

What is Gothic Earth Eternal?

Gothic Earth Eternal is a netbook project by Rucht Lilavivat and the Fraternity of Shadows. It is a Pathfinder 2012 update of Gothic Earth.

The Story So Far

the red death is defeated

In 1900, something completely unexpected happened on Gothic Earth. It took not just a single band of adventurers, but an entire league of scholars, soldiers, detectives, and dedicated souls to accomplish the impossible - the defeat of the Red Death. Through combat, arcane might, and tireless research they shoved the entity out of this reality, sending it back from whence it came.

Imhotep was destroyed and his great king, Djoser, was eradicated from the face of Gothic Earth. The Darklords found themselves suddenly trapped within domains - strange mystical pockets of the land that they could not leave.

In the following decades, the league made their way across the globe, destroying the Darklords one by one. This time is known as the Great Purge. It was a time in which things were turned on their head. Now it was the denizens of darkness who fled from the forces of good. But something happened that no one could have anticipated.

the rise of the jade horror

The Jade Horror and the Red Death had long been locked in a terrible struggle. Through subtle means, the Jade Horror was able to aid the league of Westerners in their battle, giving them an edge against her mighty opponent.

With the Red Death finally defeated, the Jade Horror began spreading its horrific influence throughout the globe. But yet another event shook the globe, one that no scholar or horror had seen coming.

the advent of the world wars

Though many horrors unleashed upon this realm are the work of such entities as the Death or the Horror, the greatest evils always come from Man himself. No great and powerful entity caused the outbreak of the First or Second World Wars. Humanity alone is responsible for those calamitous events.

The hideous death toll of the First World War ended the Great Purge, and gave rise to all manner of undead and warped beings. Creatures which arose of their own accord, with no supernatural patron controlling them. But it is during the Second World War that humanity truly crippled itself.

In 1945, the Germans were besieged. The Allies were closing in on them from the East and West. In desperation, they turned to a supernatural solution. They attempted an ancient ritual, recovered from the desert by Rommel's own operatives. The SS Inner Circle performed a mystic ceremony that should have, by their reckoning, freed a Darklord from its domain and put it under their control. But the ceremony was a disaster. The Darklord broke free and devoured everyone at the site.

But this ritual did much more than that - it ripped open the still-fresh seal over the magical fabric of Gothic Earth - and allowed the Red Death back into the world.

today

Now, the people of Gothic Earth struggle on. The Red Death and the Jade Horror are locked in a terrible war. Darklords, each now trapped in separate domains, plot against each other, some siding with the Horror and others with the Death.

Caught in the middle of this are the unwashed masses of humanity. People are used as pawns in this never-ending conflict. The forces of darkness are rallying now and some scholars foresee a new Dark Age approaching, one where all of Gothic Earth is consumed in a shadow-war - the Eternal Night.

The Darklords Eternal

A Darklord is a being of great power and darkness. The **Red Death** or the **Jade Horror** has chosen them as their champion. But not every Darklord follows his patron. Many work secretly to free themselves from the yoke of their servitude. The older Darklords of Gothic Earth are a pernicious lot. They have survived the War of 1900, saw the **Red Death** banished from the land, and survived the Great Purge afterwards. This means that most of the older Darklords are both cunning and resourceful.

Each and every Darklord deserves their fate. Somewhere along the line, they have committed an Ultimate Act of Darkness and this one deed trapped them in a domain that they cannot leave. The domain that they dwell in is one part palace, one part torture room.

what a darklord is not

Darklords are not a who's who of evil personas in the world. Many of the world's most evil individuals are not Darklords. Both the **Red Death** and the **Jade Horror** only embrace a particular kind of insidiousness. Darklords are not someone who necessarily commits lots of murder and destruction. Sometimes a single act of darkness can be enough to cause a person to become a Darklord.

how darklords are chosen

The **Red Death** prefers its Darklords to be someone who gets their hands dirty. Hilter helped come up with his Final Solution, but he did not personally oversee the building of specific death camps. Amon Göth, however, did. To an entity like the **Death**, Amon Göth is a far more appealing agent.

