Indeed, you shall rise higher than she ever did: you shall rule Goldendale, even this whole nation if you obey my commands. At your command the crops will wither or grow, and you shall control who has food and who does not. Only bow and worship me." Vendi fell to his knees in adoration.

Goldendale has become a village trembling under the tyrannical rule of the Straw God and his high priest. The many dead first undergo a blasphemous transformation at the hands of the Straw God, who gives their spirits undead life in the form of gaunt, horrific crows. Then their bodies are dragged through a loyal farmer's fields, their blood giving life to a furrow or two of grain. Mobs of undead spirit crows carry out

the Straw God's will, pecking to death anyone who dares to speak ill of the god or cast doubt on his beneficence.

Most of the villagers obey the commands of the Straw God and his high priest out of fear, mixed with desperation born of hunger. A few, however, are attracted by the evil power the Straw God offers, and Liesl Protchen's old coven of witches has grown since its revival under Vendi's leadership.

Personality

The Straw God depends on the worship of mortals to sustain its power. Though it is but a minor nature spirit, it has thrived in the fields around Goldendale for centuries thanks to the secret worship of a coven of witches. Liesl Protchen was only the latest in a line of witch leaders stretching back generations. With her execution, however, the Straw God grew frustrated with the secretive approach it has taken in the past, and angry at the temporal powers that ordered her death. As a result, it has begun to operate in the open, effectively ruling the town, through Vendi, by virtue of its fearsome power.

The Straw God is incredibly arrogant, viewing itself as vastly superior to any mortal. It is accustomed to being greeted with terror, awe, and obedience, and may at first be amused and somewhat baffled by characters who do not respond this way. Like a petulant child, however, it quickly loses interest in novelty and lashes out at anything that displeases it—usually through its favorite minions, the spirit crows.

Combat

The Straw God prefers to order its minions into combat rather than confront danger personally. It overwhelms opponents with its spirit crows, commands loyal farmers to defend it, and only when these lines of defense fail does it enter into melee. Once it does, however, it is a terrifying opponent. Its straw fists are powered by incredible strength, easily bludgeoning its enemies to death.

Spell-like Abilities: At will—*charm monster*, *desecrate*, *detect good*, *detect magic*, *diminish plants*, *entangle*, *magic circle against good*, *major image*, *plant growth*, *suggestion*, *transport via plants*, *unholy aura*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 12th-level sorcerer (save DCs, where applicable, are 15 + spell level), except as follows. The Straw God's *transport via plants* ability allows it to move about at will anywhere within fields of grain; it does not require a plant Medium-size or larger. It can also use *plant growth* and *diminish plants* to affect fields rapidly, instead of in the long term. The stunting effect is

THE STRAW GOD

instantaneous, and actually causes grain to shrivel on the stalk. The enrichment effect requires human blood soaking into the earth, but likewise works instantaneously, causing dry and withered grain to spring to life.

Fear Gaze (Su): Causes creature to become panicked (–2 morale penalty on saving throws, flee for 12 rounds), 30 feet, Will save (DC 21).

Create Spirit Crow (Sp): At will, the Straw God can create a spirit crow – a gaunt, horrific raven – from the body of a creature that has died within the last hour. Creating a spirit crow is a full-round action. If a person's spirit is made into a spirit crow, that person cannot be raised from the dead. Spirit crows have the following statistics:

Spirit Crow: CR 1/2; Tiny Undead; HD 2d12+3; hp 16 (average); Init +1 (Dex); Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft.; AC 13 (+2 size, +1 Dex); Atk +5 melee (1d4, bite); SQ Undead; Face 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 9, Dex 12, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 3. *Feats:* Toughness.

Regeneration (Ex): The Straw God takes normal damage from blessed or holy weapons of at least +2 enchantment.

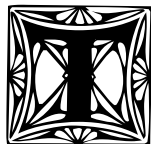
Vendi Protchen, male human Adp6: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft.-7 in. tall); HD 5d6+3; hp 22; Init –1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (–1 Dex, +2 amulet); Atk +4 melee (2d4/crit x4, scythe); AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +6, Profession (farmer) +10, Wilderness Lore +8; Martial Weapon Proficiency (scythe), Skill Focus (Profession), Toughness, Weapon Focus (scythe).

Spells (3/3/1): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds, mending*; 1st—*cause fear, command, obscuring mist*; 2nd—*bull's strength*.

Possessions: amulet of natural armor +2, potion of cure serious wounds.

STRAW BEFORE THE WIND



his adventure features the heroes' attempt to drive the Straw God out of Goldendale and return the village to some semblance of normalcy. "Straw Before the Wind" is designed for four characters of about 8th level—high enough to have a chance of defeating the Straw God (CR 12), while low enough for the final confrontation to be a very difficult challenge. If you use higher-level characters, you may

want to increase the number or level of the witches, and Vendi Protchen's level as well.

The adventure assumes that Goldendale is a tiny farming village on the island of Liffe, in the Nocturnal Sea of the RAVENLOFT campaign setting. It is easily relocated to any temperate farmland, whether in another Ravenloft domain or another campaign world entirely. The adventure takes place in autumn.

Goldendale (thorp): Monstrous; AL NE; 40 gp limit; Assets 140 gp; Population 73; Isolated (human 73).

Authority Figures: The Straw God; Vendi Protchen, male human Adp6.

Important Characters: Tam Belden, human male War4 (farmer, retired militia); Thordin Markel, human male Exp2 (smith in building #2); Jereed Mel, human female Com7 (general merchant/town matriarch).

Others: Militia, War2 (2); Militia, War1 (1); Com3 (2), Exp1 (2), War1 (2), Com1 (59).

The Adventure Begins

The player characters should enter Goldendale by chance, on their way to greener pastures. You, as Dungeon Master, can invent any reason for the characters to be traveling to or from nearby Moondale or Armeikos, or toss them a red herring indicating that something they seek might be found in Goldendale. For whatever reason, the heroes are on the road near Goldendale when the adventure begins. Read the following text to the players.

The autumn wind blows cold with the promise of frost tonight as the sky darkens over the rolling hills. The distant trees are ablaze with fall colors, and the smell of autumn fills the air. The fields alongside the road, though, are not exactly ripe for harvest—the corn is dead and dry, rasping in the breeze. Crows circling overhead caw to one another as if announcing your approach.

Though the fields seem deserted, there are signs of life still down the road—you spot a few plumes of smoke rising into the cold sky, promising warmth and perhaps refreshment before nightfall. A large crow, apparently unfazed by your presence, eyes you from a fencepost, watching you pass before taking off again in a soft rustle of feathers.

The crow is a spirit crow, described under the Straw God's statistics above. If the PCs attack it, it flies off immediately.

Spirit Crow: hp 17.

If the PCs decide to avoid Goldendale, night falls quickly, cloaking them in total darkness by the time they have reached the half-way point in their circle around the village. Refer to the description of the fields in the “Goldendale Locations” section for potential encounters while the PCs either make camp or continue on in the darkness.

If the PCs enter the village, read them the following description:

The dry fields give way to a tiny village, and the road emerges between two darkened buildings. A crow lands with a rustle of wings atop the building to your right, but otherwise the village is deathly silent. Dim, flickering lights shine through a few windows, but the only place where there seems to be any activity at all—aside from the ever-present crows—is a long building just ahead and to the left.

The long building is the gathering house, building 3 on the village map. See “Goldendale Locations.”

The First Day

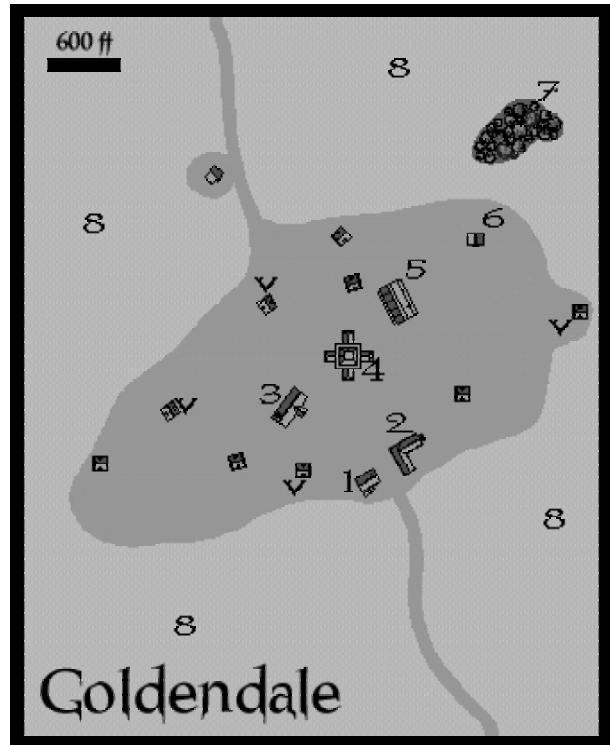
Cool Welcome

Whether the heroes head to the gathering house or visit other buildings in the village, they find the villagers uncooperative, but not hostile. Any villager has an initial reaction of Unfriendly, requiring a significant Diplomacy or Charisma check to make any headway in dealings with them (Indifferent, DC 15; Friendly, DC 25; Helpful, DC 40). Despite the villagers’ recalcitrance, the heroes should quickly get a broad view of the situation: the fields are failing, the temple is deserted, great evil is afoot, and the farmers are terrified.

At some point while the characters are talking to farmers, one of the villagers says something about the Straw God. At that instant, there is a ruffle of feathers in the window, and one of the Straw God’s spirit crows alights. It seems to fix its empty black eye sockets on the farmer who spoke, who refuses to utter another word. None of the other farmers explain, no matter how they are pressed, and the Straw God’s name does not get mentioned again.

If the characters ask about the deserted temple in the middle of town (if they noticed it), one of the farmers hesitantly explains:

“It’s... it’s the Crop-Watcher’s temple, closed down now since old Dodien... well, he’s gone now. So we... we boarded it up, and we don’t go near—don’t go there.” Looking nervously at his companions and then glancing toward a window, he flushes bright red



and mutters quietly, “Sometimes in the evening... sometimes you can hear... things inside. Like... singing. Not that... I don’t know. We don’t go there.”

None of the farmers cares to expand on this description.

Night falls soon after the heroes arrive in Goldendale, and the farmers soon get up to go home. If the characters ask about shelter—the farmers don’t offer it—the men tell them they can sleep on the floor of the gathering house. “You’ll be as safe there as anywhere,” one observes.

Leaving So Soon?

If the characters try to leave Goldendale once they have arrived, the spirit crows begin to flock around them. If they persist in leaving, the crows attack in waves. The first round, one spirit crow attacks each character, and one additional crow joins the fray against each character every round, until each character is being attacked by four crows. New crows appear to replace fallen ones, seemingly without limit. The attack only stops if the characters turn back toward the town.

If the characters fight the spirit crows for more than four rounds—or if they avoid the crows through a spell such as *invisibility to undead*—the Straw God summons additional aid. A gust of wind blows across the fields, rustling the dry stalks of wheat. In the midst of the rustling, the characters clearly hear a hissing, whispering voice say, “Come to my aid.” The next

THE STRAW GOD

round, a glassy-eyed farmer—one that the heroes talked to earlier, if possible—arrives on the scene, stiffly clutching a pitchfork. An additional farmer arrives every round thereafter. As with the crows, the farmers break off the attack if the heroes turn back toward the town.

Farmer, male human Com1: CR 1/3; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d4; hp 2 (average); Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk –4 melee (1d8, pitchfork); AL LN; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Knowledge (local) +6, Profession (farmer) +6; Endurance, Skill Focus (Profession).

The First Night (EL 8)

Wherever the heroes decide to spend the night—in town or on its outskirts—they are visited during the night by the witches that serve the Straw God and Vendi Protchen. The witches attempt to capture the characters and bring them to the copse to be sacrificed.

Witches, human female Sor5 (3): CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 5d4+8; hp 22 (average); Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atk +1 melee (1d8–1, shortspear); AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +9, Knowledge (local) +8, Spellcraft +8; Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Toughness.

