

Quoth the Raven



The World's Most Unofficial Ravenloft Netzine

A Wild Stab in the Mist

Salutations

If you are reading this, chances are that you have decided to download the second issue of Quoth the Raven, the world's most unofficial Ravenloft netzine. The first issue was quite the learning experience for myself and the other editors, though we were still hoping to lean a little more than we did. There were a lot of questions floating out there, but not a lot of answers to be had. The community wasn't shy to express dissatisfaction, but there was no clear voice concerning suggestions for the future. In a lot of ways, this second issue is another first.

This issue is a second probing stab into the mists. We've made a few changes and we're hoping to get a clear response from the audience. Readers from the first issue will note that the netzine has changed in format, but not in content. The three-column format is out and the typical two-column style is back in. Furthermore, the intro fiction has been abandoned for the most part. This is the first issue featuring Fan Fiction, which we hope will be a common occurrence.

More importantly, the content is becoming much more focused to a particular theme. This issue includes the Shining Bay, a cluster of advanced domains, The March of Progress, an examination of cultural levels, and other material geared to an advanced cultural level. It is important for readers to know that this is the theme of this issue, not the theme for the entire magazine. In future there will be issues on other themes. For example, there are works in progress for an entirely medieval themed issue, as well as an issue based on the infamous Carnival.

I would like to take this space to remind our readers that this magazine depends upon them for both content and for feedback. The editors of Quoth the Raven want to produce a useful product, but we need help to do that. Feel free to share with us your feelings about this magazine and make suggestions for the future. Tell us how you feel about the length of the magazine, the size of the articles, the themes or anything else. We can't make this magazine better without your help.

In any case, enjoy the issue and let's all hope this second stab hits something.

ScS.

Quoth the Raven: Issue 2

Quoth the Raven®

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The Rat

Original Fan Fiction

By Sean "The_God_Brain" Poindexter

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It was raining when the rat woke up from his brief and fitful slumber. This wasn't anything new, it always seemed to be raining, and when it wasn't raining, a pale mist choked the horizon. The rat didn't consider such things, the world only existed in so far as he could feel, see and smell. At that moment all he could feel was hunger, not an unusual sensation for a rodent...but he while he couldn't see anything to eat, he could smell it.

There were others about him, rats like him with mangy black fur and wiry, whip like tails. He didn't bother them, and they didn't bother him, but they were his competitors in this life. The rat twitched its nose to pick up the scent of what he could eat, and he found two trails. Following the first, the closest, he found he brethren swarming the soft swollen earth...the body of a black flyer had fallen here.

The rat sat up on his haunches and licked his front toes, his way of keeping himself busy while he examined the scene. There were at least twenty of his siblings here, chewing on bits and pieces of the dead flyer. It was hardly worth his effort to fight past them for what was left, most of what he smelled was already being eaten. He nodded his head in frustration, then fell to all fours and scurried away before any of the others took notice of him.

The rat took his time in finding the other scent. It was difficult for the rain; the musky stench of the earth and bits of past meals on his own coat distracted him. He took to compulsively licking his fur several times, having to consciously stop to focus on finding the scent again. When he found it, he would trample over the soggy weeds and grass until he lost it again, and then go through the frustrating procedure of finding it once more.

In about an hour or so, as rats measure these things, he found himself in the tall weeds. The rat remembered why he didn't go into the tall weeds, why there weren't other rats here right now following this scent. The rat realized that he would have been better off fighting with his siblings for scraps of the flyer. It was too late now; the rat was in the hunter's land. It was bad enough that the hunter came stalking the rats in their own home when it got bored or hungry, but to be so brazen as to actually go to the hunter...he shouldn't have let his stomach control him so much.

The rat realized he was licking his fur again, and he stopped abruptly in frustrations. Concentrate, he thought to himself, concentrate and you might live another night. The hunter wouldn't expect any of us to come up here, so maybe there is a chance...then he smelled it again. Oh my...so much of it...so much stronger than before. He was close, so close to it...so close to a meal that was all for him. None of the other rats would dare crossing the hunter to get to it...at any other time he would have remembered what a rat looked like after the hunter finished with it, finished tearing its fur open with its shiny

white teeth and claws the size of a rat's leg...but tonight all he could think of was the scent of food.

He was already on his way when he finally decided to go forth. The scent was vivid now, constant and unwavering. This seemed meant to be, he thought...this was a meal he was supposed to have, even though it would likely be his last. He'd had a long life though; survived many things and he would likely survive this as well.

Past the weeds he came to a gate. Lightening flashed and lit up the sky, and the rat recoiled as its sensitive ears twitched from the thunderclap that followed. In the brief flash of illumination, the rat saw a house past the gate, up a stone path at the top of a hill. He'd never journeyed this far into the land of the Hunter before, perhaps this was where the hunter lived? No, far too large for the Hunter, this was a home of the Giants. Was something the Giants had worthy of a rat to eat? The scent seemed to be saying yes, and when the pumping of his little heart lessened he scurried through the gate and into the yard.

The scent took him behind some giant buildings, where the earth was muddy and wet again. In his entire racing about he hadn't noticed that it had stopped raining, and the unearthly mist was rising up from the earth again. In the distance, towards the source of the mouth-watering scent, the rat now heard something that the rainfall had muffled before. It was a chopping sound, like something hard and metal hitting something soft. It was rhythmic, like the rat's heart, though occasionally broken by the sound of dragging. The rat advanced, until in the mists ahead he could see the breathtaking sight of a giant, its shadowy silhouette stabbing the earth with a spade. So powerful were the giants, the rat thought to himself, that they reshape the very earth beneath them! Surely, there would be something this giant would have that he could eat.

He watched intently as the giant finished his work, finally drawing close enough that it was more than a shadowy figure, he was a bearded giant with grey hair and filthy clothes. He was surrounded by other piles of soggy earth, and before him lay a shallow hole, the bottom of which was filled with a brown pool of dirty rainwater. The rat twitched its nose and raised its head up to get a stronger taste of the scent, and found that it was all around him! The very earth was full of it, and the strongest point of it was coming from a large black bag that the giant had with him.

The rat was just about to advance on the bag, when the giant threw his digging spade to the earth. It almost struck the rat, which instinctively dived out of the way only to lose his footing and fall into the hole. He hit the pool with a splash, and closed his eyes as water surrounded him. Panic took his body and he scrambled to bring his face up from the murky fluid, then he gained a tentative hold on the muddy wall of the pit and pulled himself up into the air. The giant then hurled the pack into the pit with him, once again knocking the rat into the water. This time though, he was able to pull himself to the top of the bag and avoid the risk of drowning. Now the question remained: would he be able to get out of this hold before the giant threw something else at him?

The answer was no, but it didn't matter because when the rat realized that his meal was under his feet, he elected to stay in the hole. He made his way into one of the openings of the bag and found his toes touching something cold and firm. The giant was hurling earth back into the hole, but it didn't matter to the rat. He'd dug himself out of worse, and the hunter didn't dig, so he would be safe with his meal.

Long before the earth was packed, the rat was chewing on the soft, cold flesh of his meal. He pulled bits of flesh from bone, swallowing it greedily then moving on to another fresh piece of the prize. It wasn't until his hunger was abated, and he began to look for a warm place to rest, that he realized what he'd been feeding on: the body of a giant.

Awe took him for a moment, the moment when he found the hand. It was like his, but obviously larger and furless. His wormy tail lashed about nervously and he examined the fingers, feeling each of them and sniffing the skin gently. He found that it was smaller than the hand of the giant who had buried this one, and on its finger it bore a shiny new treasure, a ring!

Some of his siblings had taken treasures from the giants before, but nothing this shiny or delicate! It was perfect, he could take this with him and show it to the others so that they would know that he had been in the land of the hunter and the land of the giants...but no, then they would covet it and a cleverer rat would steal it, and he'd never be able to enjoy its glitter and shine again. No, he thought, this would be his prize alone. He would keep it himself and never let any of the others see it.

It took him a while to gnaw the finger from the hand, but it came off with a little fight. Less simple was removing the ring from the flesh, but this could be accomplished later. Besides, he would likely become hungry again before he got home, and this meat would serve his belly well. With the prize in his teeth, he set to the task of digging himself out of this hole, and once he'd accomplished that it would be back to the land of the rats. The earth was still moist and malleable, and before long the rat's filthy head poked through the earth and he was facing the cool embrace of night again.

The mists were thicker than before, and they obscured his passage. He'd been down there for at least an hour or so, as rats measure these things. The scent of other meals to be surrounded him, rising up from older, less defined mounds of earth that encircled the one from which he'd come. What treasures, either shiny or chewable, lay buried in those? It was too risky to try, and the rat was no longer hungry so he could focus on his survival more easily; though that didn't stop him from compulsively licking the bits of his last meal from his fur every few minutes.

He left the scents behind him, and scurried across the law in the direction he thought he'd come. He was almost to the gate, when he heard the hunter. Had it been a clearer night, the hunter would have already taken him. But the earth was wet and the hunter hated the wet, so his movements were awkward and clumsy by comparison. The hunter's eyes gleamed in the night, and his mouth opened to reveal those dreaded teeth. He was far from the rat, but he could still smell the scent of one of his fallen siblings on the hunter's breath. The rat was confident that the hunter had not noticed him, at least until the hunter began to creep towards him.

Think, focus...the rat thought as he stopped licking his fur and glanced about. Pick up your prize, he thought to himself as he took it into his teeth and looked for an escape. There was a house, the giant's house not far from here. The rat had gotten mixed up in the rain, the mist was too thick and it had confused him, drawing him closer the house than he intended to go. He might make his escape, but if he were to run now the cat would take to pursuit, and he would become a meal.

Salvation came when the great metal gate swung open and a team of four-legged giants came storming in, dragging a wheeled box behind it. The hunter, startled by the

sound more so than the rat, was distracted for but a second, and the rat took his leave. He scurried up through the moist grass into the house, running under a door. The hunter was behind him, but the rat had sufficient lead and agility to escape. He was in the house now, safe at last from the hunter...but not from the giants.

The ground here was hard and bare, and there was a pleasing warmth that rose up from a cackling fire in the distance. The rat carried his treasure to the fire and curled up next to it on a row of stone, letting the heat dry the caked mud to his mangy fur. What he enjoyed most was the shine and sparkle on his treasure, the red and yellow flames reflecting in the shiny glow of the metal surrounding the pale, cold flesh of a giant's finger.

Such luxury was not to last, however...then a door swung open and several giants filed into the room. The rat scurried away frantically, finding a bookshelf to hide behind as he watched nervously for any signs of the hunter coming in with them. No hunter, but he did see the giant from before, in cleaner clothing, talking to three other giants. One of them, the one being talked to, was older than the others, and bore a look of worry or concern. The giant the rat recognized was explaining to him something, and the two other giants stood back away as though they weren't sure what was going on. The elder giant then broke into tears, shaking his head and looking about the room, while the familiar giant placed his hand on his shoulder and offered some sign of condolence.

It was then that the rat remembered that he'd left his treasure by the fire! Looking across the room, he saw it there as plain as day, resting on the giant's finger. Nervously, he rubbed his hands and whipped his tail, then with a sharp bite of his lip departed from the safety of his hiding place and advanced upon his treasure. The giants seemed too distracted to care about him anyway, and with any luck he'd have his treasure and be out of there before they even noticed.

No such luck, it would seem...for just as he was within an inch of his prize one of the giants let forth a scream. The rat froze, then looked up to see all five of them advancing upon him. The rat took one last look at his treasure, the glittering sparkle in the firelight and the musty scent of the flesh, and darted back to his hiding place. He peered over his shoulder once he was there to make sure that the giants weren't about to catch him, when he saw a curious thing: they weren't interested in him at all...

The elder giant looked intently at the rat's treasure, then reached forth slowly with a quivering hand. He took the prize into his fingers and raised it to his face, wiping the tears from his eyes and examining it closely. The shaking subsided, and was replaced by a tremble of grief, followed by an explosion of rage. The familiar giant attempted to flee, but the others grabbed him. The older giant was screaming so loud it made the rat turn down his ears, and the other giants were striking the familiar one with pieces of wood to subdue him.

From here, the rat followed the giants out into the yard. HE knew that being close to the giants should dissuade the cat. He followed them only because the elder giant still had his treasure, and perhaps when he wasn't paying attention he would drop it and the rat could reclaim his prize. This didn't happen, however. Instead, one of the giants threw the familiar one to the earth next to the mounds he had been digging in earlier that night. The familiar one seemed to protest, but the elder giant struck him in the face with his boot. With that, the familiar giant retrieved his spade and began to dig; until the earth

was opened again and there before them lay the remains of the giant the rat had fed upon earlier that night.