Most Darklords for the **Red Death** also have a personal stake in their Ultimate Act of Darkness. Most didn't kill random innocents for no reason. They had a real and driving need to enact their vile deeds. Usually, something in a Darklord's background is tied to their Acts of Darkness. Thus, a Darklord is usually not a soldier who killed fifty men because he was ordered to do so. Rather, he is a man who chose fifty people for a personal reason and ensured that each of those souls fell to his twisted needs.

The **Jade Horror**, on the other hand, is far more impersonal. It doesn't necessarily care about people who get their hands dirty or not. It cares about individuals who can give it souls, which it seems to feed upon. A doctor who innocently sends victims to a clinic, which is really a site of torture and a portal to the realm of the **Jade Horror**, would be an ideal agent. But sometimes, the **Jade Horror** needs a direct agent of its will. That's when it sends in its own Darklords.

Unlike the Darklords of the **Death**, the Darklords of the **Jade Horror** share one common trait - they worship it with a religious fervor. Or, at least, they did at one time....

Above all - the most important thing to remember is that the **Red Death** and **Jade Horror** follow no fast rules on who they make into a Darklord. All things above are nothing more than guidelines.

Domains of Dread

Each and every Darklord on Gothic Earth exists within a domain - a special prison that is one part torture chamber, one part prison, and one part playground. Domains on Gothic Earth can be as small as a house or as expansive as a small country. It depends upon the Darklord than dwells within.

what a domain is like

Typically, a domain will be a place on Gothic Earth that has been twisted to fit the macabre inner psyche of its Darklord. For example, a killer who is very child-like in his mannerisms might find himself trapped in a particular neighborhood with lots of strange and archaic toy stores; a closed-down amusement park might be nearby.

But the domain of the Darklord is also a prison. No Darklord can leave their own domain. Some feel an overwhelming sense of dread as they approach the borders of their domain. Others feel nothing. But one thing is clear - if any Darklord attempts to cross the borders of their domain, it causes them untold pain. And they

not a metric of evil

Early on, we explored the idea of making some of the most evil individuals on earth into Darklords - people like Stalin or Kim Jong-il. We discovered quickly that this just didn't work. If all of the most evil individuals on earth were Darklords, then the list would actually be quite stale. Most Darklords in the Year 2012 would be male, dictators, megalomaniacs, and in the end quite similar. Not only was this not as fun, it wasn't very Ravenloft. Remember that Darklords can often be more tragic than evil.

why domains?

For this edition of Gothic Earth, we wanted to make Darklords distinct from the other threats in the setting. Also, we wanted to give the setting a little something different, to differentiate it from the Masque of the Red Death. Finally, we wanted to make the Gothic Earth Eternal setting more in keeping with the ideas and themes of Ravenloft.

will always find themselves suddenly appearing in a new location – always within the confines of their domain.

A Darklord's domain is not just a prison in the physical sense. It also acts as a psychological torture chamber. For example, a Darklord who drowned her own children might find herself trapped in a town where the birthrate is unnaturally high, so there are children everywhere, constantly reminding her of her own awful deeds. Each domain is twisted perfectly to assail the Darklord with guilt, pain, anguish, and suffering.

closing the borders

Most, but not all Darklords can close the borders of their domain. They can do so with a thought. Some domain closures are actually surmountable. For example, a darklord might be able to make a ring of fire around their domain, but anyone in an aircraft can fly over it. Some have domains that cannot be crossed by any means, such as a barrier of mist that one may travel into, only to find themselves back in the domain when the fog clears away.

Closing the border of a domain is never done lightly. When a domain border closes, typically all forms of communication through the border get cut off. Cell phones go dead. Electricity ceases to flow across wires. Highways are shut down. Sections of the planet go dark from satellites. Thus, closing the border of a domain is a blatant and flagrant act of supernatural power. And usually when a Darklord does something like that, other Darklords will either see it as a challenge or a threat to the status quo.

The creatures of darkness know that the Rule Unspoken (see below) keeps them alive. Because no one wants to talk about the supernatural, the denizens of Gothic Earth can usually act unmolested. However, all creatures of the night know that large and blatant displays of power will erode the Rule Unspoken. And no one wants that. Because if humanity was ever able to rally together and rise up against their oppressors, it would mean another Great Purge.