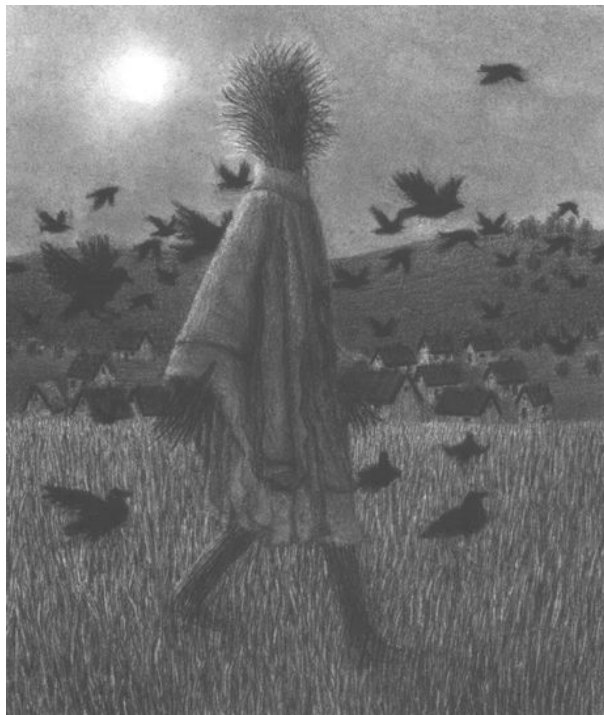
Spells (cast 6/7/5, know 6/4/2): 0—*dancing lights, daze, detect magic, flare, ghost sound, light*; 1st—*charm person, command, hypnotism, sleep*; 2nd—*enthrall, invisibility*. (Note: The witches are sorcerers, but use the witch spell list presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.)

Each witch has a raven dread familiar: Tiny Magical Beast; HD 5d4; hp 11; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 17 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural); Atk +4 melee (1, claws); SQ improved evasion, share spells, empathic link, touch, speak with master; Face 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 6. Listen +9, Spot +9; Alertness.

If their assault goes badly, the witches try to flee, using *invisibility* to disappear back into the night.

The Second Day

The second day in the village, the heroes find the villagers completely unwilling to talk to them or be



seen in their vicinity. They are free to explore wherever they like, at least at the outset.

Initial Explorations

As soon as the heroes make any attempt to look around the town, they witness a chilling scene from a distance. Read the following description to the players:

Outside the large barn behind the boarded-up temple, a solitary farmer is stumbling towards a flock of crows. Raising a hoe above his head, he half-lunges, half-falls toward the nearest black bird, bringing the tool down hard. The bird easily dodges the clumsy blow, and leaps up to peck at the man's eyes. Now all the birds take to the air, and swarm around the farmer's head like gigantic gnats. Swinging the hoe madly around himself and wailing pitifully, the man first drops to his knees under the onslaught, then collapses completely. The entire incident lasted only a few seconds, and clearly the man is dead.

Since the PCs witness this event from a distance and it is over so quickly (a single round of combat), there is little or nothing they can do to prevent it. Area-effect spells would of course affect the farmer as well, and the undead spirit crows are immune to *sleep* or *hold* spells that would leave the farmer unharmed. There are 15 of the spirit crows involved. A moment later, the Straw God issues his instructions for use of the dead body:

As the monstrous crows lift off the fallen farmer, a gust of wind sweeps across the dry fields, rustling the straw like a malicious hiss. As the rustling grows in volume, you seem to hear a voice whispering in the sound of the rustling straw: “Bring the fallen one to me.” Almost immediately, another farmer emerges around the corner of the barn and looks with some trepidation at the crows that still linger. The birds hop away from the body, and the farmer stoops to pick it up. Without even a glance in your direction, he walks slowly up the road to the east.

The farmer steadfastly refuses to even acknowledge the PCs’ presence. Carrying the body over his shoulder, he makes his way to the Straw God’s temple (Vendi’s house, building #6).

The Remains of the Day

See “Goldendale Locations” for possible encounters as the heroes explore the village. If they try to leave Goldendale, first spirit crows and then farmers move to prevent them, as on the first day.

As often happens in Ravenloft, the day goes by fairly quickly, hastening the night. Partly this is due to the season and Liffe’s cold climate, of course. But the Straw God’s will is not without its influence as well...

The Second Night

When the sun sets on the second day, read the following description to the players:

As the last sliver of blood-red sun disappears below the western horizon, a crow lands nearby with a loud rustle of feathers. Another lands behind you, and in just a moment the still-darkening sky is thick with their black feathers. They do not utter a sound, but the beating of their wings echoes the pulsing of your hearts.

The spirit crows attack, again with no apparent end to their numbers. In fact, there are 100 of them, less any the heroes have already killed. They attack in waves, as previously, so no area-effect spell can wipe out all 100. The only escape from them is in the Crop-Watcher’s temple. See the description of the temple, below, for information regarding how the heroes can leave the temple and avoid the crows.

Goldendale Locations

I. General Merchant

Jereed Mel (human female Com7), a remarkable woman of ninety-three, runs this store as she has for

seventy-one years. She is a stern, proud, matriarchal figure in the village, used to speaking her opinion and getting her way. Since the coming of the Straw God, however, only her daughter Tenetha (human female Com1) has kept her alive by keeping her tongue in check. Jereed carries a long, fresh scar near her left eye as a reminder to speak no ill of the Straw God or Vendi Protchen. Now sullen and withdrawn, Jereed spends most of her time in a rocking chair in her room behind the store, while Tenetha manages the store’s dwindling business. The spirit crows took Tenetha’s husband, Karel Brovya, last week.

2. Smith

Thordin Markel (human male Exp2) is the village smith—a huge, muscular, and jocular individual in better times. He has kept his strength but not his humor by remaining obedient to the Straw God in every way. The Straw God has rewarded his obedience with a steady supply of food, which he certainly needs in order to support his seven children. His wife died a few weeks ago—pecked to death by the spirit crows while arguing with her husband about his complacency.

If the PCs visit Markel’s shop, they find the forge cold and the smith drunk beside it. He answers their questions with a grunt, possibly a word or two, and seems anxious for them to leave. He is willing to work, but accepts payment only in food or drink, and his prices are high.

When the PCs leave, a young man runs after them. Thordin’s eldest son, Kep, is a handsome—if a bit skinny—boy of 17. He is in a frantic state, and pleads with the PCs to “do something about Vendi and the Straw God.” In one long, almost incomprehensible torrent, he says, “I watched my mother die, all the crows—and Vendi killed Dodien, the priest, I saw him go in the temple...” At this point, a spirit crow lands on the boy’s shoulder. Kep goes stark white and pinches his lips closed, staring in terror at the crow’s empty black eye sockets. As if issuing a warning, the crow lashes out with its beak, leaving a long bleeding line on the boy’s cheek before fluttering to the top of the roof. No sooner have its feet lifted off his shoulder than Kep turns and runs into the house.

3. Gathering House

Goldendale is too small to support an inn, a restaurant, or a tavern, so this long building serves all three functions. The building itself is the common property of the village, built eighty years ago by cooperative effort of all the townsfolk and maintained to this day in the same manner. In happier times, townsfolk would bring their dinners here to eat as a community, staying up into the night telling tales, singing, and dancing. The building is much quieter now, with farmers coming for only an hour or less,

THE STRAW GOD

eating in sullen silence or nursing a mug of ale. It is showing some signs of neglect after the last few months, as well: unwashed dishes piling on a table, broken pottery on the floor (carefully avoided by those who still come here), an unpleasant-looking dark stain near one window, along with a single black feather no one has dared remove.

During the day, this building is always deserted, as most of the farmers are still toiling in their fields. For three hours, from just before sunset to a short while after, there are 2d8 farmers here, clustered in quiet groups of two to four. Once night has settled in and the farmers have returned to their homes, the gathering house is deserted once more.

4. Crop-Watcher's Temple

The Crop-Watcher is a generic good-aligned agricultural deity. You can substitute another deity appropriate for your campaign if you wish.

The Crop-Watcher's temple stands deserted in the center of town. Boards cover its windows, and a wooden beam bars its doors from the outside. The townsfolk keep clear of it, believing (correctly) that it is haunted. More importantly, the spirit crows will not touch or enter the building.

Characters can pry the bar off the doors (it is nailed to the doors, not simply laid across them) with a successful Strength check (DC 18). Bashing through the bar and the door requires a check against DC 25. Breaking through the boarded-over windows is easier (DC 15), but then a character must climb

through the window, which is awkward, especially when being pursued. The bar across the doors is AC 5, has a hardness of 5, and has 10 hp. The doors themselves are AC 4, have a hardness of 5, and have 15 hp.

When the characters enter the temple, read the following text aloud:

Motes of dust dance in the light, stirred up from the floor by your presence. The temple is a simple structure: the entire building consists of a large, open sanctuary, with a plain altar erected in the center. A silver sculpture, resembling a sheaf of grain, adorns the top of the altar, while a large, dark brown stain soils the side and the floor in front of it. A very faint sound of singing seems to be echoing among the roof beams, but it grows slowly louder, as if the singer were approaching you from a very great distance.

Dodien Memik was the priest of the Crop-Watcher in Goldendale for 37 years before Vendi Protchen murdered him. Whether it was his emotional state at the time of his murder or the Crop-Watcher's greater plan, some force has kept Memik's life-force in this plane for now, where he can provide some assistance in the fight against the



Straw God. His presence is why the spirit crows won't come here (he retains his power to turn undead, even in his undead state!). His spirit is anchored to the temple, though—he cannot leave its walls.

When the heroes have been in the temple for a full minute, Dodien's ghost manifests in front of them, the slightest of smiles on his face. He appears as the translucent image of an old man, leaning on his stout quarterstaff, his chasuble soaked with blood.

If the characters attack the ghost, he reverts to his ethereal form and avoids them for the rest of the adventure, unless they

specifically ask his aid while in the temple at another time. If they talk to the ghost instead, he is only too pleased to answer questions about his state. He can describe his death and identify his killer, and can summarize most of the information in the Straw God's background information. He does not know the details of the Straw God's appearance to Vendi, but he was aware of Liesl Protchen's involvement with the Straw God's cult, so he has surmised much of it. Before Liesl Protchen's death, he explains, the Straw God and the temple of the Crop-Watcher co-existed in an uneasy tension, maintaining a balance that allowed the farmers to eke out a living on the difficult land. Dodien was aware of the witches and their nocturnal rites, but was unable to act against them. By murdering Dodien, Vendi upset that balance, allowing the Straw God total control over the fields and their produce.

If the heroes ask for advice on combating the Straw God, Dodien offers a few simple suggestions. Gesturing toward the altar and the silver sheaf of wheat lying upon it, he suggests that carrying the sheaf will keep the crows at bay. He recommends that a cleric carry the holy item... "just in case." He urges them to protect themselves with defensive magic, and offers to cast any spell in his repertoire that might be helpful to them (see his spell list below). Lastly, he teaches them all a hymn to the Crop-Watcher:

Ours the plowing, ours the sowing,
Ours the labor, ours the strife.
Thine, O Watcher, is the growing,
Thine the quickening to life.
Help our good seed in its growing,
Help us in this toil-filled life.

Singing this hymn, he believes (correctly) will give them an advantage when they face the Straw God in battle. He does not know any details of the Straw God's abilities, so he can offer little other concrete advice.

Dodien Memik, male human ghost (second rank) Clr3: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d12; hp 24; Init +1 (Dex); Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 Cha), or 9 (–1 Dex) when ethereal; Atk +3 melee (1d4, incorporeal touch) or +6 melee (1d6, quarterstaff) when ethereal; SA manifestation, corrupting touch, turn undead, greater turning, rebuke plant creatures; SQ rejuvenation, turn resistance +4, undead, incorporeal; AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 13, Con —, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +8, Knowledge (religion) +6, Profession (farmer) +8; Endurance, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff).

Spells (4/3/2): 0—*create water, detect magic, guidance, resistance*; 1st—*bless, protection from evil, endure elements**; 2nd—*aid, barkskin**. Domains: Plant and Sun (domain spells are marked with an asterisk).

5. Common Barn

This large building, like the gathering house, is public property belonging to the town as a whole. It contains farm implements owned in common, and has plenty of space for storing grain—space that is entirely unused at present.

6. Vendi's House

Vendi's small house is unremarkable—like the other homes in Goldendale, it is a single-room dwelling with interior curtains partitioning sleeping space from kitchen and eating spaces. What is remarkable is the field just behind the house, with its shrine to the Straw God.

The fields themselves are verdant and alive, in stark contrast to almost all of the other fields around. Where other farmers have, at best, a furrow or two of growing grain, Vendi's entire plot is bursting with grain. Among the stalks at the near edge of his fields, the stalks actually twine together to form a small shelter, with an open doorway in the front. The Straw God resides in this living temple, with Vendi as his near-constant servant and companion.

If the heroes arrive here following a farmer carrying a dead body to the Straw God, they witness the grisly scene:

The farmer lays the body down in front of a small building formed out of living, overgrown stalks of wheat. Something like a dozen large crows perch on and around the structure. From inside the little shrine, a figure emerges—seemingly made of the same stuff, like a walking scarecrow. Draped over its shoulders is a white chasuble stained with dark blood and black earth. It stands head and shoulders above the tall farmer and the cringing man who emerges behind it, clutching a scythe.

Bending over the corpse, the straw figure opens the body's mouth and reaches inside. Something black and large begins to emerge from the dead man's mouth. A moment later, it explodes in a flurry of movement, flapping its feathered wings furiously. Flying to the top of the shrine, this new crow joins its fellows.