The next few minutes, as rats measure these things, were a clamor of frustration and fear for the rat. The giants took to beating the familiar one again, but at no point did they ever relinquish his prize. They made him dig more, until upwards of twenty mounds in the earth were opened and the bodies of a smaller giant revealed within. Sometime during all this it had begun to rain, and the mists enshrouded the scene like a garden wall. The rat shivered in frustration, watching the giants stomp about the defiled earth, frantically going from one hole to the next, then recoiling in disgust and anger at the contents therein. When the last hole was overturned, the elder giant pointed at the familiar one, now covered once again in mud and filth. He screamed as the two men took him away, dragging him out of the yard and into the forest behind them. The rat, his mind still obsessed with his prize, followed the group.

They moved faster than he, and by the time he'd caught up with them they were holding the familiar one to a tree. He struggled in vain, as the two stronger giants pulled his arm back and held it to a branch. The elder giant drew forth from his coat a hammer and a long, slender, rusty nail, which he drove into the flesh of the familiar giant's hand, securing him to this tree. He screamed and begged, but that didn't stop the elder giant from driving a nail into the other hand, then into each foot...until the familiar giant was secured to the trunk and branches. To further dissolve his chance of escape, they wrapped a rope around his waist and the body of the tree, and then left him there in the rain, screaming.

Thoughts of the prize were gone now, as the rat had found something even shinier to adore. Before him, writhing in pain and agony was warm food. The rat drew close, not yet confident that the giant couldn't hurt him. When he was sure of it, he took a few cautionary sniffs and found himself becoming drunk on the aroma of blood. Then he scurried away, back to the land of rats. He would alert them all, and they would follow. Tonight there would be a great feast, as every rat in the countryside would descend upon the giant and finally taste the luxury of warm food! Better than any prize, the rat would be a hero, the champion who had braved the land of the hunter and the land of the giant, and brought his siblings the most beautiful prize of all.

The mists parted way before him, almost tunneling his advance and he scampered thoughtlessly through the mud and grass, his wormy tail whipping behind.

The Shining Bay

Evil Walks Foggy Streets

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutton

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The fog was rolling across the streets of the city and steam was rising from the sewers. The white light of the street lamps was swallowed up in the vapors, illuminating the mist and obscuring all that lay beneath its shroud. Constable Parker sniffed the air and was pleased when he didn't gag. That afternoon the wind had changed and the fumes from Nosos had spilled across the whole island. The stink had only begun to dissipate.

In the distance the foghorns sounded from the Queen Mary Bridge. Even from his spot in the center of the West End, Parker could see the marvelous structure. Miles long and taller than any tower, the Queen Mary Bridge spanned the amazing gap between the sister cities. The ancient steel structure was a lit up with lantern, just as it was every night. The bridge was buried in evening fog, but in his mind Parker could remember the huge bridge, linking the tiny islands of the Shining Bay into a line of stone and steel, connecting Timor to its ruler Paridon. To the East the great clock tower of Buckminster Abby was striking twelve. The sounds of the huge iron bells rang out in their booming bass toll, ringing out over the sleeping city. As the bells rang from afar, the sounds of a scream pealed out.

Parker bolted down the sidewalk. The source of the scream was close by, so Parker moved with as much haste as possible. He tried to reach for his patrol

whistle, but before he bring it to his lips he could hear the sounds of other whistles singing their shrill cries through the fog. In a second Parker had reached the source of the scream. He stood before an alleyway, strewn with garbage and litter. At the center of the storm of rubbish lay a woman. Parker didn't have to look twice to be sure; he knew she was dead.

The young constable was running before he could string together a coherent thought. There was a trail of blood, dripping away from the body. He bolted down the alleyway, almost slipping on some rubbish as he turned the corner. His eyes caught a glimpse of movement around the corner; he followed after. Like a run away freight train, Parker charged through the black maze of filth that was the West End. In the dark they were unfamiliar ways, a labyrinth of crumbling bricks and gloom. Yet he refused to slow down for a second.

Now he could sense his quarry, see the invisible cape flapping in the blackness, hear the sounds of the racing footsteps over his thundering strides, feel the hot breath of the murderer. Turn after turn, the murderer tried to lose him. Parker was too quick, too agile to be lost. The young man gripped his baton so tightly it hurt. His heart was exploding with each beat; the vein behind his eyes bulged horribly. Each step brought him closer and closer; he could almost reach the flapping cloak.

Now they neared the edge of the alleys, Parker could see the light of the lanterns. With a final burst of speed, he overtook his target.

Arms interlocked, pumping legs tripped one another. Both bodies collapsed onto the cold hard concrete and rolled painfully from the alley and into the street beyond. Parker kicked hard into the other man's body, eliciting a tortured cry. His throat ached with pain, his heart struggled against the adrenaline, but still Parker forced himself up and brought his foot down. The cloaked murderer screamed in agony, dropped the bloody scalpel he held and brought his hands up to block the incoming blow. Parker was swimming in a sea of rage; in his few years on the force he had seen too many bloodied bodies. He wasn't going to let this animal escape.

The baton fell again and again, cracking bone and splitting flesh, and again and again his foot dug deep into the cloaked man's side. The murderer was dead twenty strikes before Parker stopped. Exactly how long Parker stood aghast, staring down on the body, he could not tell. It wasn't long before the sounds of whistles caught up with him. The first constable on the scene was someone Parker had never seen before, an old, gray haired man in uniform. The man said something, but Parker didn't hear him. More constables arrived after a while. Most of them were older, fatter men, out of breath. Each one gave the corpse a kick, whistling with approval.

"Good job, kid," was the most common statement. "You got the West Borough Butcher!" Parker didn't hear much more than that. He was still coming down from the adrenaline high. The other men ushered him away from the scene, he followed, still in too much

of a daze to have anything better to do. Thus occupied, Parker wasn't watching when the gray haired constable reached down to the corpse and carefully removed the ring on its middle finger; a ring inscribed with a triangle and an eye, a ring identical to the one on the constable's own finger.

The Shining Bay

Geography

The Shining Bay, also known as Zherisia, is a new cluster with a long history. The Shining Bay was forged from a false history; a past that did not exist several decades previously, though is as real to the denizens of that domain as any history is to the people affected by it.

The Shining Bay is an island several miles east of Nova Vaasa and south of Graben Island. The island is dominated by the city state of Paridon, a massive and sprawling metropolis greater than any city on the Core. Flanking the state of Paridon is its allied nation Nosos. Nosos is a barren waste, choked with fumes and black slag. The two lands nearly encircle the body of water from which the island gets its name, the Shining Bay.

In the middle of the Bay stands Paridon's sister city, Timor. Timor is a tiny but densely populated city, built upon an island and connected to Paridon by a massive bridge of steel and stone that straddles the tiny string of islands between the cities. A ring of black rock surrounds the island of the Shining Bay. The island gains its name from the only natural usable harbor completely encompassed by Paridon city, where the water and river eroded the rock.

History

The people of the Shining Bay share a common lineage, they all belong to the ethnic group known as the Zherisians. Their tiny island evolved from an original city-state, which stood where Paridon now exists. A hereditary monarchy ruled the city-state for centuries, fostering the growth of culture and science. It was in this early time that Timor was colonized. The Zherisians were reluctant to expand into the city, for legends foretold that it was built upon a nest of horrible monsters, monsters that eventually devoured the people that first colonized Timor. Nonetheless Timor was colonized and built into a sister city for Paridon, ruled by its own aristocratic council.

Timor was nearly impossible to reach by sea, for the island is lifted free of the bay by a wall of sharp rocks, making any attempt to dock nearly impossible and terribly hazardous. To facilitate the colonization, subterranean tunnels were engineered. From both sides, cavernous tunnels were dug through the soft rock beneath the bay, allowing the tunnels to emerge inside of the island, breaking through the weak stone that made up the interior of the island, far away from the unbreakable rock of the shore. The pneumatic tunnels allowed steam-powered locomotives to pass between the cities under the Bay. However, as the centuries of prosperity passed, traffic between the island and the mainland expanded beyond the bounds of the tunnels. The mighty Queen Mary, a massive bridge of steel and stone was constructed from Paridon to Timor, spanning over a number of small atolls in the bay.

As time passed, so to did this golden age. After centuries of rule, the wealthy

nobility overthrew the Zherisian Monarchy in a bloodless coup. The city-state was made into a republic, ruled by an oligarchy of nobles. Yet as time passed the aristocracy became decadent and corrupt. The need for science and advancement petered out and the two cities began to decline. Tight restrictions were placed upon learning, allowing the oligarchy to control the flow of ideas and advancement. The knowledge of Paridon's golden age disappeared within only a generation. The land fell into corruption and immorality. So great was the decline, that the people scarcely realized that their island had left their native ocean and emerged in a strange world of mist and shadows.

Despite the rampant corruption and immorality, there remained a hidden force at work, secretly fostering ethics and morality. The Celebrants of Humanity was founded to preach the ethics of Humanism to the masses. With the support of the commoners, a popular revolt brought the royal line back to power under a constitution that divided power between the royalty and nobles. By 745, the Monarchy and its Parliamentary supporters took power for its own.

Timor remained the sanctuary for the Oligarchy and a war arose between the two states. Timor was battered, but its position was solidly defended. In the end, Timor was starved into submission. Rather than retake the city, Paridon decided to exploit the populous. The monarchy exchanged food for manufactured goods, at a rate of exchange that favored Paridon immensely. Timor declined and many of the buildings decayed, the stores and shops of Timor were converted into urban factories and textile mills where

the population laboured to make enough goods to afford to eat.

Nosos was colonized shortly after the suppression of Timor in 747. The area had once existed as an impenetrable forest, guarded by barbaric druids. The people of Paridon ignored the forests of Nosos, though they secretly hungered for the riches of the area. When Malus Scelerius appeared, the city of Paridon saw a great economic boom. The vast forests were converted into charcoal and sold at high prices to the lands on the Core. After the forests came the mines and the metals they carved from the earth. Nosos was made into an independent state in a joint agreement between Paridon and Nosos' House Councilors. The city of Paridon lost nothing by granting Nosos its freedom, for it allowed the city to levy hefty taxes upon goods transported from Nosos, to other domains, by way of Paridon's ports.

Politics and Religion

The island of the Shining Bay is ruled by the Zherisian Monarchin conjunction with a body of appointed lords. The official religion of the Shining Bay is a highly sophisticated faith, based upon the underlying philosophy that becoming more human is the only manner in which a being may attain perfection.

The Celebrants of Humanity have recently begun to tap into the divine force of perfection, issued forth by the General Will of Man. This General Will serves as a "moral judge", acting in the same role normally filled by a God. The domains of this faith are knowledge, law and strength and the underlying alignment is lawful neutral. Despite the recent appearance of spell casting

celebrants, the Celebrants of Humanity mostly remains a monastic order, instructing Celebrants in the art of self-perfection by training them as monks.

Also at work in the Shining Bay is the gentleman's club known as the Divinity of Mankind. This organization is known as a popular philosophical society, an exclusive club where men of wealth and power can meet and privately discuss matters of business, politics, science and spiritualism. These clubs meet at lodges, which are located all over the Shining Bay.

Magic is a mysterious force at work in the world, one that defies reason and rationality. As a consequence, advancement in magical knowledge is severely lacking in the Shining Bay. Wizards and sorcerers are extremely rare, looked at more as a novelty than a serious profession. The priests of foreign gods are looked down upon with pity. Faiths that profess rational ideals are viewed favorably, while those that stress blind devotion and tradition are shunned. Psionics are so rare in Ravenloft that they are completely unknown in the Shining Bay.

Advanced Cultural Level

The domains in the Shining Bay are much more advanced than those of other areas in the demiplane. Rifles are considered to be martial weapons and pistols are simple weapons.

Furthermore, characters and non-player characters with the classes aristocrat or expert should be granted the class alterations as prescribed for those classes in the Gothic Earth conversion, detailed in the article Those Who Delve the Dark found in Quoth the Raven Issue 1.