For that reason, many Darklords will only use this power in the most dire of circumstances.

escaping a domain

On Gothic Earth, it is possible to escape particular domains. This possibility is not just something only within mortal grasp. Darklords, too, can sometimes escape their mystical prisons. In 1945, a secret research branch of Hilter's SS forces conducted an ancient ritual which was able to break the borders of a domain and set a Darklord free. But the ritual, a magical rite recovered from the great and insidious Imhotep, was imperfect. The Darklord went mad and tore through the SS soldiers on the site. To this day, he is still missing.

Since that time, numerous other Darklords have attempted to replicate the ritual, with varying results. A few Darklords have destroyed themselves in the process. One Darklord was consumed in a terrible conflagration along with her entire domain. Some Darklords have gone mad. A small few have actually made it out of their enigmatic prisons...but with a price.

It seems that once a Darklord does escape her domain, she starts to die. Her body begins to wither. Her powers begin to fade. And once in this delicate position, often her enemies will begin hunting for her in earnest.

The only way to survive, once free, is to establish a new domain in a new location. The few Darklords that have been able to do this did it the only way they knew how – enacting another Ultimate Act of Darkness.

So the question remains – why would any Darklord want to be free? After all, it just means that the Darklord gets weaker and possibly dies. Many Darklords attempt to escape out of hubris. They have heard the stories of others' attempts at escape, but believe that somehow such an event won't happen to them. Many Darklords just want to taste freedom. Even if it is just for a day or two, they want to see the world that has been denied them. Other Darklords do it out of a sense of necessity. For example, a Darklord who is being hounded by a rival or a group of powerful adventurers might have to find some way out of her prison to escape. Still others have a long-range plan. They move their entire operations as a single move in a globe-spanning chess game.

But no matter what, no Darklord can survive for long unless she has a domain around her. This is the dread irony of Gothic Earth. Each Darklord needs her prison.

escape from domains?

The possibility of escape from domains was created to give game masters deeper and richer story options. Now, a Darklord isn't just languishing away in their domain, they could be trying to get out. Maybe they are already out and about to enact their Ultimate Act of Darkness. Maybe one Darklord has escaped and is in the domain of other Darklord. The possibilities abound.

And, of course, being able to move domains gives game masters more creative freedom as well. If the heroes have fought and vanquished a Darklord in one location, you can have him appear in another, completely different location for more insidious fun.

Life on Gothic Earth

Life on Gothic Earth transpires much as it does today on our own earth. People wake up, go to their jobs, to school, come home, and go to sleep. But in-between the spaces of the world, something else lurks. The Darklords are not the only things that wait in the night. Beings beyond all reckoning dwell in the dark places. Down dim alleys, dusty basements, and in the skin of our closest friends.

the rule unspoken

In Gothic Earth in the Year 2012, almost everyone knows about the supernatural. That's right, almost everyone knows. But no one wants to talk about it. It has become known amongst investigators as the Rule Unspoken.

Most people on Gothic Earth encounter the supernatural during their childhood, when they discover that the Thing Under the Bed is real. Not long after, they usually they find out from a friend or from a desperate parent the terrible truth that makes up the Rule Unspoken: "If You Talk About It - They Will Get You".

Those unfortunate souls who don't learn this terrible truth are usually taken away in the night. Sometimes they are made into an awful repast. Sometimes they are turned into a creature themselves. Thus, the Rule Unspoken is maintained through attrition - those that break it vanish and are not discussed. Those who maintain it have a chance at life - but only a chance. There are always the fortunate few, of course, who have never experienced the supernatural and remain in the dark. These are the lucky ones.

This makes the setting of Gothic Earth a desperate one. People don't wander about happily unaware of the evils around them. Instead, they are keenly aware of them, but powerless to do anything about it. Everyday, people go missing. A chair will sit empty at the dinner table and no one will speak of who once sat there. Scores of crimes remain unsolved by the police and the files are buried in a drawer. To live on Gothic Earth is to live in oppression and fear.

a time for heroes

Yet, this is how heroes arise on Gothic Earth. A lone man or woman finally stands up. Somewhere else, group bands together and says, *no more*. This is how the champions of Gothic Earth are born.