Its bizarre work apparently complete, the straw figure nods slightly to the farmer who carried the body here. Looking both relieved and anxious to get out of here, the farmer scoops the body back up in his arms

THE STRAW GOD

and hurries away. The straw figure and the scythe-wielder turn to go back into the shrine.

The farmer takes the body immediately to his own field, where he drags it through his furrows, blood seeping into the earth and revitalizing his crops.

If the heroes confront the straw god, see “Confronting the Straw God,” below.

7. Copse

This stand of trees is a sacred location for the coven of witches who have called Goldendale home for generations. It is also the true home of the Straw God’s spirit (see “Appearance” in the Straw God’s description), an old witch hazel tree, its yellow flowers now in bloom.

If the heroes are in the grove between 1 hour after sundown and midnight, they will certainly attract the attention of the witches who gather here nightly. The statistics for the three witch leaders were presented under “The First Night,” above. The remaining ten witches are all 1st-level commoners:

Witch-in-Training, female human Com1 (10):

CR 1/3; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d4; hp 2 (average); Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d3 subdual, unarmed strike); AL LE; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Knowledge (local) +6, Craft (any) +6; Iron Will, Skill Focus (Craft).

8. Fields

The fields around Goldendale are a bizarre mixture of dry, barren crops and healthy, growing wheat. Most farmers’ fields are totally barren, while a handful of fields have one or perhaps two green furrows.

Small packs of dire wolves have taken to wandering the barren fields near the town. If the heroes decide to spend the night in the fields, or otherwise spend a significant amount of time in the fields, they are sure to encounter 1d4+4 dire wolves.

Dire Wolf: CR 3; Large Animal; HD 6d8+16; hp 45 (average); Init +2 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural); Atk +10 melee (1d8+10, bite); SA Trip; SQ Scent; Face 2 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 25, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10. Hide +7, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +7.

Houses

The houses that are not marked with a V are inhabited by an unremarkable family of farmers. See

above (“The First Day”) for typical statistics for ordinary farmers.

Vacant Houses

Many of the farmhouses in Goldendale (marked with a V) now stand completely vacant.

Confronting the Straw God

If the characters confront the Straw God without following Dodien Memik’s advice, they must first contend with the spirit crows, exactly as described under “The Second Night,” above. The silver sheaf of wheat from the altar keeps the crows at bay, however, allowing the heroes to focus their attention on the Straw God. See “Combat” in the Straw God’s description for details of fighting the demon. If one or more of the characters sing the hymn to the Crop-Watcher, however, the Straw God flies into a berserk rage. It gains +2 on its attack and damage rolls, but suffers a –2 penalty to its AC. In addition, it concentrates on direct attacks, though not to the point of total stupidity. It does not use its *transport via plants* ability to escape the battle, instead fighting to the death. It does not use *charm monster* or *suggestion*, though it does use *magic circle against good*, *entangle*, and *unholy aura* to best effect.

Recurrence

Unless the heroes figure out that the Straw God’s spirit is tied to the witch hazel in the copse, the Straw God will return, in one form or another, to plague the Goldendale region again. The next time the characters pass through the area, though, they may find the town deserted, the fields starting to grow thick with new undergrowth and trees—the ancient forest reclaiming the land that was cleared from it. As the forest grows, the Straw God—or some new incarnation of it—also grows in power, and the heroes could find a much more difficult task ahead of them the next time around.

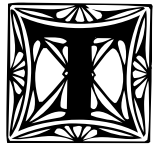
THISSALLRA TORR

By Cassandra Jacobs

It is not only our fate but our business to lose innocence... There is no end to the violations committed by children on children.

—Elizabeth Bowen

BIOGRAPHY



he loss of an innocent child is always a tragedy. But when that loss is not complete, when the child still struggles to salvage what it can of its destroyed life, when its mind and body are trapped by corruption, that tragedy is magnified tenfold.

Thissallra the fiend and Saandra the innocent are entwined in mind, body and soul. One searches for a way out of the Lands of Mist; the other searches for her father. Neither seems to be able to achieve their goal, and it is unknown if one can ever be freed of the other.

Appearance

Saandra is approximately 3'6" tall, with dark skin, black hair and black eyes. She is a charming and delightful child, slight of build, and very energetic. Her relationship with the demon has made her very intelligent and fascinated with knowledge. She is also very perceptive, and Thissallra's influence upon her mind has made her far wiser than her years would suggest. However, she displays no evil tendencies, as she and Thissallra have remained separate beings.

Thissallra is a huge, grotesque demon that stands more than 15 feet tall. He has dark brown, leathery skin and four arms – two of which end in clawed humanoid hands, while the others end in massive crab-like pincers. His face resembles that of a snarling dog. His formidable strength, demonic rage



and contempt for the lives of those around him makes for a terrible adversary. He is extremely intelligent and can easily outsmart most of his opponents. Being drawn into Ravenloft has given him a healthy respect for the unknown, and as such, he's not very quick to disregard opponents or information without giving them serious thought – a most unusual quality in a tanar'ri. As a result, he does not suffer from the typical demonic trait of overconfidence.

The fiend is able to take control of the little girl – exchanging her form for his – only in certain circumstances: when she is in physical danger, when there is a danger directed towards him, or during the 'witching hour' (the hour after midnight). The fiend typically returns Saandra to her sleeping quarters before the time period is up to avoid having her awake in a strange location. Occasions when this has been unavoidable (or the glabrezu hasn't bothered) have led Saandra to believe that she sleepwalks.

When Thissallra takes control of Saandra's body, she writhes and contorts, much like a lycanthrope changing form. Once the change has completed, the demon stands where the child once was. Saandra

THISSALLRA TORR

remains unharmed, but her psyche is locked inside the demon's mind behind a mental wall, where she does not experience anything he does while in control. Once Thissallra relinquishes control, he undergoes the transformation back into the form of Saandra. She believes she has either been sleepwalking or has been "off playing with the faeries". Saandra is completely unaware of the demon inside of her.

It is possible that people could learn of Saandra's condition and attempt to part the demon's psyche from hers. Thissallra would see this as a threat to himself if the attempts would destroy him, and he can manifest to protect against them. Of course, Thissallra would willingly go along with anything that would separate the two without destroying him.

Phylactery

This odd union of a demon and child has created an unusual phylactery. Saandra's body is the demon's home for his soul. As such, destruction of the child would surely destroy the demon.

Thissallra is unsure of the connection between the two of them. Since he'd rather be safe than sorry, he ensures Saandra is protected at all times.

Thissallra Torr

Male Glabrezu (Tanar'ri): CR 15; Huge Outsider (chaos, evil); HD 10d8+40; 85 hp; Init +0; Spd 40 feet; AC 27 (-2 size, +19 natural); Atk 2 pincers +15 melee (2d6+7), 2 claws +13 melee (1d3+3), 1 bite +13 melee (1d4+3); Face/Reach 5' x 10'/15'; SA Spell-like abilities, improved grab, summon tanar'ri; SQ Damage reduction 20/+2, detect magic, true seeing, immune to poison and electricity; acid, cold and fire resistance 20; SR 21; AL CE, SV Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 25, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 19, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +15, Concentration +16, Hide +6, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +5, Listen +21, Move Silently +12, Scry +13, Search +15, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +15, Spot +21; Cleave, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Reality Wrinkle: 500-foot radius when Thissallra is present; none when Saandra is.

Land-Based Powers: Invisibility (Avonleigh), Aura of Fear (Paridon)

Corruption Index: 6

Saandra Le Monte

Female Human: CR –; Small Humanoid; HD 1/2d8; 3 hp; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 20 feet; AC 12 (+1 size, +1 Dex); Atk Slam -2 melee (1d2-2); SQ Demonic protector, communicate; AL LG, SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Hide +3, Knowledge (history) +3, Sense Motive +5; Dodge.

Background

Thissallra is a fiend, trapped within the mind and body of the five-year-old female child, Saandra le Monte.

Saandra was born in Hazlan where she lived with her father Stevfan, an outlander mage of moderate abilities. While attempting to escape a group of bandits one night, Stevfan had entered a fog patch, hoping to lose them. Remarkably, he found himself in Ravenloft. Deciding to make a new life for himself, he traveled to Hazlan, where wizards were accepted, married a local Rashemi girl, had a daughter and continued his studies, more as a hobby than an attempt at serious research. Three years later, Saandra's mother disappeared without a trace. Her father, believing his wife disappeared because of the evil in his newfound home, tried to discover a way to leave the entire world. Research eventually turned up a spellbook, lost by an adventuring party from a different world. Within the book was a spell that would allow one to open a portal into another world and summon a powerful extraplanar creature. He studied diligently, and in any other circumstance, would have been able to successfully cast the spell with little consequence. However, his desire to leave this land for his tiny daughter's sake was so great that the spell was warped by his emotion. Stevfan intended to bring forth a creature of good that would see their plight and, for the sake of goodness, help return them to a better world. Instead, it opened a gate to the Abyss and brought a demon through: a hideous parody of the noble protector Stevfan had wanted. The dark powers work in mysterious ways.

Thissallra was the leader of a faction of demons in the Abyss. He led this army in the endless Blood War against the devils of Baator. An extremely capable general, his unit had nothing but success in its past. Thissallra reveled in the glory of war and was driven to extremes of passion by torture and bloodshed. He is still an intense creature, exhibiting ranges of emotion rarely seen even in the chaotic demons. He is passionate and determined, his desires

without bounds. His rage is immense, as are his ambitions.

The general found himself pulled into Ravenloft at the hands of Saandra's father. Filled with rage at the mortal's effrontery, the demon attempted to destroy the man who had trapped him in this land. Before he could, however, a magical cage snapped shut around him, pulling him into Saandra's mind as she slept upstairs, unaware of her father's magic. He immediately took control of the girl and teleported them out of the location.

Thissallra is aware of his entrapment within Saandra. He will not put the child in danger, for fear of destroying himself as well. As such, they travel around the demiplane together, she searching for her father, and he searching for a way to escape Ravenloft. Saandra is too young to remember clearly where she is from, so attempts to take her back to her home in Hazlan are near impossible. Also, when it seems she might actually be on the path to her home, Thissallra spoils the effort, keeping the child far away from her birthplace. He can sense Saandra's emotions, and her constant fear and longing for her father are like ambrosia to him. The fiend knows he must keep Saandra safe, so he tends to put the two of them in proximity to orphanages and other places where they might care for her, but otherwise cares nothing for her personally. He takes care to maintain the image of Saandra as a normal child, but only because he does not want people to be aware of his presence. If people exhibit signs of wariness towards the girl, Thissallra will leave. Occasionally, he might dispatch the suspecting person, if there is only one, and if he can do it in such a way as to redirect the blame. He does not engage in mass slaughter since this would draw attention to himself, which would eventually reveal his dark presence.

Thissallra takes control at night and searches for information that will enable him to escape the Demiplane. What little influence he has over Saandra he uses to force her to read magical works, using her research to educate himself.

Saandra's father feels she is still alive and is searching the Core for her. He has engaged the aid of George Weathermay in the past and while he is unaware of the relationship between the fiend and his daughter, he has become a specialized demon hunter, knowing the demon is tied into her kidnapping.

Personality

Thissallra has managed to discover some of the basic nature of Ravenloft. He understands the nature of the prison he is trapped in (both the child and the demiplane) and has deduced much of the concept of the domains and their trapped lords. Since he knows

it is impossible to remove the prison from the lord, he plans to remove the lord from the prison. As such, he is planning on murdering a darklord in the hopes that the domain will dissolve around him, freeing him into the ethereal plane. Thissallra has heard of several other methods involving portals and rituals, but since his entrapment is a direct result of such an experiment, he is unwilling to try magical attempts at leaving.

The fiend is going to rely on brute force to leave Ravenloft – a tactic that has stood him in good stead through the Blood War. He believes that many lords do not have the skills to stand against a fiend of his awesome power. He has begun infiltrating their safe havens and gathering as much information as possible about their powers and weaknesses. His research has taken him to the southern part of the Core, where he has studied Dominic d'Honaire, Ivan Dilisnya, Ivana Boritsi, and Jacqueline Renier.

Combat

Using spells to detect either the fiend or child can be unreliable. Saandra herself is indistinguishable from any other five-year-old to most magic.

However, *detect magic* reveals that formidable web of abjuration, conjuration and transmutation spells around her. The only ability that she shares with the tanar'ri is a limited form of telepathy that she uses unconsciously. Due to this spell, people whose minds are unprotected against mental intrusions hear Saandra talking in the dominant language of whatever region she is in. Those who are protected (by a *ring of mind shielding* or similar magic) can only hear her speaking Vaasi, her native language.