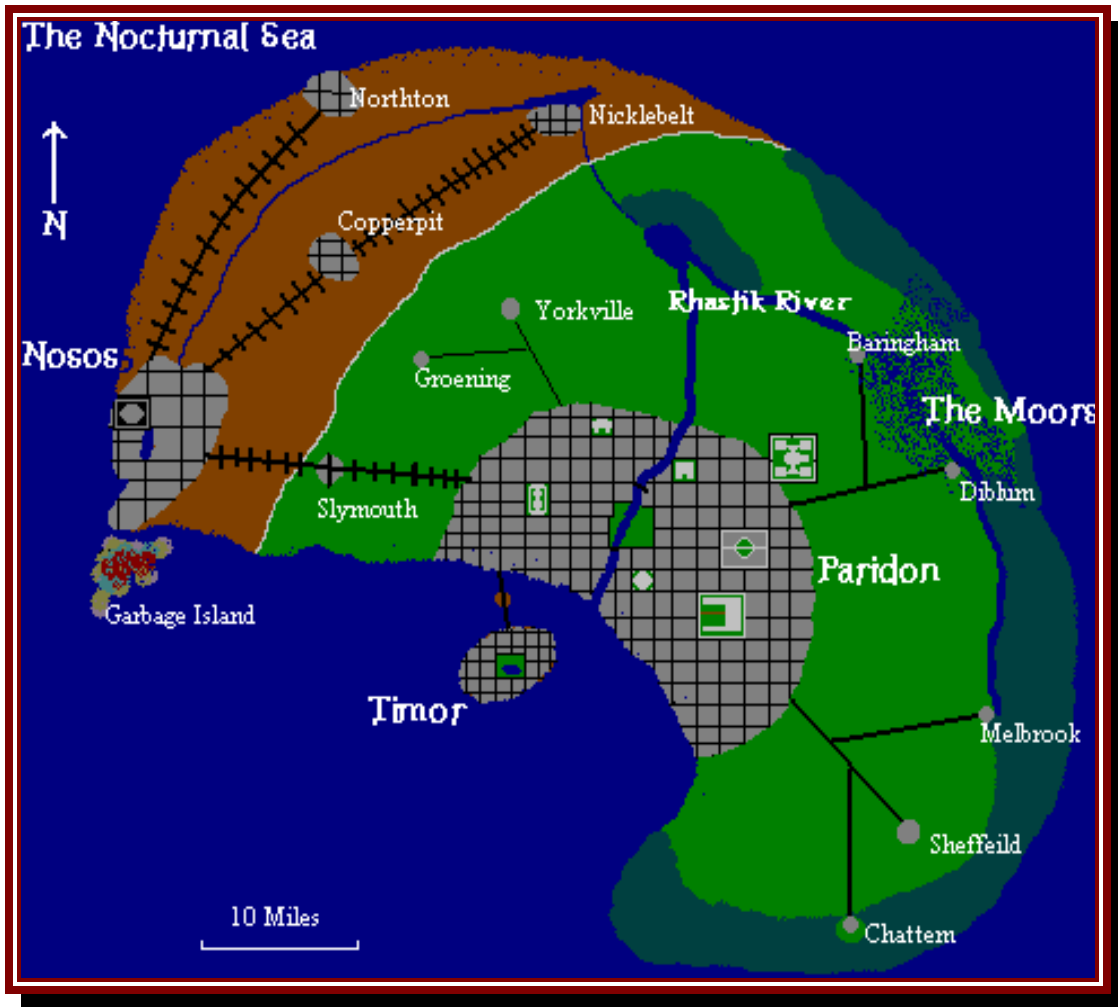


Figure 1: The Shining Bay - Island in the Nocturnal Sea

Nosos

Cultural level: Industrial (12)

Landscape: Sparse ecology (despoiled wasteland). The land of Nosos is a blasted wasteland, dominated by endless hills of slag and gaping pits into the earth. The land is devoid of any animal life, except for the flocks of pigeons and seagulls migrating between townships. The earth of Nosos is scorched by the sun and devoid of any plants, leaving the land a desert even on the shores of the Yellow River. The river gains its name from the sulfur in the water, spewed forth by the metal

refineries of the domain. Every drop of water is infested with a variety of organisms, most of which are debilitating if not fatal parasites.

Nosos is permanently shrouded in an awful acidic stench and the skies are always blackened with the fumes that belch from the domains metal refineries and coal furnaces. Rainstorms are frequent in Nosos, each deluge brings a flood of acrid water that corrodes metal and burns the rock black. Seasons are all but indistinguishable since the black smog traps heat in the domain. Winter is the only noticeable season; it can be identified by the noticeably colder climate and the fall of ashen snow. At

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all other times the temperature is high and the air is humid. Periodically the domain is smothered in a fog of fumes coming from the “roasting yards”. This smog reduces visibility to zero, though it causes no immediate harm to anyone who is forced to breath it in.

The cities of Nosos team with life, though it is a life choked by equal parts misery and fumes. Every building in the is covered in a layer of black soot, and the streets reek of sewage, for few homes posses plumbing. After a rain, the waste seeps into the ground and accumulates in the basements of buildings at the bottom of hills.

Rats and scavenging insects thrive in these conditions, as do a plethora of diseases. Where Nosos meets the Nocturnal Sea the land becomes hard jagged rock. These rocks are very resistant to any attempt to hew them, so no true harbors exist. Just off the coast of Nosos is Garbage Island, the storage dump for all of the domain’s excess materials. Garbage Island is a thriving ecosystem for seagulls, pigeons, feral cats, rats, mongrel dogs and diseased humans.

Settlements: Copperpit (pop 657), Garbage Island (pop 112), Nicklebelt (pop 894), Northton (pop 545), Nosos Proper (pop 2700)

The Folk: Population 4950; Humans 99%, other 1%. Languages – Zherisian.

The folk of Nosos divide into two classes, the owners and the renters. The owners are the elite of Nosos; they are the rail barons, the slumlords, the company directors and the storeowners. These people live lives of relative luxury in rich estates on the high ground on the edges of the cities. This upper class is fairly well educated, though most of their experience is gained from hands-on

experience at the sides of their parents. The members of the upper class are cynical and without scruples. Success is measured by how much one can exploit the impoverished people directly beneath one’s self. The members of the upper class are highly competitive between each other; murders, conspiracies and theft are well-established social institutions. The upper class maintains a council, under the guidance of the council’s chairman, Malus Sceleris. This council oversees the common interest of all members of the upper class, maintaining the status quo.

The renters are the lower class of Nosos. They are a downtrodden lot; their suffering is the foundation upon which Nosos was built. The renters are hopelessly poor and indebted; they and their children labor without end in the mines and refineries of Nosos, earning only enough to feed their families until they grow old, are injured, or become debilitated by a disease. The renters live in terror of exile to Garbage Island, the punishment that befalls anyone who cannot afford to rent land in the cities.

The only established religion in Nosos is the Celebrants of Humanity. These missionaries are struggling to gain the trust of the people. Little success has been made amongst the upper class of Nosos, for many of these nobles have been lured into the gentleman’s club known as the Divinity of Mankind. Even those not of that society resist the Celebrants, for the aristocrats fear that the church will unite the people against their oppressors.

The Law: The House of Councilors writes the laws of Nosos and oversees the enforcement of its Charter. The Chief Executive, Malus Sceleris, leads the House. This governing body meets infrequently, most of its duties are to

approve new taxes to be placed on the impoverished poor of Nosos or pass new laws to oppress them.

The individual aristocrats enforce laws in Nosos, each of who maintains a small force of personal thugs. These thugs are a critical component in the laws of Nosos, for they are the only force keeping the downtrodden poor in line. The assembly of workers is always considered unlawful. The upper class is terrified by the prospect of organized laborers, so they do anything to keep that from occurring. There is an unofficial reward offered for any information leading to the arrest of labor organizers. There are few places where the workers are not so desperate as to pass up an opportunity to earn a hand full of coppers by betraying their friends.

The greatest offences in Nosos are theft, murder and unlawful assembly. Crimes are prosecuted in the courts controlled by the House of Councilors, obviously there is a powerful bias in these courts against the poor laborers brought to trial. Sharp minded barristers and stern Justices of the Peace ensure that the courts never fail to place poor criminals in prison and rescue wealthy aristocrats from injustice.

Punishment for minor offences is usually a hefty fine, though the more serious crimes are resolved by incarceration into the Nosos Jail. For important offences, such as the murder of an aristocrat or unlawful assembly, the sentence is usually permanent exile on Garbage Island. Prisoners sent to that horrible place are never seen or heard of again. For cases like murder the sentence is almost always death by hanging.

Of the laws in Nosos, the most perplexing is the “green tax”. The possession of any kind of plant requires

the payment of an expensive “green tax”, roughly one gold piece each month for every cubic foot of flora. Only the wealthy nobles of the domain can afford to pay it, which makes gardens around their manors a status symbol of the highest caliber. Of course the poor of the domain cannot afford to pay the fee, so many of them have never so much as seen a living plant. Trees are completely forbidden by law.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources – Coal, copper, gold, iron, metallurgic knowledge, nickel, silver, steel. Coinage – pound (gp), shilling (sp), pence (cp).

Nosos is built on trade. Nosos has no harbors of their own, so they rely upon the exchange of goods through Paridon’s ports. The railroads of Nosos are critical for this purpose; the massive beasts of black steel haul the refined metal ore to the factories of Paridon where they are turned into finished goods. Nosos is filled with shops selling goods purchased from Paridon. Though the people of the domain are impoverished, they do enjoy many benefits from the miracle of metallurgy. Were it not for metal stoves, glass plates, woven clothing, cheap bread and cast iron pots, the people of Nosos would never be able to endure the unhealthy conditions under which they live.

There is no natural source of food in Nosos, so it depends on the purchase of bread, grains and meat from Paridon. Native sources for meat are all but nonexistent. There is a steady trade in pigeon meat, and an unofficial trade in rat, cat and dog meat substituted for imported beef and pork. The impoverished customers know the truth, though pretending that it is proper fare is the only thing allowing them to enjoy their meal.

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Characters: Classes – aristocrats, experts, fighters, rogues. Skills – bluff, craft (clock making, gunsmith, locksmith), diplomacy, Profession (engineer, locomotive engineer, miner). Feats – toughness, great fortitude, jaded, skill focus (bluff)

Characters native to Nosos may use firearms as though they were not exotic weapons. Any form of pistol is a simple weapon and rifles are martial weapons.

Malus Sceleris

Darklord of Nosos

Male human aristocrat 4 expert 2 manipulator 2: CR 8; SZ M Humanoid (5ft 8in. tall); HD 8D6 +18; hp 42; Inn +1; Spd 30; AC 11 (+1 dex); Atk: +5, +8 melee (dagger 1D4+3), +7 ranged (dueling pistol 1D10, *3, 50 ft.); SA diseases, spells, trickster; SQ Curse, Immunities; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +10; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 16, Wiz 13, Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: bluff +21, diplomacy +19, gather information +17, innuendo +11, intimidate +13, knowledge (chemistry) +12, knowledge (pathology) +12, perform +9, read lips +10, sense motive +14; machiavellian, skill focus (gather information), lightening reflexes, logical mind, skill focus (bluff), skill focus (diplomacy);

*Class Abilities*¹: Discretion, Expertise, Noble tongue, Power is Knowledge, Renown, Stiff Upper Lip, compelling conversationalist, world wise.

Spells Memorized: Charm

Spells Known: cause fear, charm

Languages: Zherisian, Vassi, Darkonese, Grabenite

Signature Possessions: black cape, designer shoes, expensive cane, fine silk suit, gold watch, jeweled dagger +3,

Mackie dueling pistol, silk top hat, white gloves.

¹ From “Those who Delve the Darkness”, Quoth the Raven Issue #1

Background

Malus Sceleris began life as the neglected son of a widower druid. Malus’ father never recovered from the loss of his wife and subconsciously blamed the child for her death in childbirth, as a result he never able to give his son love or affection. Instead he became a pure disciplinarian, lecturing the young boy without end. At an early age Malus learned to resent his father, for while the man tended lovingly to trees and animals, he showed nothing but scorn for his own flesh and blood. The old man continuously lectured the boy in the ways of the great circle, trying to teach the boy to listen to the voices of the forest and the spirits of the departed druids who still dwelled within. Yet Malus was deaf to the voices, and for that, his father ignored him.

Malus became a resentful teen; though he was apt at hiding his true emotions, he learned that he needed to release his anger. He accomplished this by striking at everything for which his father stood. Malus became the opposite of his father; he became light hearted and out going, a charming young man with a quick smile and a quicker tongue.

With his charms, he inspired a group of villagers to settle in the forests of Nosos. He knew that the villagers would instantly come into conflict with his father. From the shadows, he played both groups against each other. As the conflict escalated Malus experimented with the best ways to defile the forests his father loved. Uncontrolled fires and clear-cutting quickly proved too boring to satisfy his needs, so Malus looked into chemicals and diseases. In these

sciences he found the best means by which he could plague life and despoil the land. With a means of revenge at hand, all that stood in his way was his father. Malus tried unsuccessfully to secretly poison the old man, earning nothing for his attempts but stern scolding for using dangerous herbs. The old druid might have suspected his danger had Malus not been such an accomplished liar. After the failure, Malus turned to disease. One day he road out to the city beyond the forest and carefully gathered fouled water as well as blood, pus, sweat and other fluids from those dying of diseases. With his vile mixture of toxins he returned home and polluted his father's bed.