The job of the hero on Gothic Earth is never easy. When they knock on doors or interview witnesses, it's rare to find the lone soul who wants to talk. That's often why the heroes on Gothic Earth must form cadres or even leagues. To gain information they must be able to protect those who dare to speak up.

the inscrutable east

In the Far East, things work a bit differently. There, people are able to talk about the supernatural, but usually do so behind closed doors. Fortune-tellers and exorcists ply their trade, but do so clandestinely. However, the citizens of the East are constantly at war with the Rising Lie. As modernism slowly sweeps across Asia and the Middle East, it carries with it a happy falsehood: "The supernatural does not exist".

Thus, the Old Ways are dying out and with them the secrets to battling the minions of the **Jade Horror**. This makes for different sorts of heroes than the ones found in the West. Those who take up the fight against the darkness in the East are also preservers of the Old Ways. They seek to save the knowledge that is rapidly disappearing from their culture, while trying to stay alive themselves. These brave individuals do not just seek to save lives but an entire way of life.

the rule unspoken in your game

This unique rule on Gothic Earth makes it quite different from many modern horror settings, where skepticism is the norm. It also helps the game master to keep up a sense of coherency and consistency in the game. For example, wouldn't a police department know that inordinate amounts of people are missing from their town? Because of the Rule Unspoken it's possible that they are well aware of it. They just chose to do nothing about it. Speaking of the police, the Rule Unspoken also solves the problem of PCs running to the authorities. If the authorities are well and truly afraid, they may not respond when the PCs come calling. It's possible that the authorities instead turn to the PCs for help!

While most people don't like to talk about the supernatural, there are some who will. It's the game master's job to make sure that finding someone who will talk does not become frustrating for the PCs. If the PCs are on the trail of a creature and not a single person wants to talk to them, then the game will swiftly become tiresome.

Perhaps. We will need to ask Sarah Davis, won't we?

--- On Tue 9/27/09 RosCruGROUP1 Gabrielle <alpha996@...> wrote:

>
> But the part about "special people" is intriguing. Referring to the Corrupted? Even Darklords?

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>
> > --- On Mon 9/26/09 RosCruGROUP1 Wiseman <magi@...> wrote:

> >
> > If he did see Her, it doesn't matter. He only saw what She wanted him to see. She wears many faces. Many masks.

> >
> >
> >
> > --- On Mon 9/26/09 RosCruGROUP1 Gabrielle <alpha996@...> wrote:

> > >
> > > Thank you, sir. We have a lot more footage, but this is the bit that I wanted
> > > you to see the most. Look at the transcription. Allen Jeffries might have actually seen Her...

> > >
> > >
> > >
> > > --- On Sun 9/25/09 RosCruGROUP1 Wiseman <magi@...> wrote:

> > > >
> > > > Finally saw the video and transcript. Unfortunate that the asset had to be liquidated. But this looks promising, my dear.

*Michael, here are the interceptions
if they find out we did this - it will be bad.
Very bad.*

*BTW, glad you found her.
Let's get started right away.*

Jeffries: You see, that's how she wants it. She wants you to keep looking. To keep searching for the answers.

Ingram: Right. Who's she?

[Davis holds up a hand to Ingram]

Davis: Why? Why does she want us to keep looking?

Jeffries: Because she's a...because she wants you to keep exploring. Don't you see? The more you explore, the more you seek the answers...the further down the rabbit hole. The further. The further.

Davis: The further down the rabbit hole. That's what she wants. Okay. Why, Allen. Why. Just tell us.

Jeffries: Rabbits. [Incomprehensible] Rabbits.

Davis: Allen!

Jeffries: No, you...you don't... She wants you to keep looking, because the further down the rabbit hole you go, the more you end up like her.

Ingram: But who....

[Davis holds up a hand to Ingram again]

Davis: And that's what she wants? For us to become like her?

Jeffries: Yeah, yeah. You get it, don't you. [Incomprehensible] I can tell. The look in your eyes. You've tasted it. The moist, wet earth down there. The rich, grainy dirt. Black and wet.

[Davis looks away.]