While the demon is manifested, no trace of Saandra's psyche can be detected, as it is blocked behind a mental shield to protect her. Note that Thissallra is extremely intelligent and will not, under any circumstances, do anything that will draw attention to them. He wants to learn all he can about the melding and find a safe way to remove himself from her. Of course, he cares little about what the removal might do to the child, but since he is not sure about the connection between them, he is unwilling to risk her life for fear of his own. Thissallra can use any of his powers while in control.

Wounds inflicted upon the glabrezu are reflected upon Saandra when they change back – if a fireball hits him, she will be covered in burns and cuts. Saandra loses a proportion of her hit points equal to the proportion of damage taken by Thissallra. For example, if the demon loses 75% of his total hit points, Saandra will have only 25% of her hit points remaining when he gives up control. She cannot use any of Thissallra's abilities while he is hidden away.

THISSALLRA TORR

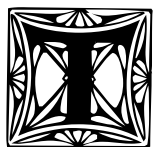
Spell-like Abilities: At will—*burning hands, chaos hammer, charm person, confusion, death knell, deeper darkness, desecrate, detect good, dispel magic, enlarge, mirror image, reverse gravity, shatter, unholy blight*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 10th-level sorcerer (save DCs, where applicable, are 13 + spell level). He is also able to *teleport without error* at will, as a 12th level sorcerer.

Seven times per day, Thissallra is able to cast *power word, stun* as a 15th level sorcerer.

Detect magic and *true seeing* are always active, and take effect as though cast by a 12th level sorcerer and a 12th level cleric respectively.

Summon Tanar'ri (Su): Once per day, Thissallra is able to summon 4d10 dretches or 1d2 vrocks with a 50% chance of success, or 1 other glabrezu with a 20% chance of success.

SEARCH FOR INNOCENCE



his adventure, designed for characters of levels 10 to 12, introduces Thissallra and Saandra. The heroes have the chance to disrupt one of the glabrezu's schemes to escape the demiplane, and can meet Saandra's father, who will tell them more about Thissallra and his goals. Their actions can lead to a moral quandary: the choice between destroying an innocent child, or ridding the world of an unimaginable evil.

The Adventure Begins

Thissallra has concentrated his efforts on Ivan Dilisnya, playing on the distrust and political intrigue between him and his cousin Ivana Boritsi. He hopes the constant plots and distrust between the two of them will give him the edge he needs to destroy them both. He believes this will cause Borca to dissolve, and that this will allow him to escape back to the Abyss. He has recently infiltrated a library in Lechberg and discovered a wealth of information about the Dilisnya family's history in a hidden room of the library.

The party is hired to find out who has been stealing the books, but they find out far more than they bargained for.

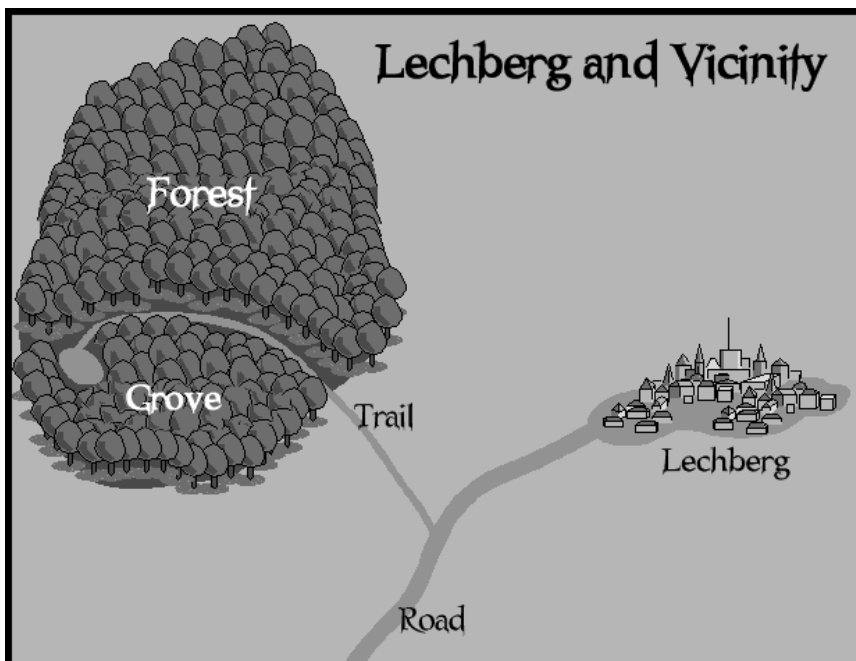
Lechberg

The adventure opens with the party traveling towards the city of Lechberg in Borca. Ideally, it is early afternoon, and people are conducting their day's affairs. This atmosphere should give the party reason to join into the market day and explore the city a bit.

Like everywhere in Borca, particularly those places under Ivan's direct control, Lechberg is hopelessly corrupt. In order to get anything – access to the city, access to the wealthy district, food and shelter for the night – the adventurers must pay handsomely. After a few days of this, an offer of work and the kindness of the sisters who run the orphanage should seem a godsend.

Lechberg is sharply divided between two classes, the peasants, who scrape a meager living from whatever employment they can, and the nobles, who live on the rent from properties both inside and outside the city. Of course, by the standards of most other lands, even these nobles are impoverished: Ivan's enforcers take considerable amounts of protection money every time they visit, and they visit often.

The southern side of the city is far poorer than the northern. The houses are run down, there are soup kitchens and shelters for beggars, and guard patrols are frequent. If the PCs look around, there appear to be quite a large number of grubby children wandering the streets, just looking for food to eat. On the northern side, carriages are more common, the houses are larger and more splendid, and the guards wear plain clothes to avoid disturbing the citizens. Goods bought from the poorer districts are cheap, but of low



quality, while northern shops are filled with expensive goods that also lack quality.

While the party is exploring, they come under the scrutiny of a man by the name of Larris.

Larris works for Ivan Dilisnya, although he will never admit this. As one of Ivan's trusted city officials, Larris has been investigating thefts at the local library, which include several books with information about Ivan and his family. The darklord fears Ivana has managed to infiltrate the library and steal this information somehow, and thinks it might be used against him. When he discovered that the thefts were linked to a strange disturbance in the land he had noticed, he demanded Larris use everything in his power to find the books and the thief, and mete out an appropriate penalty. He is petrified that Ivana has found a way to disrupt his control over Borca.

Larris has spotted the party, and decided to hire them to find the thief. Because they are not Borcan, he presumes that they unlikely to be working for Ivana. However, in Borca's corrupt and devious political landscape, no one can be trusted, and Larris tells the party as much as he deems fit, but nothing else.

A well-dressed older man catches your eye. His clothing portrays him as one of the nobility, as there is not a speck of dirt on his fashionable brocade jacket and black pants. His salt and pepper hair is pulled back into a small ponytail and a pair of spectacles perch on his nose.

The man raises his hand to attract your attention and begins walking towards you. His stride is confident, but you perceive nothing threatening about him.

Larris approaches the party with his hand out. He introduces himself as a member of the board of officials for the local library. Since the party is obviously not from the area, he would like to hire them for a small job hunting down a thief. Any member of the party that appears to be a scholarly type will catch Larris' eye, and he will direct these next statements towards them.

"We pride ourselves on our extensive and well established library," he continues, "and it hurts us incredibly when our beloved works of knowledge are taken away, unable to benefit the public." Larris looks genuinely upset at this thought.

"We are willing to do anything within our power to recover these works," he tells you. "So far, our law enforcement has been unable to discover the identity of the person or persons behind this and we continue to lose our precious books."

Larris is prepared to offer the party 100 gp if they can find the identity of those responsible and bring them to him. He is willing to give the party 30 gp up front, and will raise his offer to 150 gp each if they balk at the initial offer.

Larris will bring the party to the library and allow them inside to familiarize themselves with it. He'll request they return at 8 in the evening, when the library closes for the night.

The Thief

The library is quite important to the nobility of Lechberg, and is also quite important to Ivan. In it, he maintains a secret room where there are books containing information about all the noble families in Borca and the surrounding domains. Also contained in this secret room are books about Ivan's history and family line. These are the books that Thissallra has been stealing in his attempt to learn more about this domain's lord.

Larris will not tell the party about the secret room under any circumstances. He hopes the party will be able to catch the thief without discovering the room (i.e. before the thief opens the secret door in front of them).

The library is built out of stone, with an ornate marble facade. Read the following description to the players as they approach the building.

This section of the city obviously prides itself on its library and the knowledge within. Easily the most expensive building you've seen, this small structure is quite impressive with its white stone walls and marble pillars. A small but elegantly shaped flight of stairs lead up to a set of double doors made out of black wood with a well-polished silver handle set into it.

The interior of the library has another secret, which Larris will fail to inform the party of. When it was built, the city officials paid quite handsomely for a permanent *anti-magic shield* to be cast inside the building. This prevents any magic from operating inside the library, or even penetrating the building. This was done in order to protect the books. Unfortunately, Thissallra's *invisibility* and *aura of fear* are land-based powers, and are not affected by the ward, but he is unable to use any of his other spell-like abilities while inside the library.

You had expected the library to be filled with musty tomes, and have a pervading atmosphere of disuse around it. Surprisingly, this library is quite

THISSALLRA TORR

different – it is more like a gentleman’s club than a library. The books are neatly stacked on the floor-to-ceiling shelves, which give way towards the back of the room to elegant tables and plush armchairs. Standing in the front door, you can see a checkout desk to your right and a large table with an exotic looking plant to your left. Everything is well lit by an ornate, oil-fed chandelier on the ceiling.

If asked, Larris will inform the party the books being stolen are irreplaceable family records and other legal documents, which are particularly vital in Borca’s labyrinthine legal system. He shows the party an empty shelf from which the books were supposedly stolen. Obviously, he doesn’t reveal the existence of the secret room, feeling that this knowledge is unnecessary and a security risk.

The party is welcome to set up any preparations they deem necessary to find the thief. Larris will lock up the library at 8 o’clock and if the party wishes, they can stay inside the building. The door will lock itself behind the party if they leave the building (Open Locks DC 25). Larris also warns the heroes that they are responsible for any damage caused to the library, as most of the information therein is irreplaceable. He begs them not to damage anything, mentioning that even the thief has not caused any damage other than the theft of the books.

At a quarter past 12, the front door slams open and a gust of wind sweeps through the library. Thissallra, under the cover of *invisibility*, stalks in. As there are no windows in the building, the PCs will probably be unsure of exactly what time it is. If left uninterrupted, Thissallra will boldly walk through the library, open the secret door, go down the stairs, and shut the secret door behind him. He plans to read the books for half an hour or so, then take the more interesting ones back to the orphanage where Saandra

lives.

Once the demon has entered the building, the PCs will be engulfed by Thissallra’s *aura of fear* if they have remained in the library.

Thissallra’s next actions depend on the party’s reaction to his entry. Ideally, the DM should draw out the action until 1 o’clock so the party can proceed easily to the discovery of Saandra. If the party attempt to confront the demon, Thissallra may avoid them, hiding in the shadows around the area, or he may attack violently, knocking them all out (only to have them revive just before 1 o’clock, of course). If they don’t confront him, he stays in the secret room, reading. When he decides to leave, he attempts to avoid the party. Still, Thissallra loses track of time and changes back to Saandra half way to the orphanage. He does have time to hide the books before the change takes place (Spot DC 25 or Search DC 22 to find them).

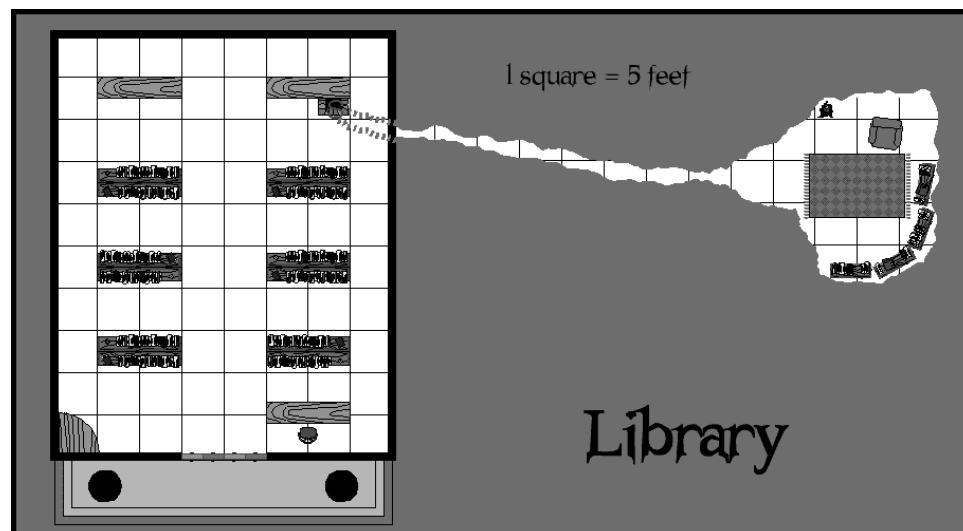
If the party explores the surrounding area for the creature that broke into the library, they’ll stumble across Saandra, crying in the alley. She has just awoken and she’s unsure of where she is.