The old druid returned that night, exhausted from a physical confrontation with the villagers. Finding his son there, something overcame him and the old man embraced his son for the first time. After so many fights with ignorant outsiders, the old druid had finally come to appreciate the son who had never left his side, the only other being with whom he could share his feelings, the only person who would be left after himself to carry on the struggle. For once, Malus was at a loss for words. The young man knew that he was feeling a sensation he had never felt before, something very unusual and alien. Yet the feeling passed too quickly, whatever part of Malus that might have wanted to explore that feeling was long atrophied. Malus covered his face with a fake smile and told his father to rest.

By the coming of the dawn the druid was wracked with agony. His body was being assaulted by countless parasites, each releasing toxins into every organ in his body. Malus watched as his father's body seized and shivered. The tough old priest lasted for hours, offering Malus

sadistic entertainment until the sun began to drop behind the trees. In the red light of dusk the forest was bathed in orange light.

Malus buried his father amongst the trees for he wanted his father's spirit to feel the same agony he would visit upon the forest. As Malus dropped the last spade of earth upon the grave, something tugged at the edge of his consciousness. At first he dismissed it as the buzzing of a fly or a trick of the mind, yet as the night grew around him the voice became clear. It was the sounds of the forest, the whispers of the trees and the echoes of the druids. Malus was horrified, for in his father's death he had gained the abilities that he had always reviled. Somewhere in the chorus he heard a sound that struck his very soul, a voice that pierced his heart and unleashed a torrent of misery. It was the voice of his father, whispering the words that he had never uttered in life:

"I love you, son."

Malus shrieked in horror and pain. The old man had been ignorant to the very end, never doubting his son's loyalty for a moment. It was then that Malus understood love, just as he came to understand true sorrow. In a fit of futile rage, Malus set the forest ablaze. Desperate to silence the voices, he scorched the woods, stamped upon the grasses and defiled the groves. The next day Malus retreated to the village and took refuge in the structures of stone. In the safety of the manmade houses he plotted the destruction of the forest. He knew that only by exterminating all of nature could he silence the voices and quell the guilt gnawing at his soul.

Current Sketch

Malus is a man of only 30 years. He is a handsome specimen, always outgoing and spirited. His face is never

absent of his shining smile, which varies between a trustworthy grin to a fiendish sneer. Malus never leaves his home wearing anything but the most expensive fashions from Paridon or the Core. In public Malus is witty and extremely charming, but in private, to his enemies, he is diabolically ruthless and smug.

Alone, Malus could never have destroyed Nosos. However, finding people willing to help him was a simple matter. Malus used his charms to convince the village folk to recklessly scour the land while he arranged a lucrative trade agreement between Nosos and Paridon. The city of Paridon had no shortage of men willing to defile nature for a profit. Malus lured the most ravenous businessmen to Nosos and convinced them to assist him in opening mines, mills and smelters.

In his efforts to silence the voice of the forests, Malus has scorched the land of Nosos. The trees have been harvested and carried away, the earth has been sundered and the air poisoned with toxic chemicals. He has made the land into a barren waste, buried its life beneath dunes of lifeless sand and mountains of slag. Yet the scouring of life from Nosos is incomplete. Each morning Malus can hear the hum of life growing deep beneath the layers of soot and slag. Deep in the crevices of his mind, he knows that he can never truly destroy nature. Yet Malus will not give up his quest.

He has blocked out the traumatic memories of the night of his father's death, yet he fears to hear the voice of nature again. Malus has decided that the best manner in which he can stomp out life is to encourage mankind to wage an unending battle against it. He has made himself into a robber baron, a slumlord and the harshest taskmaster east of

Falconovia. Malus drives the workers of Nosos like a cruel slave master and manipulates the other aristocrats of Nosos to do the same. He is terrified that should the ceaseless industry of Nosos come to a halt, nature will reassert itself and he will again face the forgotten horror that lurks in his nightmares.

To ensure that it never happens, Malus has made it his business to keep the workers at their labors. Malus baits the people of Nosos, keeps them chasing after wealth and material gain. The laborers are kept downtrodden; the crushing load of debts and injustices dashes their hopes and dreams, keeping them in their place. Malus enjoys oppressing the poor and helpless, there is no form of entertainment more enjoyable to him than watching his thugs pummel those who can't pay their rent. The young man knows that he cannot treat the aristocrats in the same manner, so instead he manipulates these nobles into corruption and evil, and taking vicarious joy from the malice they sew.

Combat

Malus despises combat; he feels that it is beneath a man of his abilities. Yet he is not so naive as to believe that his bodyguards would always be able to protect him. Malus always carries a dagger, an heirloom he stole from a family exiled to Garbage Island. Complimenting the dagger is a dueling pistol. Malus never leaves his home without at least one bodyguard, most of whom are third level warriors.

When faced with a threat, Malus usually lets his natural charms do his work for him. His skill as a manipulator allows him to fascinate and even make suggestions to opponents who might otherwise have been hostile.

Curse: Malus is haunted by the half forgotten horrors of the night he buried

his father. Malus has been granted the supernatural druidic sense of his parents; he is able to speak with trees at will and can sense their presence within a mile radius. However, the presence of trees horrifies Malus, for every tree within the domain whispers with the voice of the extinct forest. When Malus senses such a plant in his domain, he suffers from the effects of a failed fear check. Immediately Malus sends his minions to stamp out the offending flora. His abilities allow him to pin point the location of the plant within an area of ten yards. Malus is loath to bear the presence of any plant, be it the shrubs of a garden or a single flower in a vase. However, these puny plants cannot speak to him, they merely buzz with the hum of life. As a result, Malus allows the wealthy aristocrats of Nosos to possess gardens around their mansions, if they pay the “green tax”.

Diseases: Malus maintains a staff of scientists who are experts in the creation of diseases. Malus himself is well versed in diseases, so he proposes most of the theories to the creation of the pathogens. In his laboratories Malus keeps a vast store of lethal and parasitic creations. With his immunities to disease, Malus can smear these compounds on his hands and deliver them to a victim with a touch. Of the plethora of diseases at his command, he is known to have at least one disease designed to debilitate his enemies, one that creates a catatonic state and at least one capable of inducing madness. These diseases are always of the highest virulence. The difficulty class for the fortitude check is usually 20 and the incubation time is never more than a single day.

Immunities: Malus is immune to all forms of diseases, poisons, ability

damage and life-drain. Malus does need to eat, drink and breath, but no amount of toxicity in food, liquid or air can harm him. Malus can use his own body as a vector for diseases and poisons. Usually he carries a debilitating disease or poisonous chemical on his hands, wearing his signature white gloves to prevent accidental contact.

Trickster: Malus possesses an inhuman charisma, a force of will that inspires trust in even the most wise and wary. Normally player characters cannot be influenced by diplomacy or intimidation attempts made by NPCs. Whenever Malus uses his skills to intimidate, or negotiate or use his manipulator abilities upon player characters they must make an opposed sense motive check. If the check fails, then they play into Malus’ hands. Characters engaged in combat or who possess prior knowledge of Malus’ machinations gain a +4 circumstantial bonus to their opposed check.

Lair

Malus Sceleris dwells in Sceleris Manor, positioned on the top of “Snob Hill” in the center of Nosos Proper. Sceleris Manor is home to a dozen servants, half a dozen guards and Malus’s pathogen laboratory. The building is made of blackened wood and built into the shape of a diamond. The three-story structure features servant quarters, guest rooms, a dining hall, a ballroom and a rock garden built in the center. Like most mansions in Nosos, a tall stone fence protects Sceleris Manor. Guards patrol the barren grounds of the manor, protecting its owner from assassins and would be thieves. Mechanical traps protect certain rooms within the manor house are protected by, including Malus’s bedroom and laboratory.

Closing the Borders

When Malus wills that the borders close, huge mountains of slag rise up from the ground. The slag neat the top is molten, causing damage as magma. The skies become thick with choking fumes and a storm of acid rain throws back any fliers or anyone foolish enough to slog through the molten slag. On the coast of Nosos, the waters become extremely fierce with the approach of a storm. No swimmer or sea craft can avoid being dashed upon the rocks, nor can any flier escape the tempest.

Paridon

Cultural level: Industrial (12)

Landscape: Paridon is home to the largest, most populous city in the entire known demiplane. Paridon makes up the majority of the Shining Bay; the domain contains the island's only usable port. The harbor is located in the south west of the domain, and is covered in ports and docks. The rest of the domain is encircled by the impenetrable black rocks that line the coast. In the Northern corners of the land these rocks are a sheer cliff face, separating the land from the Nocturnal Sea by a deadly drop into the foaming surf. The land around the city of Paridon is dominated by rolling grassy hills. These grasslands are divided up by highways of worn earth made by the shepherds who graze their flocks on the land. Beyond the grasslands are the domain's only forests. These are thin woodlands, populated with a plethora of wild birds and the foxes that prey upon Paridon's sheep. The forests are made up of mostly deciduous trees, though the fumes from Nosos are giving pines and other evergreen trees a competitive edge.

The Rhastik River splits the domain and the city of Paridon. This river runs

in a curve down from the southeast, through the moors, into Lake Rhastik and down to the Nocturnal Sea. The land of Paridon receives a huge amount of rain for a domain of its size, so the River is almost always full. There are numerous moors and peat bogs in the domain, mostly in the East of the domain, though a few tiny swamps can be found in the lower grasslands. These bogs are dismal places where the trees block out the sun and no light can escape the muddy, brackish waters.

The most important area of Paridon is the metropolis of the same name. Seat of the monarchy of the Shining Bay, Paridon is a living artwork commemorating the glory of reason. The city is a sprawling jungle of stone and mortar. The Rhastik River feeds the city with water, and the countless ships from Darkon, Graben Island, Liffe, and Nova Vaasa feed it with foodstuffs. The city is devoid of any greenery; say that of Queen Mary Park, located in the center of the city. The city is known to foreigners as the city of lights, for the streets are always illuminated by oil lanterns. Beneath the city is an expansive system of sewers and tunnels. Abandoned by man, these cavernous shafts were once a magnificent pneumatic train tunnel, facilitating trade between Paridon and the sister city of Timor. Now the need for those tunnels is gone, all that travels through them are the rats and other fell things.

Settlements: Barrington (pop 82), Chattem (121), Diblum (54), Melbrook (75), Groening (62), Paridon (pop 39 245), Sheffield (pop 65), Slymouth (pop 245), Yorkville (pop 60)

The Folk: Population 40 050; Humans 99%, other 1%. Languages – Zherisian.

The people of Paridon are divided into the upper, middle and lower classes. The lower class represents the uneducated labourers of Paridon society. They work in the countless factories and docks, as well as bakeries, farms, fisheries and slaughterhouses. These people are a slovenly folk; their speech is peppered with slang, have little appreciation for art or science and they live in squalor. The lower class dwells in the gloomy slums, both in the Westborough (the North West Corner) and Bay Side (the dock area). They make little money for their efforts and partake of few of the advantages of their society. The lower class of Paridon has privilege that no peasant or serf in the Core possesses, the ability to move up in social class. If they can save enough money to have their children educated or apprenticed to a craftsman, then the whole family can benefit from the presence of a middleclass relative. Despite this, many of the poor folk squander their money on the cheap beer manufactured in Paridon's breweries. Alcoholism and domestic abuse is universally abhorred, but it is also a fact of life in the city. These impoverished labourers wear simple, grey clothing.

The next class is the middleclass, made up of educated professionals and craftsmen. Everyone from the shopkeepers to the doctors and barristers of Paridon are considered middleclass. The members of the middleclass invent, market and sell the manufactured goods that drive the economy of Paridon. It is impossible to overlook the influence of capitalism in the middle class. Outsiders might mistake this drive for simple greed, and although avarice does play a role, the industriousness of the Paridon middleclass is driven by the opportunities available to them. In the

city of Paridon, a bootblack's son could become a doctor, if he can afford to pay for the education. Indeed, such a doctor might even be able to wriggle his way into high society and marry his way into the upper class. The middleclass men commonly dress in black business attire, the women wear modest dresses.

The upper class of Paridon is made up of the wealthiest members of society. They are the landowners, owners of successful businesses, partners in prestigious law firms, members of Parliament and highborn nobles. The upper class is an exclusive society of refined gentlemen and delicate ladies. The upper class is very discerning in its members, money and marriage is never a guarantee of entry. Without exception, the members of the upper class are elitist and self-superior. They enjoy a standard of living beyond that of the richest nobles of the Core and have access to all of the greatest luxuries known to man. Wealthy men tend to dress in black coats and trousers; women prefer bonnets as well as long dresses of any colour.