Ingram : (to Davis) Hey, you with us?

Davis: (speaking in low voice) Does she want everyone to be like her? Is that the point?

Jeffries: No, no! Only...only the special people. You know. Like you, Sarah.

[Davis rises from her chair and begins pacing the room, biting a fingernail.]

Ingram: Well that's great. What else can you tell us, Allen?

Jeffries: (looks at Ingram and pauses) She's red. She's red and wears...

Ingram: How about a name.

Jeffries: She's red. And wears a mask. But she doesn't talk - no, no. Never speaks. Just gives you ideas. Wonderful ideas. Brilliant ideas.

Ingram: Does she have a name, Allen.

Jeffries: (looks at Ingram again and smiles for a long while) You know it already.

Sir, I'm writing this very quickly from a public computer. I suppose with what happened to my car this morning - I take that as a sign that I have been rendered off-status. Please please please reconsider your assessment.

Please reconsider.

--- On Fri 9/30/09 RosCruGROUP1 Wiseman <magi@...> wrote:

>

> To say that I am disappointed would be a vast understatement, my dear. This does not look good for the project.

>

>

> > --- On Thu 9/29/09 RosCruGROUP1 Gabrielle <alpha996@...> wrote:

> >

> > Sir,

> >

> > I am terribly sorry. I am so terribly sorry.

> >

> > I do think that the session was a valuable one. Potential for significant intelligence gains here. Our analysts are pouring over the video as we speak. I'm sure we'll find some more information.

> >

> > > --- On Thu 9/29/09 RosCruGROUP1 Wiseman <magi@...> wrote:

> > >

> > > Gabrielle.

> > >

> > > How can this be salvaged?

> > >

Ingram: Okay, Sarah. Let's take this from the top again...

Davis: You're wasting your time, you know. Wasting my time, too. Most importantly...you're wasting his time. You have to see. I'm trying to help you. All of you.

Ingram: Okay, there you go again, Sarah. His time. Talk to me about him.

Davis: (loudly) I already told you about him!

Ingram: You told me a bunch of cryptic statements.

Davis: (waving hand around, arm restraints restricting movement) It's all in there.

Ingram: Take it from the top...

Davis: Well, he's completely different from her. Completely different. You see, I made the mistake of thinking that they were similar. But they're not. You have to see. I'm trying to save you.

Ingram: (looking at someone off camera) Okay, now we're getting somewhere.

Davis: (lowering voice) You see...she wants...people.

Ingram: Yeah? Wants them how?

Davis: [incomprehensible]

Ingram: That's disgusting.

Davis: It's true. She wants you to be like her. Same with... (gesturing) ...you see, only the special people. Special. But him? He doesn't care. He doesn't give a shit. He doesn't want us to be like him. I thought...I thought... (begins crying)

Ingram: Again with the tears. You know, this is getting old. No one buys it.

Davis: (shouting) HE DOESN'T WANT US! HE JUST WANTS TO EAT US! EAT US! EAT US! EAT US!

Ingram: Whoa, whoa. Calm down. (gestures to someone off camera) John, gets us the sedative.

[A man moves into view. He can only be seen from the back. The man stops in front of Sarah Davis. Tyler Ingram's face can be seen, wrenching into an expression of terror. A dark stain begins to spread over the man's back. Ingram springs up to his feet.]

Ingram: (shouting) Code six! Code six!

[The man presumed to be John's head rolls backwards off of his shoulders. His body topples.]

Ingram: CODE SIX!

[Where Sarah Davis was sitting appears to be a distorted figure with a wide, gaping mouth. The eyes cannot be seen, only two small mouths with glistening teeth where eyes should be.]

[Video goes blank]

Davis's voice: ...that's why I have to eat you, first.

[END TAPE]

Darklord: Ed Gein; The Whisper; The Elephant

background

On November 17th, 1957, police in Plainfield, Wisconsin made their way onto the farm of one Eddie Gein, a suspect in a robbery and kidnapping. None of them realized that they were about to discover one of the most garish crimes in all of history.