The soft sound of a child crying catches your ear. Sniffling sobs lead you to an alley where you spot a little girl, wearing nothing more than a white linen nightdress over her dusky form, sitting with her back against the wall and her arms around her knees sobbing quietly. She looks no more than six years old.

Saandra has just found herself in this alley and she’s quite frightened. She’ll cling trustingly to anyone who approaches her in a friendly manner. If asked, she can tell the party that she sleepwalks and she lives at “the home with the other kids”. The party will probably hear her speaking in Balok, the

dominant language in Borca, although it is obvious from her dark skin that her ancestors don’t hail from the area. However, people protected by a *ring of mind shielding* or similar magic will hear her speaking in Vaasi, not Balok.

Saandra is dressed in a worn but clean nightgown. She is clean and appears to be well fed. The party should be able to deduce that



she's not a street child, but one that's been cared for. Although their nerves will be strung out by the incidents at the library, the DM should attempt to placate them and stress that there is nothing sinister about this child. Indeed, anything cast on her in an attempt to divine her thoughts or nature shows her to be a normal five-year-old child.

Saandra

While the party may be suspicious about Saandra, they should return her to the orphanage. They are heroes, after all.

Located in the southern section of the city, the orphanage is struggling to get by on meager funds, but the children in their care are not neglected or abused. The grounds are well kept and the interior is clean and neat. There are a total of 14 children presently housed here by the Sisters of Care. The sisters are quite happy to have Saandra returned to them.

Sister Allarielle can give the party a bit of information about Saandra. They are aware of her sleepwalking habits, although she has never managed to escape the grounds (they are unaware that this is not true). Saandra is a happy, quiet child, who remembers her father, but not where she is from or how she parted from his care. She appears to be quite intelligent and loves to read. The sisters took her into their care about 3 months ago when they found her at their door, ragged and dirty and obviously confused as to her whereabouts. She doesn't appear to be from the city or even this land, since her manner of speech is slightly different from those in Borca, and she is clearly darker skinned than most Borcans.

The orphanage can give no other information about Saandra to the party. They'll thank the party for returning her, but can give no reward as they are struggling to keep their operation running.

There's not much for the party to do for the rest of the day after returning Saandra to the orphanage. Larris will try to find them to see if they have made any progress with the thefts. If confronted about the secrets kept hidden from the party, Larris attempts to gloss over their exclusion. He tells them he believed they could capture the thief without knowing about the secret door and the anti magic field. He knows nothing about Saandra.

Larris wants the party to have results for him by tomorrow. He's quite impatient now, since he feels the party knows too much about the library.

Since the party stayed up for most of the night investigating the library, they'll probably want to spend the day resting.

When the party returns to the library, they're in for a surprising encounter with Stevfan leMonte.

Stevfan has secretly been following them (hoping to warn them that the thief they were searching for was a demon). He saw them meet Saandra and return her to the orphanage, and hopes to enlist their aid in bringing his daughter to the Mystick Cage he has prepared so he can separate her from the glabrezu. He is unable to do this himself, as whenever he has tried in the past, Thissallra has teleported away before he can get them to the Cage.

Stevfan waits until after dark to approach them and after Larris leaves, either approaching them directly or knocking on the library door (if they are inside). He needs to have Saandra in the Cage before midnight frees Thissallra.

A man with dark brown hair and a beard stands in front of you. He is dressed in traveling clothes and carries a pack over his shoulder. The air of a traveler surrounds him. His tired blue eyes look you over.

"I can give you your thief," he tells you, "if you help me."

Stevfan knows nothing about Thissallra's plans to dispose of Ivan. He does know that the party has been hired to find out who is stealing books, and that the thief is Thissallra. He also knows the party met Saandra and returned her to the orphanage. He is willing to answer any questions the party asks except questions about the demon and its connection with his daughter that will incriminate him. He should give the party enough information to convince them he does know what he is talking about, but not enough for them to fully comprehend what is going on.

"I need the child you found last evening," he tells you. "I know you have questions, and I will answer what I can, but time is running out. Know that I have only her safety in mind and will promise that no harm will come to her."

The DM should play this to the hilt, as it might be difficult to convince the party to retrieve Saandra at the request of this stranger. Stevfan will swear on his life he will do nothing to harm her, but will stress that it is vitally important to her life that she be brought to him outside the city. If he has to, he will tell the party she is his daughter and this is why he wishes her no harm.

Stevfan gives them directions to a grove in the forest outside of the city. He promises to meet the party there before midnight and instructs them to bring Saandra. Once they agree, he will leave the city to prepare the Mystick Cage for their arrival.

THISSALLRA TORR

The party should attempt to retrieve Saandra from the orphanage. Probably the easiest way is to have a rogue sneak into the orphanage and kidnap her. If she recognizes the character as one of the people who returned her to the orphanage, she'll go along, assuming it's all right. The sisters won't allow anyone from the party to walk in and take her, regardless of their reasoning.

The party finds the trail to the grove easily, as Stevfan has no reason to lead them astray. They should arrive just before midnight.

The Ritual

Stevfan has been studying Thissallra and knows the demon and his daughter are bound together. In his pursuit of the two of them, he has discovered a description of the Mystick Cage ritual. After tracking the glabrezu to Lechberg, he hurriedly assembled one outside the city. He has patiently waited for the right time to spring the Cage on the demon, and the party has given him the opportunity to attempt the magical ritual.

The party arrives at the Cage just before midnight, along with Saandra, who is half-asleep. A Knowledge (outsider lore) (DC 22) or Spellcraft check (DC 27) will reveal the Cage's function, if they haven't seen one before.

A large circle of wood 40 feet in diameter outlines this clearing. Beams of wood rise up from the base to meet at the center of the contraption. Candles at the base of each beam cast an eerie light into the grove and a platform in the very center of the circle stands unoccupied.

You see Stevfan step out from the shadows at the far end of the circle. His drawn and haggard face sees the child in your arms and you see relief fill his eyes – relief along with grief and longing. He takes a deep breath.

"I know you have placed a lot of trust in a stranger, but I must ask you to extend that trust one step more." He looks you directly in the eyes. "I ask you to place the child on the platform in the circle and stand around her. There is little time left."

Hopefully the party will comply with Stevfan's wishes. He knows there is no other way to capture Thissallra and he needs to have Saandra in the center before Thissallra is able to manifest. So far, the demon has been watching from the recesses of Saandra's mind, but since she is in no danger, he cannot manifest to protect her or himself.

The party should place Saandra in the center of the Cage and stay within the Cage themselves. Once

they do this, Stevfan casts his spell to trap Thissallra. Once his spell is cast, Thissallra will manifest, since he is the target of the containment. He will not be pleased.

The party hears Stevfan's voice rise over the chirping of the insects in the night air. The effect on Saandra is as quick as it is horrifying: she begins to contort and writhe in pain upon the platform. Her bones bend grotesquely as she begins to grow in size, wings sprouting from her back and her face thrusting forwards into a canine snout. Over the sounds of bones snapping and reshaping, you hear Stevfan's voice behind you, seemingly far away,

"I give you your thief and the destroyer of my daughter!"

Thissallra is dragged out of Saandra's body to confront the heroes in his full, enraged splendor. He immediately attacks whoever is nearest him, determined that his secret will remain safe and that these mortals will suffer for their effrontery.

Stevfan ducks to the back, keeping the heroes between himself and the demon. He begins searching for his daughter. From his studies and pursuit of Saandra, he believes the demon travels inside of her but is a separate entity from her. He planned the Mystick Cage to force a transformation, believing it would release Saandra from Thissallra's grasp and the party could deal with the demon while he escaped with his daughter. But Stevfan failed to grasp the importance of the demon's phylactery. While Saandra is Thissallra's phylactery, the demon protects it by hiding her within himself. Stevfan lacks a replacement phylactery for Thissallra. Because of this, Saandra won't be released from the demon's grip.

The party should be hard pressed to battle Thissallra. He is intelligent and cunning, but with a bit of ingenuity, they should be able to push his limits. If the party gets him to a dangerously low level of hit points, read the following:

You can see the creature is beginning to weaken. Your magic and sword blows have taken their toll on the creature. It drops to one knee and shakes its head, trying to clear away the pain at your attacks. It looks at you with a snarl, and as you raise your weapon for another blow, a sudden clap of thunder shakes you. You see the creature has disappeared.

At your feet, covered with bruises and blood, is the Saandra, the child you retrieved from the orphanage. Your weapon is raised to kill her.

Saandra is unconscious; her young body can't take the punishment visited upon it by the heroes. However, Thissallra is still fully aware inside her. As soon as the Mystick Cage is disrupted (by removing Saandra from the Cage, or having less than four people inside), he teleports her away. If the party attempts to kill Saandra, Stevfan will try to stop them and Thissallra will teleport out before the last blow is struck.

Stevfan knows he has failed to separate his daughter and the demon and that they have fled the area. He picks up his gear and will leave the party without giving an explanation if they don't press him. He will continue searching for them. If confronted, he will tell the party what he knows about the relationship between Thissallra and Saandra, but will not say how they became that way. He feels far too guilty about his role to reveal that to the party.

The party is left to decide what to do next. They can report the removal of the thief to Larris, but since they can't give him any proof of the thief's identity or disappearance, the city official won't give them their payment. If the party discovers the missing books under a loose board under Saandra's bed at the orphanage, he'll be willing to pay them.

Recurrence

Given the scenario, Thissallra will probably escape the party's killing blow. If they've managed to defeat the demon, they'll be faced with a dying child. Since the party was unaware of the connection, there shouldn't be any supernatural consequences, but they should feel a tremendous amount of guilt at causing her death. If Saandra survives, Thissallra's lifeforce continues to inhabit his phylactery; simply reducing the demon to 0 hp is not enough to destroy him. Once he has recovered, he will instinctively move to regain a physical form by possessing the nearest sentient being – probably Stevfan. And so the tragedy will renew itself, with Thissallra no longer trapped within Saandra, but still irrevocably tied to her while she remains his phylactery.

If the party attempts to kill Saandra after the demon has retreated into her, the DM should judge their actions harshly. They attempted to kill a child. If Thissallra escapes, his goal is to once again find a darklord to kill. He might begin stalking Ivana, since he has amassed a large amount of knowledge of Borca, but given his recent disruption in Ivan's section of Borca, he might find it wise to search for a different domain. In his mind, there are several domains out there with lords that can't stand up to the power of a demonic general...

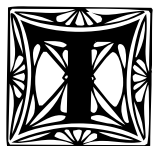
THE WHITE FIEND

By Jaleigh Johnson

*Fair summer droops, droop men and
beasts therefore:
So fair a summer look for never more.
All things vanish, less than in a day,
Peace, plenty, pleasure, suddenly decay.
Go not yet away, bright soul of the sad
year;
The earth is hell when thou leav'st to
appear.*

—Thomas Nashe
“Summer’s Last Will and Testament” (1900)

BIOGRAPHY



he Laws of Nature allow Winter’s power to hold its sway for but one season out of four, its grip on the land slipping inevitably into the hands of Spring. The White Fiend knows no such laws. Her touch upon the land is death.

Appearance

The White Fiend stands just over five feet tall, with spindly arms and legs that are disproportionately long. Her skin and hair are stark white, but her eyes are sunken, cinder-black pits that dominate her small face. This effect, at first glance, makes her appear sightless, but the demon’s eyes burn with an intense hatred and madness that is unmistakable. Her hair is caught with

slivers of ice, making it wildly disheveled. She appears garbed in a cloak seemingly comprised only of writhing white mists.

Phylactery

The vaporous cloak moves of its own accord over the White Fiend’s body, though it is solid enough to touch and handle—resembling a cloak of feathers. Its sinuous mists drift and twine themselves about her, constantly prodding her with snatches of her former existence. These memories are as insubstantial as the mist that whispers them, and in her insane state she can never hold onto them for long. Despite the anguish this causes, she never removes this garment. It contains her life essence, her means of continued survival. While wearing it, the demon can never be permanently slain.



The White Fiend

Female corrupted fey: CR 10; Medium-size fey (outsider, cold); HD 9d6+9; hp 49; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +2 natural, +2 deflection); Atk +7/+7 (1d6+3, claws); SA frost breath, withering touch; SQ alter animals, cold subtype, damage reduction 15/+2, spell-like abilities, SR 19; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +9; Str 17, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 10. Height 5 ft. 1 in.