The people of Paridon value reason and intellect over any other trait. Though birthright is respected, it is never an excuse for a lack of manners or a dull wit. The people of Paridon worship no Gods and partake in no superstitions. Their only religion is the Celebrants of Humanity, a religion governed by the "General Will", the collective unconsciousness of all humans. This General Will is the spirit of all human morals and ethics; it is the source of all intuition and the ultimate destination of the deceased. Beyond this belief, the folk of Paridon put their faith in science and logic.

The Celebrants preach a harsh breed of puritanical morals, emphasising modesty and chastity above all else.

While the lower class has mostly ignored this view of sex, the middleclass and upper class are socially bound show the same aversion as the Celebrants. Both women and men dress in conservative and concealing clothing.

The Law: Paridon is a constitutional monarchy. The official head of state is Queen Anne, heir to the ancestral crown. The head of government, however, is the Prime Minister Sir Winston Chapelmount, leader of the House of Commons.

The House of Commons, a body of professional politicians elected every four years, writes the laws. These parliamentarians meet for ten months each year at the building from which they derive their name. Laws are debated and if passed then sent to the House of Lords, a body of aristocrats appointed for life by the ruling monarch. This house either accepts or rejects new laws or taxes, though they have no direct control in the creation of a budget. Should a law or form of tax be approved, it goes to the monarch, who may or may not accept it.

Laws in Paridon are based on a long series of precedent, though there is a significant movement calling for a simple codified system. Criminal law is not unlike that of any other domain. Assault, fraud, murder, rape, and theft are all serious crimes, punishable by imprisonment or in some cases death. The civil law of Paridon is extremely extensive, encompassing business practices, contract law, labor rights, libel, medical malpractice, negligence and slander. Punishments for civil

offenses are often fines, whose proceeds go to the victim.

The Paridon Constabulary enforces Law and order. The constabulary is a professional police force based in Rotterdam Yard in the Eastern half of the city. Ignorance of the law is not considered an excuse for an offense, so outsiders are encouraged to be on their best behavior. Criminal offenses are punished by imprisonment in the Regional Jail, located on the Northwestern corner of the city. The jail is a cesspool of criminals and other scum, though it is many times more civilized than any dungeon in the Core.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources – beer, cast iron, ceramics, culture, designer clothing, furniture, glassware, jeweler, manufactured goods, scientific knowledge, shipping, usury, steel goods, textiles, and wool. Coinage – pound (gp), shilling (sp), pence (cp).

The booming economy of Paridon is dependent upon foreign trade. Paridon maintains massive fleets of merchant vessels that buy raw materials like lumber from neighboring domains and bring them to Paridon. These raw materials are then sent to factories either in Paridon or sent over the Queen Mary Bridge for manufacture in Timor. The finished goods are sent out to Nova Vassa, Graben Island, Liffe or Darkon, where they fetch a hefty price. The outside Domains depend upon Paridon to manufacture products like cheap textiles or delicate metalwork, so they have a vested interest in maintaining good relations with the Shining Bay.

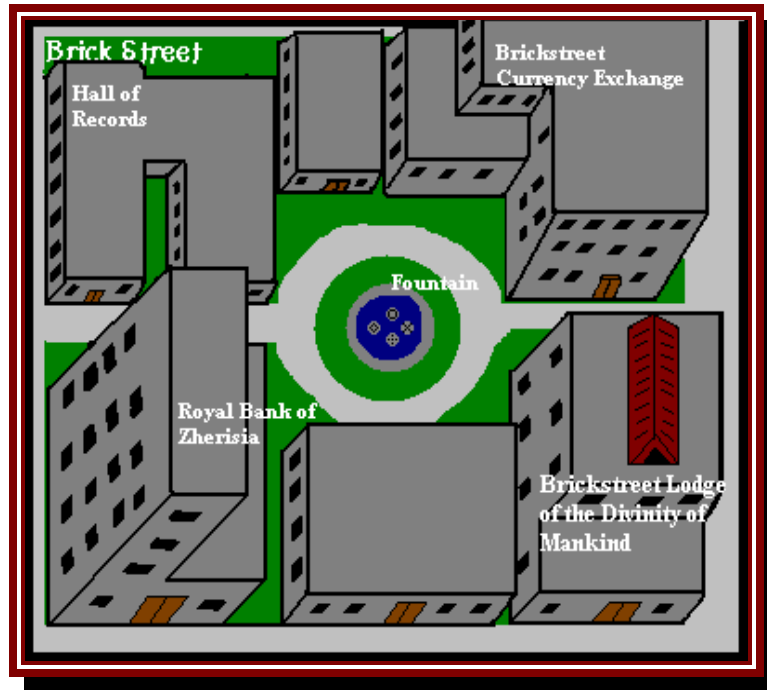


Figure 2; Brick Street - Commerce center of Paridon

Paridon is highly dependant on Nosos and Timor. Nosos is the source of all of Paridon's metal and coal, allowing the domain to keep shipping and heating costs down. Paridon has a vested interest in the exploitation of the workers in Nosos, so the government of Paridon has never spoken out against the brutality in that domain. Timor is the other critical cog in Paridon's machinery. Timor is kept in submission by a series of tariffs on foodstuffs, which make food so expensive that the Timorese are forced to labor ceaselessly in order to survive.

Paridon uses a complex form of economic management. "Shares" in a business are exchanged at the Currency Exchange on Brick Street, just north of the House of Commons. There are a great number of banks in Paridon, which loan money to the merchants who ship the goods of the Shining Bay throughout the Nocturnal Sea.

The countryside around Paridon is filled with farmers and shepherds. Most of the food in Paridon is imported from Darkon and Nova Vaasa, but a good amount of vegetables are grown in the domain. The main use of the countryside is for sheep grazing. Sheep are the domains main source of meat as well as the only stable source of wool. The wool from sheep are processed and turned into finished products in the textile mills and sweatshops of Timor, only to be sold in Paridon to merchants, and from there shipped to domains on the Nocturnal Sea.

Lamb meat and beer are the last two significant items in the economy. Lamb is so expensive that most families can only afford to eat the organ meat. There are a wide variety of dishes served from the lesser meats of lamb, including a mishmash of internal organs called haggis. Beer is a watery ale brewed from foreign grains. This beer is both a cheap and fine tasting beverage, popular

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amongst everyone in the domain, even though the upper classes express a token disdain for the brew.

Characters: Classes – aristocrats, clerics (the Church of Mankind), experts, fighters, monks, rogues. Skills – bluff, craft (clock making, gunsmith, haberdasher, locksmith, tailor, tanner, weaver), diplomacy, knowledge (history, economy, royalty, politics), Profession (banker, constable, driver, engineer, lawyer, merchant, sailor, shepherd). Feats – logical mind, Machiavellian, skill focus (bluff, craft skills, profession skills)

Sodo

Darklord of Paridon

Dread Doppelganger aristocrat 6: CR 10; SZ M Shape changer; HD 4D8 + 6D6; hp 44; Inn -1; Spd 30; AC 15 (-1 Dex, +6 natural); Atk: +5 (2 slams +9, 1d6); SA Detect thoughts; SQ curse, immunities; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +12; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 18, Wiz 16, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: bluff +24, diplomacy +18, disguise +22, gather information +14, listen +13, innuendo +14, intimidate +10, knowledge (local) +8, knowledge (history) +8, knowledge (arcana) +9, sense motive +22, spot +9; alertness, dodge, machiavellian, skill focus: bluff, skill focus: diplomacy, skill focus: sense motive

Class Abilities¹: Discretion, Expertise, Noble tongue, Power is Knowledge, Renown, Stiff Upper Lip.

Languages: Zherisian, Darkonese, Grabenite, Sithican, Vassi.

Signature Possessions: Crown of Queen Anne, exquisite dress, gown or robe of office, golden scepter, royal signet ring, royal jewels.

¹ From “Those who Delve the Darkness”, Quoth the Raven Issue #1

Background

More than a century ago, Sodo lived amongst a tribe of doppelgangers in the city of Paridon. These shape shifters lived lives of comfort and ease as immortal parasites upon society. Unlike normal members of their race, these doppelgangers were kept immortal by the use of an alchemical formula, held by their clan elders. More than his kin, Sodo desired constant admiration and glorification, and sought it out in his false identities. He basked in fawning and pampering, and used his tribe of doppelgangers to manipulate the society of the city so that his guise might be constantly bombarded with the attention he so craved.

Yet Sodo’s selfish machinations led him into conflict with the rest of his clan. The elders disapproved of all of the attention focused on one of their members; as well they were envious of his charismatic leadership. As a means of punishing the upstart, they ordered him to leave his current guise and surrender it to one of the senior doppelgangers.

Sodo was livid, but like a skillful chameleon, he never showed the slightest anger. Instead, he prepared to strike at his enemies from the shadows. He mingled with unwitting humans dupes and created the Divinity of Mankind. To its human members it appeared to be a gentleman’s club, devoted to the pursuit of pleasure and to concealing the debauchery of its members. To Sodo it was a weapon by which he could strike at the Elders.

Sodo skimmed money and human members from the Divinity to form the “Bilderbergers”. These “Bilderbergers” were devoted to two tasks, assassinating the elder doppelgangers and creating a powerful magical item, the Fog Crown.

To remove the doppelganger elders, Sodo initiated a revolution to overthrow the Zherisian Monarchy. In this second civil war, Sodo could mask the deaths of the Clan Elders as typical political assassination of Republicans and Royalists. In the meantime, Sodo constructed a fiendish device that would bind the doppelgangers to his will. The Fog Crown would give him the ability to assume the appearance of a Doppelganger Elder, a feat normally impossible. He used this ability to issue orders to his doppelganger clan, using them to create the oligarchy that would rule Paridon.

Even in his inhuman heart, he knew that it was an abominable act. For though the doppelgangers were a society of shallow immortals, the Elders of the clan were the very progenitors of their race and the only source of guidance for these evil beings. More importantly, these elders held the alchemical formula that allowed doppelgangers to stave off age. The destruction of the elders had doomed their race to inevitable age and death. For that act of ultimate treachery, Sodo befell an awful curse. Just as his plans came to fruition, a gray fog rolled forth from the streets of Paridon, covered the whole of the Shining Bay, and lifted it from its ancestral ocean to the cold waters of the Nocturnal Sea.

For his evil, Sodo was given that for which he had sacrificed so much, the shape of a doppelganger elder. He was bound into the gangly shape of an ancient monster, greatly weakened and slowed by the geriatric body. No artificial magic or makeup could hide his hideous gaze, so he was forced to hide in the sewers and live in filth, while his fellow doppelgangers lived in luxury. In the absence of true elders, the unguided doppelgangers exploited Paridon without

restraint. The city-state steadily lost its amazing scientific marvels, as well as the ethics and morals that held it together. Sodo made a token effort to stem the senseless loss, but his disability made him the subject of scorn rather than of the respect due to an elder.

These younger doppelgangers had reason for their cruelty to their lord. Since Paridon first appeared in Ravenloft, in the year 586, the remaining doppelgangers faced the horrible prospect of aging and dying. Without the alchemical knowledge held by the deceased Doppelganger elders, the remaining creatures began to age. To stave off the terrifying prospect of death, they had used an item known as the Fang of the Nosferatu as a means of collecting human life force and transferring it to themselves. Every twenty years they struck, slaying thirteen humans with an enchanted blade. These killings became attributed to the serial murderer Bloody Jack.

Abandoned by his immortal kin, Sodo appealed to humans. With great effort, he was able to convince the last remaining men of the “Bilderbergers” to act as his proxies in the Divinity of Mankind. The Divinity had become a secretive society; dedicated to the rebirth of the ethics and morals they once corrupted, as well as the preservation of science and reason. Under Sodo’s guidance, the Divinity was largely responsible for the uniting of numerous small religious sects into the Celebrants of Humanity in the year 690. Through this religious organization, the Divinity fostered the growing Royalist movement, which brought about the return of the Monarchy.

The Constitutional Monarchy drove out most of the doppelganger clan, who were masquerading as the majority of

the aristocratic oligarchy. With the doppelgangers in disarray, Sodo's henchmen seized the Fang of the Nosferatu. The divinity of mankind then obtained the Fog Crown, which had been spirited away by the mists and been renamed as the Crown of Queen Anne.

With both relics, Sodo's Bilderbergers enacted a ritual to claim the life force of human victims, just as the doppelgangers had done. Yet instead of transferring the life force to the doppelgangers, they channeled it into the Crown. With the power stored in the Crown, Sodo was able to change his appearance to that of a single person, the monarch of the Shining Bay, Queen Anne the Second. So he ended the torment of his monstrous visage, and finally seized power over his kin.