The investigators were drawn to the smell of decay from Ed's barn. Once inside, it was near overwhelming. Those who pressed on first found the body of a human woman - beheaded, disemboweled and hung like a game animal. But this was only the beginning. Within was an entire gallery of some of the most ghoulish sights to have ever been seen by mortal eyes. There were entire rooms of furniture crafted from flesh. Chairs, sofas, and lampshades - all upholstered from human skin. Shriveled and preserved heads on display. A bowl made from a human skull. A box of preserved genitalia. A belt made of human nipples. A human heart on a frying pan, waiting to be eaten. Even a patchwork suit made from various women and flesh masks made from peels of human skulls. As the authorities tallied up the hideous inventory it became quite obvious that they were looking at the remains of dozens, perhaps hundreds of people.

When Ed Gein was first taken into custody, he put up no fight. He made no protest or complaint. After extensive interviewing, his sad story began to unfold. He had grown up, raised by domineering and verbally abusive mother. A mother who had constantly lectured him about the sin of sex and woman companionship.

When she died, he was left alone. With no one to guide him, he started to engage in bizarre fantasies which involved both sex and destruction. In a fit of mania, he began to experiment with crafting flesh by digging up human remains. Eventually, this did not suffice - fresh, new meat was required. Living flesh.

Some labeled Ed Gein as a bizarre transvestite of some kind. But his psychosis was far beyond that. In the end, Gein was not interested in becoming a woman. He was interested in becoming his mother.

powers

In life, Ed Gein was a soft-spoken, unassuming and even effeminate man. His new form, given to him by the **Red Death**, reflects his nature. Ed Gein no longer has a body. He is a mere voice. A thought in people's heads. The only time he can truly manifest is in the stuffed mannequins that others have made of his mother. This is his special torture - to always be a disembodied entity, unable to touch any flesh of any kind.

Just like his mother, Gein has the power of suggestion. He can whisper to people, goading them into hideous acts of depravity. Despite this, Ed is very protective of children - perhaps because of his own troubled childhood. He not only forbids his followers from harming children, but will make great efforts to protect them.

domain

The town of Plainfield, Wisconsin could not be more aptly named. A small community of around 900 people, the town is very much the same as it was in Gein's day. The landscape is flat, and the community has a quaint quietness about it.

However, on Gothic Earth, the town holds a chilling secret. Plainfield is home to a cult - a group of troubled souls who call themselves the **Saggy Baggys**, named after the children's story - the **Saggy Baggy Elephant**.

The cult is comprised mainly of young men who have been influenced by Gein's power. Now only a telepathic thought, Ed has drifted to each one of these people and whispered to them, slowly goading them into horrific acts of murder, destruction, and flesh-fetishism.

Most of the members of the **Saggy Baggys** start out as an unsettled young person who has an unhealthy fixation for an individual. It might be a family member, friend, or even pet. As Gein whispers to them over the course of months, the unfortunate victim eventually gains an unnatural desire to *become* the object of their attachment. Eventually, they attempt this transformation through necrophilia and flesh-craft.

There are members of the cult who have flesh-suits, constructed to be like the person of their fixation. A few have suits made to be animal in nature, like Boris McPherson, who has a giant horse-suit.

These depraved individuals work in concert, using teamwork to claim victims from around the state, always capturing and imprisoning them before using their bodies as trophies, furniture, and adornment.

The Saggy Baggys meet in an dilapidated but large cabin in the woods in Plainfield, known to them as the Elephant's Nest. At Ed's direction, the house has been decorated as he would have had it in life - with flesh-crafted items, most of them fabricated from members of the living. There are tables made from skeletons. Beds covered with stretched skin. Human heads festoon the walls.

But perhaps most chilling of all is Ed Gein himself. As a telepathic thought, he can now only be present in the world through two mannequins made in the likeness of his mother. One of these is kept at the Elephant's Nest. The other is hidden, for if both were destroyed, it would Gein as well. Each of these mannequins has been stitched together from skin, bone, and stuffing. He can cause them to speak, but not move. He speaks from them when he wishes to address his entire cult.

closing the borders

When Ed Gein wants to close the borders to Plainfield, those attempting to leave find everything growing darker and darker, until they find themselves in a dim place with earthen floors and hooked chains dangling from the ceiling - the basement of the Elephant's Nest.