Skills and Feats:

Reality Wrinkle: 18,000-foot radius

Land-Based Powers: None

Corruption Index: 0

Background

The White Fiend was summoned to Ravenloft by an unnamed wizard who dwelled in the Balinok Mountains, near a series of small villages. The wizard was powerful, but used his influence to subtly watch over the villages and surrounding land. As he grew older and felt his powers begin to wane, he intended to be certain that there would be another to take his place after his death, to guard the villages and lands from outside threats. He became obsessed with the notion that the people would not be able to survive without a protector, and ultimately decided to summon a creature from another plane to serve in that role. He concluded that a powerful natural spirit, one that could serve as guardian and avenger if the need arose, was the only suitable successor to his magic. He put all of his power and pride into preparing a ritual, certain that his call would be answered. He was partially successful.

As he performed the necessary spells, a creature did appear within his summoning circle, one vaguely resembling a humanoid female with a thin, misshapen form, claw-like hands and a shrill voice that screamed in wordless fury. There was an unnatural wildness about her, a fey cast to her features that was like nothing he'd ever seen. Her skin and hair were alabaster, but her eyes were completely black. She crouched in the circle, shivering uncontrollably from some unseen pain and staring at him with insane, undisguised hatred. The wizard, realizing he had made a terrible error, attempted to reverse his spell and send the creature back to whatever hell it had emerged from. Before he could, she attacked him savagely, scraping and biting with teeth and nails that cut like icy razors. Her body was painfully cold to touch.

The wizard had unwittingly tapped into a strange, otherworldly realm completely unlike his own. In this world, there lived an evil being of terrible beauty and

power that stemmed from a strong physical connection to Nature. Fiercely possessive of the land she controlled and was a part of, this unique spirit held herself superior to all other races. She reacted with quick and deadly force to any perceived threats to her domain. Her touch held the power to heal or harm, and her magic could bend the weather to her will, making the land thrive or wither as she chose.

Whether as a result of the wizard's call or intervention by the dark powers, the summoning spell enveloped the fierce creature, ripping her from her own world and forcibly severing her connection to it and to Nature in the process. The sudden transition had a terrible and irreversible effect on the spirit, so utterly alien was she to the land of Ravenloft. It twisted her in mind and body, corrupting her magic and ultimately driving her insane. She killed the wizard and fled his tower, establishing a lair for herself in the Balinoks.

Years passed, and as the newly born White Fiend lay dormant, hidden from the outside world, she slowly began to learn more about her new home. She discovered that her power was not lost, as she had at first feared, but was instead drastically altered. She could still command the weather, summoning storms of ice and snow from a calm sky, but she no longer had the power to heal or create. Instead, her presence seemed to have a crippling effect upon the land and the animals that remained near her. The White Fiend was intrigued at this. As she watched, the animals began to physically resemble her more and more as time passed. But the demon's greatest pleasure came in the realization that she could now control these animals, and make use of their acute senses whenever she wished. With this knowledge, the White Fiend at last ventured out of hiding to lay claim to the land around her lair, using her powers and her animal slaves to help secure the territory. Eventually, her reach extended into the human settlements the wizard had long protected. She systematically attacked the villages, killing the majority of the inhabitants and driving the others away. When she had finished, and the land was hers, the demon simply vanished.

To this day, the White Fiend has moved frequently from one region to another, lingering for a period of several years in each place—long enough to leave an indelible mark of corruption upon the land. Over time, the land the demon inhabits will show little new growth in the way of plant life, and more than half the animals born will be stillbirths. This effect persists until the demon moves on. She selects cold, isolated locales to establish her lair, relying upon her animal minions to do her spying and hunting. She can affect the land around her lair to the limits of her reality wrinkle (approximately a 4-mile radius) but only for destruction, not for preservation. All of her power to

THE WHITE FIEND

heal and create was lost when she entered the Demiplane of Dread.

Personality

With only bits and pieces of its former nature, this demon is a chaotic, solitary creature that retains only vague memories of what she used to be. She is thoroughly insane, but as explained above, there is something of a pattern to her existence in Ravenloft. She moves from one area to another, claiming a small lair and the land within her reality wrinkle as her own. She will guard this territory against any outside intrusion by beings of greater than animal intelligence, hunting down and killing for amusement those who venture too close to her lair. Once she has remained in an area long enough to gain control of the animals, she spreads her claimed territory further, using her minions as her eyes, ears, and hunters. Then, when her corrupting presence begins to affect the land beyond the point of recovery, she moves on. This pattern of behavior serves no long-term goal, but is merely a reflection of a mad, restless nature; the demon cannot remain in one place for too long. The White Fiend is aware of her imprisonment within Ravenloft, and, bitterly hating this, has successfully resisted the temptation to gain land-based powers. She prefers to believe that she is still the master of the land, despite the fact that it now holds her captive.

Combat

The White Fiend avoids direct physical confrontations whenever possible and prefers to act through other means. However, when roused she is a terrifying opponent. The very fabric of reality seems to twist to her will – the weather of her concealment, the animals protect her, and strange and terrible shapes seem to form from the whirling snow.

However, she is not entirely unstoppable. The White Fiend's greatest vulnerability lies in attacks directed at her phylactery, her cloak of mists. She can somehow sense that this is the source of her power, for she instinctively protects it and will flee from combat if it is damaged in any way, especially if it is burned by a fire-based attack. The only way to forever destroy the demon is to kill her physical body and burn the cloak that contains her life essence.

Spell-like Abilities: At will—*minor image*, *wind walk*, *control weather*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 13th-level druid (save DCs, where applicable, are 13 + spell level), except as follows. The White Fiend can use *minor image* to create illusions anywhere with her reality wrinkle. She can only use *control weather* to lower the temperature below freezing or to

create ice and snowstorms. These storms affect the entire area contained within her reality wrinkle.

Withering Touch (Su): The extreme cold that emanates from the White Fiend is so deadly, it can cause the flesh of her victims to shrivel with frostbite. Each touch causes 1d4 temporary Strength and Constitution damage. On a critical hit, the hit actually inflicts a permanent ability drain. In either case, the victim negates the effect with a successful Fort save (DC 15).

Frost Breath (Su): The White Fiend has a breath weapon that acts as a cone of intense frost centered upon the demon's mouth, extending out to a range of 10 feet long and 10 feet wide. Creatures caught within the area of effect suffer 6d8 points of cold damage, with a Ref save (DC 17) for half.

Alter Animals (Su): All animals that dwell within the boundaries of the fiend's reality wrinkle will eventually fall under her control. Their eyes will turn black, fur and skin bleached white to resemble her. Besides the physical alterations that take place in these creatures, some animals develop powers similar to those of the White Fiend. This has been the case with the black-eyed wolves the demon uses as her hunters. They have developed a breath weapon similar to the demon.

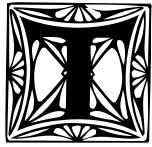
Winter Wolves: CR 5; Large magical beast (cold); HD 6d10+18; hp 51; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 50 ft.; AC 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +9 melee (1d8+6, bite); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.; SA breath weapon, trip; SQ scent; AL NE; SV Fort +8 Ref +6 Will +3; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +6 (+13 in areas of snow and ice), Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +1 (+5 when tracking by scent); Alertness, Improved Initiative.

The White Fiend has the ability to see through the eyes of any animal under her control, make use of its heightened senses, and can direct its actions mentally as long as they remain within her reality wrinkle. However, as with everything else the demon touches, these creatures will not escape the effects of her corruption. The life spans of animals controlled by the demon are halved. Most are unable to reproduce, nor can any type of healing magic affect them. In general, their behavior reflects that of the White Fiend: territorial, chaotic, and vicious.

Cold Subtype (Ex): The White Fiend is immune to cold damage, but takes double damage from fire attacks if she fails her save.

WINTER'S WICKED KISS



his adventure is intended for a party of 4-5 characters, levels 4-6, adjusted up or down depending on how many of the White Fiend's minions are encountered. It can be set in any mountainous terrain in Ravenloft or any other campaign world, preferably during the winter months. The adventure relies on the mystery of the unknown as the heroes attempt to discover who or what the White Fiend is as they seek out her lair. It is not intended – or recommended – that the heroes fight the White Fiend at the conclusion of the adventure. The adventure instead gives the heroes a brief first glimpse into her world, allowing her to become an elusive enemy for future adventures. It is recommended that the Dungeon Master revise the rules for extreme conditions in the *DMG* before running this adventure.

Background

As the citizens of Meer prepare for the coming season, the White Fiend continues to expand her most recently claimed territory, and is preparing to move on soon. She has built a lair in the mountains and stretched outwards, skirting dangerously close to the small human



village. Her wolves stalk the outlying farms, and, in light of a recent, tragic accident, the villagers are beginning to fear for their lives if they remain in the area. But with the arrival of another winter, they seem to have little choice but to stay and endure the White Fiend's wrath—with little hope to survive it.

The Adventure Begins

After traveling for some time, the heroes unexpectedly come upon a small, remote village nestled in the shadow of a group of mountains. Oddly, they find the villagers clustered outside their homes, talking in hushed whispers. If the heroes ask questions, they are directed to the village center, where a large group of people is gathered. The villagers are worried and agitated, and the source of their anxiety appears to be centered upon a small cage being held by a farmer. When the heroes investigate, read the following aloud.

As you peer between the bars of the crudely constructed cage, you see a small white owl lying awkwardly on its side. Large, penetrating black eyes stare back at you with a strange mixture of intelligence and wildness. While you watch, the bird attempts to pull itself upright, only to fall back onto the bottom of the cage, its left wing flapping at an unnatural angle. A handful of feathers drift to the ground in the wake of its movement like so many snowflakes.

For the heroes' benefit, the farmer holding the cage (male human Com1) explains that he found the bird on his nearby farm, dragging its broken wing across the ground and making feeble attempts to fly away. Apparently, a group of local boys playing at hunting with homemade bows and arrows had come upon the creature and shot it accidentally. If a priest or druid in the party inspects the bird, it is obvious that the animal is crippled and apt to die soon. It is important to note that, due to the demon's corrupting effect, the bird cannot be helped by any sort of healing magic. It is also obvious to anyone with the Knowledge (nature) skill or similar that the owl has been unnaturally affected by magic.

Believing the owl to be one of the White Fiend's minions, the villagers go on to relate what little they know of the demon and her servants. They explain that several years ago, the village was struck by an unusually harsh and long winter. Crops were lost to the lingering frosts and some of the animals began to change. Their behavior became aggressive and violent, their eyes grew dull black and the color bled from their skin. Hunters venturing out to find food often disappeared without a trace. Wolf packs

THE WHITE FIEND

terrorized the families living outside the protection of the village. Though the winter eventually departed, the land seemed weaker and unable to fully recover. This weakness has grown steadily worse year after year, as have the winters. In the midst of storms of ice and snow that have swept across the countryside, people swear to have glimpsed a ghostly image of a laughing, wild-eyed woman who chillingly resembled the afflicted animals. The villagers now live in open fear of this formless White Fiend. Everyone seems to have a different opinion as to who or what she might be, but they are certain that she controls the will of the animals and the land itself. For whatever reason, she has decided to turn both against them. The theories as to her origin range from superstitious to fanciful; some of these are presented below, but the Dungeon Master should feel free to insert his or her own ideas.

- ❖ The White Fiend is the spirit of Winter herself, bent on making their land a cold, desolate place forever.
- ❖ She is, in fact, a powerful witch performing strange rituals on the animals and tampering with the weather to gain more power.
- ❖ It is also whispered that she is a phantom, an evil lost soul wandering the countryside.

One point on which the villagers do agree is that the White Fiend's animal servants are sacred to her. They fear that if the bird dies, she will take revenge upon the entire village. Isolated, and with yet another winter onslaught soon to arrive, the people have no hope of escape. Since they are unable to do anything to help the dying animal, they have decided upon a desperate plan to save themselves. It is their intention to send a small party into the mountains to seek out the mysterious White Fiend and return the injured bird to her. They believe her power will be able to heal the animal and thus soften her anger towards the villagers. They are unaware that the demon has no power or desire to heal, and appeal to the heroes—with money if necessary—to undertake the journey. If the PCs agree, the villagers will provide them with a guide who is familiar with the area. However, they will not allow the heroes to go with the intent of attacking the demon; they are simple farmers and hunters and have no desire to risk their lives if the party should fail. Their instructions are to deliver the bird to the White Fiend in exchange for her mercy.

Frostbitten

A stubborn few in the crowd insist that the White Fiend does not exist at all, that she is merely a tale told to frighten children and used as an excuse for the winters that have been plaguing the village for the past

several years. They are quick to point out that the strange behavior of the animals could be caused by the harsh living conditions that have resulted from the changes in climate. However, they cannot refute the fact that one of the villagers claims to have actually encountered the White Fiend personally and lived. When the heroes agree to carry out the villagers' plan, they will meet this individual, a hunter named Hanlon Gray, and also their guide. Read the following aloud:

A man steps forward from the sea of anxious faces, his expression grave as he looks at each of you. A heavy woolen cloak obscures much of his form.