Current Sketch

With the power inside of the Crown, Sodo cowed the doppelgangers. The crown allowed Sodo to issue out the precious life force as he saw fit. Those doppelgangers that displeased him were stricken with mortality, while those doppelgangers and humans that pleased him were blessed with youth and vigor. Sodo created a web of minions, all kept loyal with the threat of age.

The gathering of life force became much more difficult a task than had been for the doppelgangers. Maintaining Sodo's form drains the energies in the crown, as well, the increased number of humans involved in the life-giving ritual required more energy than could be produced from the "Bloody Jack" murder sprees. To compensate, the Bilderbergers have arranged for many more murders, using a variety of different tools to gather life force.

Though Sodo can only assume the form of the Queen, it is more than enough to ensure him the comfort and

the glory he always craved. As the mighty Queen Anne II, Sodo reigns over the wealthiest city in all of Ravenloft, enjoying amazing wealth and prestige. Yet Sodo is unable to enjoy the fruits of his machinations.

The courtiers around him are all conniving schemers, as Sodo can readily detect from their thoughts if not from his own expertise. Indeed, he can sense that every word of praise, every sycophantic sentence, is a bold faced lie, masking their own desires for wealth and privilege. From his own minions, he can sense endless resentment from the power he has over them. Indeed, faced with the endless storm of lies and the deception Sodo prefers to sulk in solitude.

With his fantasy turned to dust, Sodo mostly ignores the world around him. The House of Commons and the House of Lords look after the governing of Paridon, leaving Sodo to concentrate his waning attention upon the Divinity of Mankind and the Bilderbergers. Sodo knows he can't enjoy the attention and glory he craves, so instead he makes due with depravity.

While the Celebrants of Humanity preaches a puritan ethic of morals, Sodo encourages secrete debauchery. The only pleasure he can enjoy is the humiliation and debasement of everyone around him. Indeed, he takes a perverse pleasure in using proxies to tempt nobles into foul acts, and then blackmailing those aristocrats with scandalous information, forcing them to plead, beg and prostrate themselves before their queen.

Beyond his sick and twisted hobbies, Sodo's only concern is continuing the murders that feed the Crown. Sodo leaves that to the immortal Bilderbergers and their servants in the Divinity of Mankind.

Combat

Despite his natural weapons, Sodo hates combat. His doppelganger form is that of an elder, which is physically decrepit and slow. More over, Sodo is loath to leave the shape of Queen Anne the Second. The Darklord surrounds himself with the Royal Guard, an elite private army of fifty so warriors ranging from 1st to 4th level. Sodo also relies upon the Bilderbergers, and their servants in the Divinity of Mankind, to enforce his will. At his disposal are a number of monks, rogues and assassins.

Curse: Sodo lacks many of the abilities of a doppelganger. He no longer possesses the ability to change self or apply a glamour to his possessions. So long as he possesses the Crown of Queen Anne he may appear as his guise to Queen Anne the Second, but should it be removed he instantly reverts to his monstrous doppelganger form.

Detect Thoughts (Su): At will Sodo can detect thoughts as the spell cast by an 18th level sorcerer (save DC 14). Sodo can activate and suppress this ability at will.

Immunities (Ex): Sodo is immune to sleep and charm effects.

Lair

Sodo rarely leaves the safety of Westingham Palace, a luxurious castle on the North Eastern corner of Paridon. The Royal Guard fiercely patrols the castle, arresting any unwanted intruders and turning them over directly to the Paridon Jail. The palace itself is a marvel of architecture and opulence. Amongst the 100 rooms in the palace are a nearly thirty guest rooms, a dozen studies, the most extensive library East of Dementlieu, and the grandest ballroom in the entire Core.

Closing the Borders

When Sodo wishes to close the borders the domain becomes enveloped in a blanket of thick fog. Any person or sea going vessel that attempts to pass through the fog finds itself traveling back towards the center of Paridon.

Timor

Cultural level: Enlightenment (11)

Landscape: Sparse ecology (city).

The city of Timor is a festering urban jungle, the rotting corpse of a once prosperous city. There are numerous towering buildings that teeter on the verge of collapse, and there are countless cavernous edifices that remain abandoned and empty. The streets remain clean for the most part, for they are still heavily trafficked by the horse carts pulling food from Paridon and goods from the numerous textile and metal factories that make up Timor's industry.

There are no indigenous plants in Timor, say a few sickly flowers in a rooftop garden. Rats, dogs and other urban pests scrounge out a living in the rubble of the past, while the humans of Timor live in the crumbling apartment complexes and factories. The only proper food stuffs available to the people of Timor is the expensive grains and meats imported from Paridon.

The island of Timor rises about ten feet from the ocean, held aloft by a ring of impenetrable black rock. The interior of the island is made of softer rock, and is porous with the countless tunnels and pipelines carved into the island. Indeed, below the surface of Timor lies a sprawling network of subterranean tunnels more complex than any mine on the Core.

Directly beneath the streets is the intricate sewer system, a series of pipes

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that flush sewage waste into the ocean. The sewers are mainly black iron pipes no larger in diameter than a few inches; however there are several maintenance tunnels running through the tangled mess. These sewers link to the many basements dug beneath almost every building.

Just beneath these sewers is the cistern, the holding space for Timor's fresh water. The cistern is similar to a subterranean lake, fed by the storm drains in the city streets. The cistern also is home to a massive steam driven pump, which is the beating heart of Timor, sending fresh water back to the surface.

Further down are the old pneumatic train tunnels, which extend beneath the Shining Bay and lead into an identical system beneath Paridon. Since the Timorese no longer possess the technical knowledge to repair the crumbling tunnels, the passages are abandoned.

The train tunnels team with rats and other fell things. The pneumatic tunnels were once a major trade artery, so the connections between the tunnels and the surface are numerous. Old, barricaded stairways still link the streets to the tunnels, and several abandoned buildings are known to hold ancient lift shafts.

Finally, below the old pneumatic tunnels is the "Hive". Aptly named, the Hive is a series of ancient lava tubes carved into the soft rock. Many of the tunnels are high enough for a grown man to walk upright. The hive is rumored to be an ancient den of sleeping horrors, though man alive has ever entered them.

The different levels of the underground environment are actually linked to one another by a series of malignance tunnels. These tunnels lead to the surface, usually emerging in buildings that have been converted into factories. Such shafts are often boarded up and barricaded.

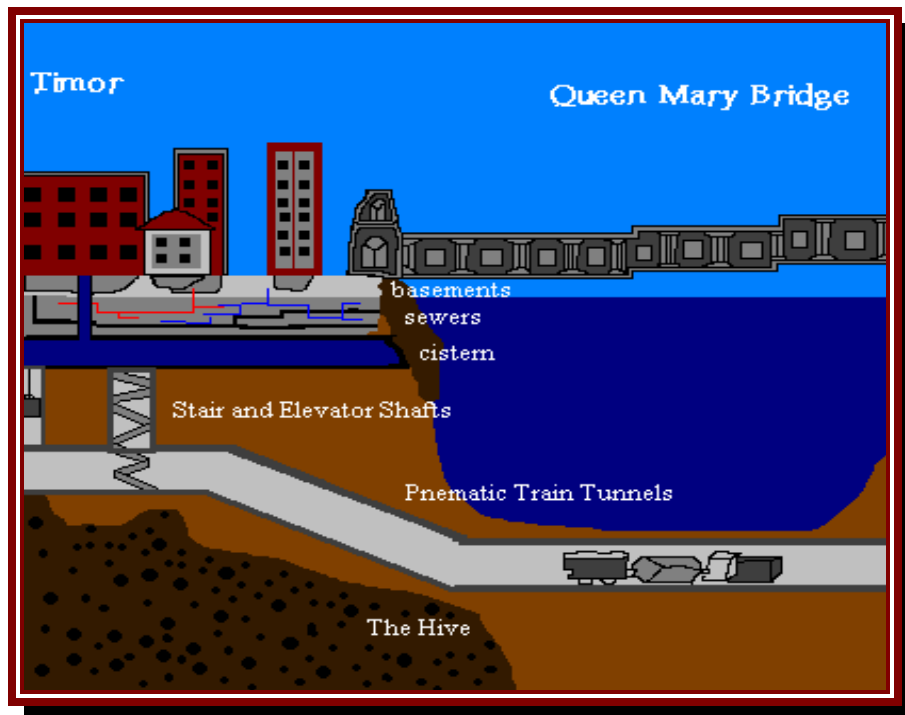


Figure 3: Timor - Cross-section of the island

Settlements: Timor (10, 000)

The Folk: Population 10 000; Humans 100%. Languages – Zherisian.

The people of Timor are a downtrodden lot, for they are slaves to Paridon in everything but name. The price of food and fuel is kept ridiculously high, so the people of Timor must labour ceaselessly to afford the commodities sent over the Queen Mary Bridge. As such, their lives are centred on the factories and textile mills where they work. These impoverished folk dress in uniformly drab, conservative clothing. Grey's and blacks are the most common colours.

The people of Timor have forsaken all forms of spirituality. They are, however, a very superstitious lot. The people of Timor are terrified of the night, as well as the maze of tunnels beneath their city. Shortly after the war with Paridon a band of men tried to reopen the pneumatic tunnels and of the dozen so explorers, only one returned alive, mad with terror. The sole survivor claimed that they had awakened an army of horrors, monsters who had swarmed up from the "Hive" and infested the pneumatic tunnels, the Cistern and the sewers.

Since that dreadful day the people of Timor have been plagued by the predations of the monsters of the deep. At first people disappeared off of the streets at night, and a curfew was set. Soon afterwards the homes and factories of Timor proved futile to block out the monsters. Whole families vanished over night, leaving only pools of blood and wet trails leading from the bathroom or from small holes in the wall or floor. Factory workers left alone, even for only a minute, disappeared without a trace.

An effort was made to take back the sewers, a posses was formed and sent

down to take back the tunnels. That day the city came to a halt as the populous listened to the screams of the men fighting and dying below. That night was even worse. The ancient plumbing throughout Timor was rocked by a horrible tremor, and when the pipes burst they sprayed forth a shower of blood and gore. The toilets and bathtubs backed up and vomited a spray of crimson, as well torn bits of human flesh.

Needless to say, the City Council of Timor has forbidden anyone to enter the sewers. At night, the doors of Timor are barricaded shut. The only people allowed to descend into the depths are the courageous civil engineers who maintain the Cistern. Even then only a pair of men are allowed down at a single time. Anyone caught outside in the night will never be allowed inside, at least not until daybreak. Since the enacting of these policies, Timor has become more peaceful. Disappearances are now rare, but the remain a terrifying possibility. The people live in constant fear of their own lives, so heroism is a foreign concept.

The Law: The laws of Timor are written by the City Council, which are the last remains of the Aristocratic Oligarchy that once ruled Paridon. The council oversees the factories and textile mills of Timor, ensuring that the people produce enough goods to make the quotas.

The Timorese constabulary enforces laws, which is nothing more than a few dozen men with clubs. The Constables spend most of their time bullying the laborers of Timor, ensuring that they produce enough goods for the factory owners.

Punishments for most offenses are the same; forced labor without pay.

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Serious offenses are punished by either hanging, or exile to the sewers. The Council tries criminal offenders, and is quick to rule against the defendant. Officially Timor lives under the same laws as Paridon, though the council is horribly corrupt and is willing to ignore any offence for a bribe.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources – furniture, manufactured goods, scientific knowledge, textiles. Coinage – pound (gp), shilling (sp), pence (cp).

The economy of Timor depends on the factories and textile mills. The only food and fuel available to the Timorese is the expensive imports from Paridon. As such, the Timorese are practically slaves to Paridon. The laborers of Timor work in the mills and factories. Among their many functions, they turn wool into cloth, carve furniture, and forge Paridon's steel into finished goods.

The only trading partner of Timor is the tyrant city Paridon. Everything that enters or leaves Timor crosses over the Queen Mary Bridge. The amazing bridge is fiercely guarded by Paridon's only soldiers, who stop any unauthorized traffic on the bridge.