"I am Hanlon," he says quietly. "I have lived in these mountains the whole of my life. This creature is no myth, and if you are willing, I can take you to her hiding place."

The heroes will learn that Hanlon is indeed the only person in the village who has any helpful information as to the nature of the White Fiend. He will explain to the heroes in private that he often ventured out into the mountains to hunt with the others when food supplies began to run low. When the animals began to show their unnatural behavior, he made several unsuccessful attempts to track the beasts down, but eventually succeeded in following them to a cave up in the mountains. The entrance was hidden from view by seemingly constant gusts of wind and heavy snow in the area. It was here that Hanlon claims to have been seized by a sudden, paralyzing cold that spread throughout his body and prevented him from fleeing. A woman materialized in front of him, her black eyes glittering maliciously as she held him effortlessly by the throat.

Hanlon can give no explanation as to why the demon let him live, but does not believe it was out of any sense of mercy. He speculates that the creature may have wanted to make her presence known to further terrify the villagers. Having witnessed the demon's evil for himself, he has little faith in the villager's plan, but will not confide this to the villagers or the heroes.

If the heroes question Hanlon's story, he will reluctantly offer physical evidence of his encounter with the demon. Removing his cloak, he reveals five thin lines of yellowed, frostbitten flesh on his throat, like the imprint of elongated fingers. The wounds he received at the demon's touch have not healed, and he suspects they never fully will. Despite his misgivings, Hanlon has been chosen and has agreed to lead a party back to the cave.

Hanlon Gray: Male human War2; CR 1; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d8+2; hp 16; Init +2

(Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 armor, +2 Dex); Atk +3 melee (1d4+3/crit 19–20/x2, dagger) or +2 ranged (1d6/crit x3, shortbow); AL NE; SV Fort +4 Ref +2 Will +1; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14. Height 5 ft. 10 in.

Skills and Feats: Climb +7, Craft (trapmaking) +4; Handle Animal +7, Listen +5, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +3; Alertness, Track

Possessions: Leather armor, shortbow, quiver with 18 arrows, [money].

Preparations

The party will follow the safest possible trail into the mountains. Though often used in the past by travelers, the harsh winters of recent years have turned this well-worn road into a treacherous climb over ice and snow-caked ground, eventually becoming impassable. As a result, the path has fallen into disuse, further isolating the village. Although it is not far to the White Fiend's lair (the village is just outside her reality wrinkle), with these obstacles it will take the heroes a day and a half of travel to reach the cave.

In addition, the heroes will have to take certain steps to ensure that the injured owl they carry is kept alive. The following guidelines can be used to determine if they are caring for the animal properly.

- ❖ It must remain as still as possible. Sudden movement or rough treatment will certainly aggravate the animal's injuries. If kept in its cage and carried carefully by a party member, this requirement is easily met.
- ❖ Obviously, the bird must be fed at least once a day, but it will eat little. It may attempt to bite the hand that feeds it out of fear, though it is far too weak to inflict any damage.
- ❖ As the weather worsens, the bird must be protected in some way from the elements. A blanket or cloak placed over the cage would suffice.

If one or more of these conditions are ignored, the Dungeon Master should make a percentile role to determine if the bird dies as a result of the party's neglect, beginning at 10% and doubling each time the heroes fail to meet the requirements. For whatever reason, if the party tarries longer than five days in reaching the White Fiend, the bird will succumb to its injuries.

Hanlon will accompany the heroes for the sole purpose of showing them the hidden cave. If the heroes try to put the bird into his care, he will refuse to have anything to do with the unnatural creature. He considers the afflicted animals to be a perversion of nature, and if given the choice, would have put the suffering creature out of its misery.

Eyes on the Trail

Almost immediately after the heroes depart, a light snow begins to fall. In a matter of a few hours, a blanket of thick white covers the land, and the temperature begins to steadily drop. If the characters are not properly clothed for a winter season, the Dungeon Master should make subtle adjustments to reflect this, such as penalties to Dexterity for hands unprotected by gloves, or negatives to attack and damage roles.

As the day wears on, the heroes begin to get the sense that something is amiss around them. Listening closely, they are able to discern a faint crunching of snow coming from somewhere behind them. A search reveals nothing out of the ordinary, but as soon as the party resumes its trek, the sounds continue, coming from beside or sometimes behind them, it will not take the group long to realize they are being stalked. The White Fiend, able to see through the eyes of the injured owl, now knows that the group is seeking her. Realizing this is no ordinary group of farmers, the demon has decided to toy with the heroes a bit and test their resolve. She has directed her wolves to follow them, but to stay well hidden. The Dungeon Master should allow the party's trepidation to build as night approaches, and they are forced to make camp with unseen eyes upon them.

Winter Night

After dark, the land takes on a far more sinister appearance. The normal mixture of nighttime sounds seems strangely unsettling, as if the animals can sense the evil presence that hangs over them. Wolf howls fill the night, and it should soon become apparent to the heroes that several of the beasts have taken up a perimeter around their camp. They stay out of sight of any fire or light source, but if any hero strays too far outside the camp, he or she will be confronted by a large white wolf with sunken black eyes, identical to those of the injured owl. They will not attack unless provoked; the White Fiend has merely ordered them to watch and see to it that her prey does not escape. If the heroes attack, the wolves will scatter, but not before one releases its breath weapon. As it is under the White Fiend's control, it will aim to harm as many people as possible.

Hanlon will strongly urge the heroes not to attack, for fear of further inciting the White Fiend's anger. He points out that she has not openly threatened them as yet, and that there may be hope. As the heroes settle down for sleep, the wolves will once again take up a position outside the camp, forming a discreet circle in the shadows. They will come no closer; it is now time

THE WHITE FIEND

for their mistress to have her fun. At some point during the night, pull the player of a slumbering male hero aside and read the following aloud:

The chill of the night air has seeped so deeply into your bones that rest seems impossible. As you drift between slumber and wakefulness, you feel sudden warmth fill your arms and nestle against your chest. The heat relaxes and soothes you, but seems unlike the heat of a fire. Opening sleep-heavy eyes, you realize with a growing dread that the fire is no longer burning. Staring at you from the circle of your arms is a woman with beautiful blue eyes, snowy skin and hair that numbs your flesh with the sting of icy needles as it brushes against your skin. The woman raises an impossibly slender finger to her lips to silence you, and leans forward slowly for a kiss.

Any action taken by the hero to repel her “affections” will cause the demon to laugh softly and vanish, her eyes darkening and her face twisting into an ugly sneer. The hero’s arms and chest remain numb from her touch, the cold inflicting 2d6 point of damage.

No other disturbances occur during the night, but in the morning, the heroes will find four sets of wolf tracks leading away from their camp, as well as an additional set of humanoid footprints that originate from inside the camp. The hero chosen as the White Fiend’s target will discover evidence of frostbite on both hands and arms. The affected flesh can be treated, but the scars are slow to fade. Magical healing can only restore 1d4 hit points per day. The hero will suffer a –2 competence penalty to all attack and damage rolls when employing any hand-held weapons for the duration of the adventure while the wounds heal.

Entering the Lair

As the heroes draw closer to the demon’s lair, the snowfall intensifies, reducing visibility to only a few feet. The White Fiend has used her control over the elements to conceal her lair and slow any potential trespassers. It is here, Hanlon claims, where the mountain trail becomes permanently blocked, that he discovered the cave entrance, and instructs the heroes to search the mountain face. They find the small opening perched on a thin ledge just above their heads. It is no more than five feet tall and wide, and appears to be covered with a thin glaze of ice that, while easily broken, effectively conceals the entrance from the unwary. The passage, while offering protection from the snow and blowing wind once inside, is cramped and deep, disappearing several yards into the mountain before widening into a large chamber of ice and rock.

Waiting for the party in the chamber is the White Fiend. Describe the following scene to the heroes:

The sheets of ice lining the chamber reflect the image of the woman standing before you, casting oddly distorting pictures upon the walls. Her hair is stiff and frozen into icy strands, and her skin seems devoid of color and vitality. Though female in appearance, her black eyes are too large and alien to be human. As she approaches your group, you realize that a faint, gauzy mist clings to her body, wrapping her like a shroud and making her seem almost a phantom.

“You were brave to come this far,” she says, her voice a whisper that echoes through the cavern. “Nevertheless, you are all trespassing here. We will deal with that matter shortly.” Her tone is ominously light.

She will approach the hero carrying the owl and hold out her hands to receive the bird, knowing all along this was their purpose in coming. Holding it lovingly in her arms, she coos and soothes the injured creature as it struggles feebly against her touch. The White Fiend regards its struggles with delighted amusement, as if watching the antics of a child. As the heroes watch, the owl will slowly begin to wither in the demon’s hands, until all that remains of it is a twisted husk that she drops to the ground after a moment. The event may warrant a horror check for the heroes, especially if witnessed by a ranger or druid. The White Fiend speaks one last time:

“Now that you have ensured the villagers’ survival, we shall discuss your presence here.” The woman turns and regards Hanlon with almost the same expression she turned upon the owl. “Hanlon, my sweet, I warned you what would happen should you return here. And since you have brought others with you,” her gaze pierces each of you in turn, “I am sure you cannot even imagine what I am going to do to you.”

Conclusion

At a word from their mistress, wolves advance from the shadows of the chamber, one for each party member. As the beasts attack, the White Fiend will stand back to watch the fun. If attacked, the demon will release her breath weapon upon hero and wolf alike, with no regard for either. The wolves will fight to the death, but as the heroes begin to gain the upper hand, the White Fiend will vanish in an angry burst of wind, leaving her lair and her minions behind to their fate.

THE WHITE FIEND

The heroes notice immediately that Hanlon has disappeared as well.

Upon exiting her lair, the heroes discover the unnatural snowstorms and winds have dissipated, leaving behind a melting blanket of fresh snow. They will find no trace of Hanlon, and can only speculate as to his fate. The village is safe, for the White Fiend has had her sport and moved on.

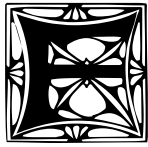
Recurrence

Though the heroes have saved the villagers, the White Fiend was not destroyed, and will move on to begin anew in another area, repeating the pattern of her existence in Ravenloft. This leaves ample opportunity for the heroes to encounter her again, and she will certainly remember them as well. They may even decide to go after the White Fiend themselves in the hope of rescuing Hanlon, should he be alive, and to learn more about this elusive demon.

LAND-BASED POWERS

*I sell here, Sir, what all the world
desires to have - Power!*

—Matthew Boulton



Fiends acquire land-based powers through the use of power rituals, as in Chapter Five of the *Ravenloft Campaign Setting* book. Each domain grants a unique power to fiends that successfully perform power rituals within their borders. Samples of those powers are given in the list below. Unless otherwise noted all land-based powers are considered supernatural powers, and saves against all land-based powers are made at a DC equal to 10 + 1/2 fiend's Hit Dice + fiend's Charisma modifier. Unless otherwise noted, activating a particular power is a standard action.

The Core

Barovia (Obscuring Mist): The fiend can create an *obscuring mist* within its reality wrinkle at will. This mist has the same effect as the spell, save that it lasts until dismissed by the fiend. The fiend is unhampered by the mist.

Blaustein (Domination): At will, the fiend can force those around it to carry out its desires. The fiend can either affect as many people as it desires with a *command* spell, lasting 1 round per hit dice of the fiend, or focus its attentions on 1 person, affecting them with *dominate person* for 1 day per hit dice. All victims receive a Will save to resist the effect.

Borca (Poison Touch): Once per day the fiend can poison a living creature by making a successful touch attack. This virulent poison is identical in effect to black lotus extract (see *Poison* in the *DMG*).

Darkon (Forget): Once per day the fiend can cause all creatures within its reality wrinkle to forget all events of the past 24 hours if they fail a Will save. Any mind-affecting spells that were influencing the affected creatures are dispelled by this effect.

Dementlieu (Mass Charm): Once per day, the fiend can invoke a variation of the *mass charm* spell. All humanoids of Medium-size or smaller in the fiend's reality wrinkle are affected as though the fiend had cast *charm person* on them. A successful

Will save negates the effects. There is no limit to the number of creatures the fiend can have charmed in this manner at one time. The charm lasts one hour for every Hit Die the fiend has, or until the target is outside the fiend's reality wrinkle.

Demise (Petrification Gaze): Once per day, the fiend can make a gaze attack. Those who meet its gaze are petrified.

Dominia (Cause Insanity): Once per day, the fiend can drive one creature in its reality wrinkle mad. It can choose to afflict them with revulsion, a phobia, delusion, depression or hallucinations (see *Madness* saves in Chapter Three of the *Ravenloft Campaign Setting* book). The madness is permanent until cured. If the fiend can somehow remain in mental contact with its victim for a full 24 hours, they do not receive a save against the ability.

Falkovnia (Rage): Once per day, the fiend can enter a rage, as a 15th level barbarian, for 1 rd per hit dice.

Forlorn (Time Shift): At will, the fiend can displace itself in time. It gains an Initiative bonus of 1d10-1d6; each round it can roll again or keep the value as it desires.

Hazlan (Detect Magic): The fiend is constantly aware of any magic cast within its reality wrinkle. It knows the precise location of the casting, and which spell was cast.

Invidia (Corrupt Life): At will the fiend can cause all plant life within its reality wrinkle to shrivel and die. Animals will seek to flee the fiend's reality wrinkle the moment this power is used, but its use causes them no lasting harm.

Isle of Ravens (Fly): The fiend gains the exceptional ability to fly, at a speed of 40 feet and good manoeuvrability. If it can already fly, its speed increases by 20 feet, and its manoeuvrability increases to good (if it is not already good or perfect).

Kartakass (Siren Song): Once per day, the fiend can sing a soft, melodic song that is carried throughout its reality wrinkle. All who hear the song are affected as though a sleep spell had been cast on them. A successful Will save negates the effect. There is no limit to the number of creatures that can be affected by this spell.

Keening (Wail of the Banshee): Once per day the fiend can wail, killing 1 creature per hit dice. Those closest to it are affected first. Victims can make a Fort save to resist the effect.

Lamordia (Hyper-regeneration): The fiend begins healing at an amazing rate whenever its hit points fall to 0 or lower. The fiend regains 10 hit points a round until fully healed.

Liffe (Incompetence): This power can affect as many people in its reality wrinkle as the fiend wants. Once per day, the fiend can impose a –4 competence penalty to the highest ability score of its victims. The penalty lasts for 1 round per hit dice of the fiend.

L'ile de la Tempete (Hypnotism): At will, the fiend can *hypnotise* all those within sight of it. Victims gain a Will save to resist this effect.

Markovia (Create Broken One): With a touch, the fiend can transform any living being that fails a Fort save into a broken one. The broken one acts as though permanently *charmed* by the fiend. It can use this ability once per day.

Mordent (Phantom Shift): At will, the fiend can create a phantom shift within its reality wrinkle. All creatures within the reality wrinkle are able to see and touch ethereal resonance. This effect lasts until the fiend dispels it.

Necropolis (Slay Living): Once per day, the fiend can cast *power word, kill*.

Nocturnal Sea (Dominate Undead): The fiend can control 1 undead creature, as though it were a human who had been affected by *dominate person*. The effect lasts 1 day per hit dice of the fiend, and it can use the ability at will. It cannot affect darklords or undead directly controlled by them.

Nova Vaasa (Inner Turmoil): Once per day, the fiend can splinter the barriers between the good and evil parts of a person's psyche, causing them to swing wildly from extreme to extreme and stopping them from focusing. They effectively become *confused* for 1 hour per hit dice of the fiend.

Richemulot (Dominate Animals): Once per day, the fiend can force all the animals belonging to a single species (e.g. rats) in its reality wrinkle to obey its will for 1 round per hit dice. Animals, unless they are familiars or animal companions, do not get a save.

Sea of Sorrows (Geas): Once per day, the fiend can force any creature in its reality wrinkle to carry out a task for it, as though they were affected by a *geas* spell. The victim can make a Will save to avoid what would undoubtedly be a horrific assignment.

Shadow Rift (Deeper Darkness): At will, the fiend can darken the area around it. It can affect a circle of land of any radius, up to the limit of its reality wrinkle. At the limits of the affected area, the light is no more than a murky twilight; at the centre, it is as deep as a *deeper darkness* spell. The gloom lasts as long as the fiend desires, and doesn't affect the demon.

Sithicus (Shadowform): Three times per day, the fiend can transform itself into a creature of shadow. It becomes incorporeal and gains a flight speed of 40 feet (good). It can still use all of its mental abilities while in shadowform. The ability lasts up to 1 hour per hit dice each time it is used.

This power has only been available since the year 752 BC, when the original Lord of Sithicus vanished. Some fiends retain the original land-based power of *Modify Memory*. At will, the fiend can change or remove up to 10 minutes from the memory of the creature touched. The victim gains a Will save to resist the effect.

Tepest (Spell-like Abilities): The fiend gains 2 spell-like abilities of level 3 or lower, selected from the Druid and Sorcerer/Wizard spell lists. The fiend can use these abilities 3 times per day. It can choose spells that it already has access to; in this case, it simply gains 3 more uses per day of that power.

Valachan (Polymorph Touch): Once per day, the fiend can cast *polymorph other* on a successful touch attack. The victim is permanently transformed if they fail a Fort save; if they pass, they are only transformed for 1 round per hit dice of the fiend.

Vechor (Alter Reality): The fiend can affect the general nature of the land within its reality wrinkle at will. For example, it can alter the weather, cause minor cosmetic changes to a building, create an "eerie feeling" in an area, or make plants seem sick and wasted. This is largely a cosmetic change with few game effects. However, with enough concentration the fiend can permanently alter reality in a small area – causing the ground to crack open, buildings to decay or change position, etc. Such permanent changes are draining for the fiend; if it uses this ability to cause considerable changes to its surrounds, the land-based power cannot be used for another week while the fiend recovers.

Verbrek (Mass Polymorph): Once per day, the fiend can create a mass polymorph effect. All humanoids of Medium-size or smaller are affected as though a *polymorph other* spell had been cast on them. A successful Will save negates the effect. Failure means that the target is transformed into an animal of the fiend's choice. All targets are transformed into the same type of animal. The effect lasts one round per Hit Die of the fiend, or until the target leaves the fiend's reality wrinkle.

Islands of Terror

Bluetspur (Mindblast): Three times per day, the fiend can unleash a mindblast around itself in a burst with a radius of 10' per Hit Dice. Anyone caught in this burst must make a Will save or be paralysed for

APPENDIX

3d4 rounds. Those who fail their save by 10 or more must also make a Madness check.

G'Henna (Cause Hunger): Once per day, the fiend can cause all creatures within its reality wrinkle to become insatiably hungry and thirsty if they fail a Will save. Those who fail the save are compelled to seek out and consume all food and drink they can find. They are only compelled to consume that which is actually edible, and are not compelled to consume that which they know to be poisoned. They are not compelled to act violently to satisfy this craving, though they might resort to theft. The effect lasts one round per Hit Die of the fiend, or until the target leaves the fiend's reality wrinkle.

Kalidnay (Desiccate): Once per day, the fiend can cast *horrid wilting*, affecting a radius of 10' per Hit Dice around it.

Nightmare Lands (Control Dreams): The fiend can affect the dreams of a single person within its reality wrinkle. If the victim fails their Will save, the fiend can influence their dreams however it desires. Common effects might be to copy the effects of a *dream* or *nightmare* spell, influence the message contained in another caster's *dream* spell, or to drive their victim mad.

Nosos (Putrefy): Once per day, the fiend can cause any food or drink within its reality wrinkle to become rotten and filthy. This can affect anywhere between a single flask and every item of food in the wrinkle. No nutrition can be got from the food; water is stagnant and flat, and doesn't quench thirst. Those who eat it must make a Fort save (DC 11) or contract Filth Fever. Magical potions, holy water and food that has been blessed or conjured by divine magic are unaffected.

Odiare (Improved Possession): The fiend is more adept at possessing other people. Whenever it attempts to take possession of someone, the DC of the save increases by 4 due to the fiend's increased competence. Also, the fiend can possess people without a focus or fetish, but retain complete control over the victim's body. The victim's soul is trapped in their body while the fiend is in control, completely powerless to stop it, but able to remember what the fiend makes them do.

Rokushima Taiyoo (Cause Strife): Once per day, the fiend can affect any number of people within its reality wrinkle with a *symbol of discord*. Victims may attempt a Will save to resist the effect.

Scaena (Illusion): At will, the fiend can cast *major image*, affecting as much or as little of its reality wrinkle as it desires.

Souragne (Animate Dead): Once per day, the fiend can animate up to twice its Hit Dice in undead (usually skeletons or zombies). These undead are completely loyal to the fiend. The fiend can only

ever have up to twice its Hit Dice in undead animated by this ability, although these minions don't count towards limits imposed by other abilities.

Staunton Bluffs (Ethereal Jaunt): Three times per day, the fiend can cast *ethereal jaunt*.

Clusters

The Amber Wastes

Har'Akir (Disease Touch): At will, the fiend can inflict a disease upon living creatures with a successful touch attack. The disease is identical in effect to devil chills (see *Disease* in the *DMG*).

Pharazia (Face of Evil): At will, the fiend can either *cause fear* or *charm person* everyone that can see its face. The fear lasts 1 round per hit dice, and the charm lasts 1 hour per hit dice.

Sebua (Detect Life): This ability is always in effect. The fiend knows the location of everything with a beating heart in its reality wrinkle. With a standard action, it can identify a particular life force. (For example, the fiend can sense that there are three living creatures within thirty feet of it. With a moment's concentration, it can discover the race, class and sex of any of those heartbeats. If it has met one of them before, it can distinguish them from another person of the same race, class and gender).

The Frozen Reaches

Sanguinia (Drain Humors): The fiend's tongue becomes grotesquely enlarged and a massive bony spur forms on its end. This mutation is present regardless of the form the demon takes; even polymorphing magic can't give the fiend a normal tongue. It becomes almost impossible for the fiend to speak normally.

However, the fiend's new tongue is prehensile and can be used to make missile attacks. If the fiend forgoes its normal attacks that round, it can instead attack with its tongue at its normal missile attack bonus. The tongue has a maximum range of 10 feet. The tongue drains the vital fluids from whatever region it strikes, doing 1d4 permanent Constitutional damage.

Vorostokov (Alter Temperature): The fiend becomes able to alter the temperature in its reality wrinkle, turning the fiery air of a furnace into the chill of a blizzard and vice versa. The fiend can change the temperature from extremely cold to cold to temperate to hot to extremely hot (These conditions are described under Hot and Cold Dangers in Chapter Three of the *DMG*). Each change requires a standard action. Thus, it would take 5 rounds to turn an extremely hot area to extreme cold.

The Shadowlands

Avonleigh (Invisibility): The fiend can turn *invisible* at will, for as long as it wants. Actions that would dispel *invisibility*, like making an attack, disrupt the spell normally, but the fiend can renew it as a standard action.

Nidala (Conversion): Once per week, if the fiend is able to communicate with someone for 10 minutes without being interrupted, it can convert them to its alignment if they fail a Will save. This communication may be verbal or purely mental.

Shadowborn Manor (Animate Objects): Once per day, the fiend can animate all the objects within 50' per hit dice (to the limit of its reality wrinkle). Swords fly through the air, ropes lash like snakes, and tables walk. The effect lasts one round per hit dice of the fiend, during which the animate objects obey the fiend's mental commands.

The Verdurous Lands

Saragoss (Instil Paranoia): Once per day, one person in the fiend's reality wrinkle instantly and permanently becomes convinced that everyone around them is plotting against them, and keeping the things it needs hidden from it. See the description in Chapter Three of the *Ravenloft Campaign Setting*. In many cases, the paranoid eventually shifts

alignment to neutral or chaotic evil. The victim may attempt a Will save to resist this effect.

Sri Raji (Fear gaze): Any who meet the fiend's gaze must make a Fear save or be panicked for 1 round per hit dice of the fiend. It can activate this ability at will.

Wildlands (Steal Abilities): Once per day, the fiend can steal any one feat or supernatural or extraordinary ability from a person it touches, if they fail a Will save. The fiend can use this ability freely for 1 hour per hit dice; at the end of this time, the ability returns to the victim (who is unable to use the ability while it has been stolen). Memorised spells, spell-like abilities, the ability to turn undead, familiars and animal companions cannot be stolen in this way. Fiends also avoid stealing abilities from good priests and paladins.

Zherisia

Paridon (Aura of Terror): At those within 20 feet per hit dice of the fiend are frightened for 2d4 rounds if they fail a Fear save.

Timor (Compression): The fiend gains the ability to squeeze itself through tiny spaces, according to the table below. Any fiend can move through any hole at least 3 feet in diameter at their normal speed. For holes of smaller diameter, the rate is reduced.

Hole diameter	Time taken to move 10 feet through hole			
	Huge	Large	Medium	Small
3 feet	Move-equivalent	Move-equivalent	Move-equivalent	Move-equivalent
2 feet	Full round	Move-equivalent	Move-equivalent	Move-equivalent
1 foot	Two rounds	Full round	Move-equivalent	Move-equivalent
6 inches	Five rounds	Two rounds	Full round	Move-equivalent
4 inches	-	Five rounds	Two rounds	Full round
2 inches	-	-	Five rounds	Two rounds
1 inch	-	-	-	Five rounds