Characters: Classes – aristocrats, experts, fighters, rogues. Skills – bluff, craft (clock making, gunsmith, haberdasher, locksmith, tailor, tanner, weaver), diplomacy, knowledge (history, local), Profession (engineer, merchant). Feats – logical mind, skill focus (bluff, craft skills, profession skills)

Hive Queen

Darklord of Timor

Female Markith Queen: CR 12; SZ H, Abberation (10ft by 20ft/10 ft); HD 10D8 +50; hp 100; Inn +1; Spd 30, climb 20 ft; AC 19 (-2 size, +1 dex, +10 natural); Atk: 4 claws +13 melee (2D4+8), bite +11 melee (2D8+4 and

poison); SA Acid blood, Poison; SQ Curse, Darkvision 120 ft, hive mind, light sensitivity; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 27, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 14, Wiz 14, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: balance +8, hide +5, listen +10, move silently +7, search +3, spot +8; Improved Grab, Multi-attack.

The Hive Queen is a disgusting aberration, with the torso of a woman and the bloated body of an ant queen. Her face is a twisted horror, dominated by huge red eyes. Her body is covered in a rubbery black hide, as thick as an elephant's. She has six insectoid legs, large clawed arms and a bulbous, transparent abdomen that constantly pulsates with the writhing of the gelatinous horrors within.

Background

The Hive Queen was not always a hideous abomination; untold centuries ago she was a human princess gifted with astounding beauty. Sadly, her appearance hid her monstrous ambition. She coveted her mother's crown and sought a way to remove the Queen from the throne.

The princess learned that horrible monsters known as markith once plagued the kingdom. Decades ago, the Queen ordered a campaign to drive the abominable creatures back into the caves that spawned them. The Queen had even constructed her castle and the city around it over the extinct hive of the markith. Despite the conquest, the aging Queen periodically ordered men to explore the empty hive, to ensure that no markith haunted the depths. With that knowledge the princess prepared a scheme to frighten the old Queen to death with the image of a markith.

The princess sought out a reclusive wizard and seduced him. The conniving woman promised her wizard lover wealth and influence over the kingdom once it became hers and in return, the wizard was to use his eldritch magic to transform the princess into the nightmarish image of a Markith Queen. All the while, she plotted with her pawn, the Captain of the Guard to assassinate the wizard once his role was completed.

The conspiracy seemed complete, and for weeks the princess made the preparations to lure her mother into a place no one else could witness the transformation. Yet while the girl maneuvered her victim, the wizard investigated the faithfulness of his murderous lover. It took him only a short while to discover her infidelities, as well as her intentions towards himself.

One moonlit night the princess led her elderly mother into the castle gardens. On cue, the wizard cast a spell to transform the princess into the bloated beast, and as planned, the queen died of pure terror. The princess screeched in triumph, and bid the wizard to remove the illusion. Her joy turned to horror as the wizard laughed in her hideous face, and explained that he had cast no illusion, that she had been transformed into the hideous markith queen.

Yet in that same moment, the Captain of the Guard struck. The soldier had lain in wait on the castle parapet, watching for the queen to die and for the wizard to appear. Before the princess could beg the wizard to undue his spell, the captain fired a poisoned bolt from his crossbow, slaying the enchanter even as he laughed.

Trapped in her hideous form, the princess was overcome with inhuman rage. The monstrous markith rampaged

through the castle and forced her way into the abandoned hive beneath. There she brooded in the shadows, miserable over the loss of both her kingdom and her beauty. In time she came to hate the surface people and desired to exterminate them.

For years she fostered an army of markith, rebuilding the hive her mother once destroyed. She struck the city, washing away the humans of the surface in a black tide of gibbering monsters. With their prey exterminated, the markith drones began to dissolve away from hunger. The Hive Queen bitterly retired to the innermost depth of the hive and placed herself into hibernation.

For eons the Hive Queen slumbered, dreaming of her lost beauty. As she slept, the Zherisians colonized the ruins of her kingdom, creating the city of Timor. In the aftermath of the war between Paridona and Timor, a party of explorers blundered into the Queens brood chamber and awoke her.

Current Sketch

Calm and rational after her rest, the Hive Queen understood the danger of exhausting her human prey. She discovered that her inhuman body fed as easily on the essence of fear and terror as on flesh. The Queen sustains her markith and herself by harvesting horror from the human cattle above, taking lives only to ensure a constant flow of fear.

The Queen despises her hideous subjects, as well as her own aberrant form. She longs for the humanity and the kingdom that once were hers. Still possessed by human desires, she occasionally sends her hunters to abduct human companions for her entertainment. These guests rarely live long, though their screams echo in the tunnels for years afterwards.

Combat

In combat the Hive Queen is a nightmare made flesh. When pressed into melee she rises up on her back legs and rends flesh with both pairs of forelegs. The Queen lacks the stinger normally possessed by markith queens, so she relies even more heavily upon her claws and her poisonous bite.

Acid Blood: The blood of the Hive Queen is a concentrated acid. Each time she is struck with a slashing weapon the wound vomits a spray of green luminescent acid. Anyone within ten feet of the Queen must make a reflex save against a DC 15 to avoid being struck by the spray. On a failed save the acid deals 1D4 points of damage on the first round and another 1D4 points of damage on the following round. Markith hunters are naturally immune to this particular acid.

Poison: The bite of the Hive Queen carries a lethal toxin. The poison has a fortitude save DC 20, the primary damage is 2D6 temporary constitution, and the secondary damage is 1D6 temporary constitution damage.

Curse: As part of her curse, the Queen lacks the stinger of a Markith Queen. Instead, she bears the horrible weight of her bulbous abdomen. Inside this transparent sack, horrible mutants writhe as they are birthed. Once each day she gives birth to a new child. These creatures begin life as formless ooze, which evades all of the Queen's attempt to destroy it. After a few hours it takes the shape of a carrion stalker, impersonator, reaver or even a markith queen.

These spawn naturally despise their mother. In the case of the male abominations, they ignore their mother and prey on the people of Timor. Markith Queens however, are compelled

to slay their mother and seize the Hive for their own.

Light Sensitivity: The Hive Queen suffers a -1 penalty to all attacks in light equal to a candle or starlight. In the brighter illumination of a torch or a lantern the penalty increases to -2, and in daylight or in an area affected by daylight spell the penalty raises to -4.

Hive Mind: The Hive Queen can telepathically communicate to all markith hunters under her control. Should a markith under her command slay a markith queen, all markith spawned by the deceased queen come under the Hive Queen's control. This extends over a radius of five miles.

Lair

The Hive Queen spends her time brooding in the depths of the ancient Hive. A huge complex of tunnels carved by lava many millennia ago, the Hive is shaped like an inverted pyramid.

The circular walls of the hive are covered in a thick mucous excreted by the hunters. The Hive is crawling with markith hunters, who burry themselves in the walls and lie dormant until activated by the Queen. The Queen's chamber is located at the very bottom of the Hive. This cavernous chamber is encircled by a moat of acid, which is crossed by a single bridge of bone and mucous.

Closing the Borders

The borders of Timor are presently closed. The rocks around the island are impenetrable, they have lifted the whole island up out of the ocean and make any attempt to enter or leave by sea impossible. The Queen Mary Bridge and the old pneumatic tunnels have circumvented the borders.

Tome of the Guardians

The Crown of Queen Anne

By Stephen "Sc8" Suffon

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Picture by Bobby Storey

The Crown of Queen Anne

The Crown of Queen Anne is an exquisite headpiece made of white gold, red velvet and adorned with countless white diamonds. The crown is a breathtaking specimen of craftsmanship, made by the jewelers of the long past golden age of Paridon. Despite its namesake, the crown appears to be a fitting piece for both male and female monarchs. The crown is shorter than most crowns, made of a golden circlet supporting four arches that link together above the velvet top. Diamonds run the diameter of the golden circlet and the supported arches. A single ruby sits on the very top of the crown. This gem is said to glow with a crimson nimbus.

History

The history of the crown is extensive, dating back to the ancient golden age of Paridon and the absolutist monarchy that presided over that age. The crown is reported to have been commissioned by the semi mythological founder of Paridon, Queen Anne the First. Historians of that golden age claimed that the crown was lost to the aristocratic revolutionaries, who sold the crown to foreign buyers. However, the administration of Queen Anne the Second recovered the crown and brought it back to Paridon. The crown is a celebrated symbol of the strength and

purity of the monarchy. It is believed that since the return of the Crown heralds the return of the Golden Age.

Only the Queen and her minions know the true nature of the crown. The true Crown of Queen Anne has never and will be recovered, since it remained on the world from which Paridon was taken. The doppelganger Sodo commissioned the creation of the crown by his minions in the Divinity of Mankind. The crown was created as a magical item to give Sodo the power to assume the shape of a doppelganger elder. The elders themselves were the first of their race, the keepers of the secret of immortality. With the crown in his position, Sodo felt free to exterminate the elders and assume leadership over the clan, even though he damned himself and the others to mortality.

The crown was lost to the mists for a time, while the doppelgangers set about a new method of keeping themselves immortal. The shape shifters discovered an enchanted dagger known as the Fang of the Nosferatu, a blade that could draw life force from humans and bestow it to themselves. For centuries the doppelgangers used the dagger to murder humans under the guise of Bloody Jack and maintain their own existences.

In the year 690 Sodo's minions, the Bilderbergers, recovered the Fog Crown and stole the Fang of the Nosferatu.

Sodo used both items to create The Crown of Queen Anne, an item that combined the power of both. The power of the Crown allows Sodo to harness the life draining power of the Fang and bestow its ability onto other weapons. When these weapons are used to murder humans, the life force is transmitted to the Crown. Sodo uses this life force to circumvent his curse and appear in the form of a human, the Queen. As well, he uses the life force to bestow immortality on his human and doppelganger minions.

Powers

The Crown is inextricably linked to Sodo. While it can be removed, its powers cannot be utilized by anyone but Sodo. Should the crown be removed from Sodo he will lose the ability to appear in human form and in one hour revert to the shape of a doppelganger elder. So long as it is on his head Sodo is affected with a change self spell as if cast by an 18th level sorcerer. This effect can only disguise Sodo as Queen Anne.

The Crown also has the ability to remove one year of age from a humanoid or shape shifter character. This reversal of age removes the physical ability penalties derived from old age, but it does not remove the bonuses to mental abilities. However, should a character use the crown's age reversal, he will not gain benefits from aging unless he first ages to the required age normally. A single humanoid or shape shifter can only benefit from this aging reversal once in a year. Sodo uses this power to keep the Bilderbergers and his doppelganger minions dependant upon him. The life force within the Crown of Queen Anne is constantly drained by Sodo's use of its change self ability, as well, the cost of reversing the

age of so many minions requires almost constant sacrifices. The Bloody Jack murders have continued, occurring once every twenty years, slaying thirteen individuals. However this bloodletting proved insufficient to provide the crown with enough life force. To supplement the drain, the Bilderbergers used their connections in the Divinity of Mankind to arrange for more murders.

The final power of the Crown is to enchant weapons. Weapons thus enchanted become artifacts with a chaotic evil alignment, an intelligence of 12, and wisdom of 14 and a charisma score of 14. Artifacts enchanted in this manner gain a +1 enhancement bonus. Anyone slain by such a weapon cannot be resurrected except by a wish or a miracle spell.

The weapons are distributed to murderers who are trained and conditioned by the Bilderbergers. Currently there are half a dozen of these Stalkers committing murders to fuel the Crown. Each of these killers operates with a different method and targets a particular type of prey.



The Stalkers

The Axe Monkey is perhaps the most horrific of the murderers unleashed upon Paridon. The beastly murderer strikes three or four times a year, usually older men, who are slain in their own homes with an axe. The murderer scrawls grotesque lyrics in blood beside the body. The constabulary is under the impression that the Axe Monkey is a master burglar, since there are no signs of his entrance or exit. The Axe Monkey is in truth an ape, conditioned by the Bilderbergers to murder.

The Dangler stalks the East side of the River, preying on foreign merchants, and immigrant store clerks. Victims are usually attacked in their place of business, just after sundown. Signs, such as a lack of a struggle, seem to suggest that the dangler was known to the victim or at least not considered a threat. The weapon of choice for the dangler is a noose, which is used to garrote the victim from behind. The victim is then hung from an elevated position, allowing the body to dangle. The dangler strikes once every three or four months.

Every so many months, the people of Paridon discover the body of a prostitute washed up on the river Rhastik. Though these deaths are largely ignored by the callous constabulary, a few investigators search for the culprit. These alienists have devised an extensive profile of the suspect they call "River Man", and though he eludes capture each murder sheds more light on his identity.

The Hook is the terror of the young people of the suburbs surrounding Paridon. The Hook is described as a man obscured by a dark, hooded coat with one hand. Where his left hand might have been is a gleaming metal hook. The Hook slays at irregular intervals, never striking more than two or three times in a year and never in the same place twice. He usually strikes in the summer months when young people are about at night. Most of the young people of Paridon refuse to believe in the Hook. It is a common belief that the Hook is a fairytale devised to keep them from engaging in mischief and other youthful recreational activities.

Pride, say the Celebrants, is a deadly sin – especially when Scalper prowls the streets. Known also as the Demon Barber, this mad man stalks Paridon's citizens, taking hair as his grisly trophies. Scalper is in fact a mad Celebrant monk, who wears beneath his vestments, a coat of human hair. Scalper prefers unescorted ladies, or gentlemen with thick beards.

Finally, the Mangler is the bane of the sailors who frequent the docks of Paridon. Described as a hulking brute, more than seven feet tall the Mangler haunts the shadowy piers. The weapon used by the brute is a pair of blood stained gloves, which cover hands that can break bones and rend flesh. The Mangler has never been caught since he vanishes in the maze of buildings on the docks. The broken bodies of sailors are found on the piers often, with perhaps as many as a dozen victims in a given year.

From the Lab

Diseases of Malus Sceleris

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutton
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Most nobles have a hobby with which to occupy their free hours. Some men pursue books, other collect works of art and some play games. Yet the lord of Nosos, Malus Sceleris, pursues a very different past time. Obsessed with disease, Sceleris has gathered together an assortment of amoral biologists and set them to the task of creating new plagues with which he afflicts Nosos.

In the laboratories of Sceleris manor, these scientists experiment with new pathogens. Inside the laboratory they have discovered amazing insights into the nature of sickness and disease, revelations that could be used to save countless lives, but are instead used to end them. It is Malus' belief that disease is critical to keeping the poor laborers of his domain weakened, to prevent them from rising against the upper class. The diseases concocted in the lab also allow Malus a means by which he can murder, debilitate or discredit his political rivals.

These diseases represent futuristic technology for Nosos. The theories and designs for these diseases are contained in the records concealed in Sceleris manor. The secrets of the disease culture are known only to Malus's team of pathologists.

Dum-Dum Fever

Dum-Dum fever is a pox designed by Malus to discredit his rivals. The disease is spread by contact, usually delivered by Malus himself with a handshake. The fortitude save to resist

the infection is made against a DC of 16. The disease incubates for 1D6 days and then strikes.

Dum Dum fever attacks a victim's mental capacity. Each day the victim must make a successful fortitude save against the disease or take 1 point of temporary intelligence, wisdom and charisma damage. The disease progresses in this manner until the abilities of the victim are reduced by a total of five points. Afterwards, the victim begins to suffer from the same symptoms of a randomly determined moderate madness effect. This madness does not incur ability damage, nor can it be removed by psychological therapy. The madness effect remains on the victim until the disease is removed. The victim continues to make fortitude saves each day to attempt to throw off the effect.

The disease carries a number of different symptoms including fever and profuse sweating. As the victim loses his mental faculties he begins to slur his speech, forget important details, and behave erratically. Furthermore, Malus has seen to it that rumors attribute Dum Dum fever as a disease carried by prostitutes. This combination assault upon the intellect and reputation is more than enough to permanently remove any rival.

Elevens

The poor of Nosos are known to carry many diseases, though they are rarely educated enough to draw the distinction between them. There is only one scourge that stands out in the minds of the urban poor, the elevens. The elevens is the most dreaded ailment, for it is universally fatal. The disease is known for its only symptom, two muscles on the back of the neck standing erect, forming two parallel lines running up from the shoulders to the head. Those who show this symptom are surely doomed, for no one has survived “having his eleven’s up”.

The disease is spread by ingestion. Malus Sceleris sends agents to pour the disease in the river. In this form the disease is somewhat mild. The pathogen rarely takes root in a healthy body, so the wealthy elite of Nosos has nothing to fear. Even the urban poor are somewhat resistant to the parasite, though the virus can accumulate in the body and cause actual harm. Merely drinking the polluted water of Nosos has little chance of hurting a player character. When Malus desires to quietly eliminate a troublesome pauper he has his agents

poison them with the concentrated version of the disease.

Concentrated Elevens infects a body through ingestion. The fortitude save to resist the concentrated disease is 18, elevens has an incubation time of 1D4 days. Each day the character must pass the fortitude save or he begins to suffer from the lethal effects. After failing this save the character begins takes 2 points of temporary constitution damage. The character suffers another 2 points of ability damage every two hours afterwards until death. Death is inevitable unless the character can receive magical assistance, or the antidote.

The antidote is a tightly kept secret, but rumors of it have spread throughout Nosos. Malus actively denies any involvement with the disease, as well as any knowledge of the cure. This is merely a subtle way of suggesting to the upper class that Malus has some connection to the disease and does indeed possess the antidote. This antidote is an elixir that immediately ends the progression of the disease and allows the character to naturally heal the damage taken.

Extraordinary Expertise

Masterwork Firearms

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutton
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Wilson was waiting in the branches of a pine tree, his legs shivering in the cold of the early winter mourning. He shifted his hands underneath his coat, trying to keep them as warm as possible. The wind was as gentle as a whisper, but still it robbed his skin of precious warmth.

The highway was silent, with nothing more to disturb the fresh snow than a freezing gust of wind. Wilson sighed out loud, not caring if anyone heard him.

"Shhh!" Hissed Roberts. Wilson just gave him a nasty look.

"Where the hell is that caravan?" Whispered Wilson, "I'm freezing my stones off."

"Shut up," replied the other highwayman, "It'll be here any minute," Wilson didn't respond, but instead caressed the pistol shoved into his belt. As if on cue, the silence of the mourning was broken by the clip clop sound of a shod horse trotting up the cobblestone road.

The carriage slowly approached. Two guards sat atop the coach, on either side of the driver and scanned the road ahead, oblivious to the danger in the woods. As they neared the two robbers, Roberts aimed his rifle.

The firearm spat fire and thunder and the carriage driver collapsed from his seat. As he fell the horses charged forward, oblivious to the ditch dug into the road and concealed by the snow. The guards took aim with their rifles.

Yet as the carriage crashed into the side of the trench the guards were thrown to the ground while the horses reared. One man fell to the side, while the other sailed into the ditch and was trampled beneath the horses' panicked hooves.

Wilson stepped over to the fallen man, aimed his belt pistol into the remaining guard's face, only to realize that the man's double barreled rifle was in his hands, pointed into Wilson's gut.

"Okay slow poke," Snarled Wilson. "Drop the pea shooter and I'll let you live". The guard just laughed.

"To hell with you," he retorted, "This is a Weston Thunder Stick. It'll blow a hole in you the size of a grapefruit."

"Weston?" Replied Wilson, "That dwarven garbage? You couldn't hit the road with that cheap trash."

"And what do you have?" Retorted the wounded guard, "That's a Mackie musket. It'll blow up right in your face."

"That's a load of turkey shot!" Shot back Wilson, "Just the kind of garbage a race traitor would spout off!"

"Eat me, you dumb ass bigot!" Snarled the guard. Meanwhile, a disgusted Roberts grew impatient.

"Kill the fool, you moron." He shouted. Wilson turned to reply. He opened his mouth but was cut off by the sound of a rifle. The guard rolled over onto his belly as the bandit fell. As the other robber fled, the guard cocked the second barrel and fired. The man collapsed face first into the bloodied

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snow. The wounded guard slowly rose to his feet.

"Couldn't hit the road, huh?" He sneered. "Mackie trash," He hissed as he spat on Wilson's corpse, while cradling his beloved gun.

History

For as long as there have been firearms in Ravenloft two names have dominated the market; Weston and Mackie. These two firearm companies have expanded across the core and even into lands beyond, hoping to out do one another and conquer the firearms trade.

Mackie

Robert Mackie founded The Mackie Company in the year 663 in Lamordia. Bob Mackie was a simple gunsmith with a poor aptitude for his own craft. Yet what Mackie lacked in skill he more than made up for in salesmanship. Mackie focused his efforts on selling his poor merchandise to travelers, preaching to them the power of the gun over all other weapons. Mackie relied heavily upon these naive travelers, for without them it is unlikely that he would have sold even a single rifle to the discerning customers of Lamordia.

Mackie's business thrived. He offered merchants free training in the use of firearms and free gunpowder on the provision that they would spread pamphlets in their own lands, advertising Mackie's guns. Though Mackie never did learn to build a decent weapon he had seized the international firearm trade for his own. He drained the land of apprentice gunsmiths and left his competitors in the dust. By the year 700 the true master gunsmiths of Lamordia were confined to small family shops in Lamordia, while the Mackie Company

expanded outwards like a weed, choking the market dry of customers.

Robert Mackie died a wealthy man in 703 and left his company to his son George Mackie. George was even more driven than his father and he vigorously campaigned in Darkon to "modernize" Darkonian warfare. George Mackie found few men he could rely upon to run satellite shops and even fewer men who could be trained to craft guns on their own.

Rather than dealing with humans, Mackie turned to the gnomes and to the dwarves of Darkon. The Darkon people marginalized these poor people; they were forbidden by law to own farmland and worked for noble lords as miners, blacksmiths or merchants. Mackie found that the dwarves had a keen mind for firearms and their natural craftsmanship abilities allowed them to learn the gun craft with ease. The gnomes with their alchemical skills made excellent powder smiths. A dwarf merchant named Weston was chosen to head this organization of demihumans and in 710 Mackie and Weston opened up a shop in Il Aluk to bring guns into the heart of Darkon.

The Mackie organization reached the pinnacle of its power, with a stake in every shop in the Core; say a few hold outs in Lamordia. Every case of powder and every pistol had Mackie's name burned upon it. Even though records from the time show that the company was not making as great a profit as it would in latter decades, it still cannot be denied that the Mackie Company had reached the peak of its power and influence.

Weston

George Mackie retired early in 724, leaving his spoiled son Harold Mackie in charge. Weston the dwarf had already been under great strain from George Mackie, since the massive profits the merchant made were not reaching the gnomes and dwarves who labored to make the company productive. Giving the company to Harold was an even greater blow, for the young man was an inept businessman and flagrantly wasted money. By 728, Weston had had enough of Harold's incompetence and started his own company.

Weston led an exodus of dwarves from the Mackie Company, stealing the majority of the gunsmiths the company had in its employ. Mackie was furious with the loss, but there was nothing he could do to stem the tide of revolt. Instead, he instituted a vengeful policy that forbade dwarves to work within the Company. Many of the employees considered it to be a boneheaded decision that might later come back to haunt them.

Weston's Company "bought out" many of the dwarf owned shops in Darkon and Nova Vaasa. Though Mackie attempted to pursue legal action against the theft of his businesses, he found that there was nothing he could do. The Darkonese government had never enjoyed the idea of their military becoming dependant on a foreign business, so the courts were paid a visit by the Kargat and a favorable verdict was achieved. Similarly, in Nova Vassa Weston bribed the right judges to secure an amicable ruling. The Mackie shops in the North and East corners of the Core were bought for a pittance and the Weston Company was born.

The Gun Baffle

Right from the start Mackie and Weston were at each other's throats. Weston had drawn first blood; the Mackie Company was severely wounded from the loss of the dwarven gunsmiths and was hemorrhaging profits in the North and East. Harold Mackie resigned as owner and pawned the company off on his sister Catherine Mackie. The Mackie Empire was quickly crumbling into dust and it looked as though it might be the beginning of the end.

Yet Catherine was not as shaken as her little brother for she envisioned a new financial empire, a pure monopoly cleansed of the taint of demihuman blood. The first step in her plans was to eliminate the competition from Weston's company. As the Dwarf Weston was traveling through Nova Vassa to the company headquarters he was felled by a sniper's bullet.

The dwarf employees of the Weston Company were furious but unshaken. The independent dwarves quickly reorganized under the leadership of a council of elder merchants, known as the Board of Directors. These directors sent assassins after the Mackie family, and though they slew the elder George and his son Harold, Catherine was too wily to be caught.

The battle was joined, and it would be fierce. Catherine was not content to let the Weston Company make a monopoly over Darkon, Nova Vaasa and the Nocturnal Sea; Mackie shops sprung up and began to challenge the Westons for dominance in the trade. The Board of Directors retaliated by sending their own feelers into Borca, Richemulot and Dementlieu. Violence sparked between the two rivals, urging the shops to hire on thugs and criminals to wage the war.

Yet the true war was waged in the workshop. The real power lay in the ability to capture the market for firearms. Since 736 the two companies have battled to devise the perfect firearm. The human scientists of the Mackie Company are constantly reinventing the firearm. It is their work that spawned the wheel lock, which superseded the matchlock, and latter the flint lock which has come to dominate the market.

Yet while Mackie is always looking to the future, the dwarves perfect the present. The Weston Company focuses upon improving older designs and perfecting a single weapon. Their slow, organic approach has allowed them to build much more powerful and reliable weapons than their opponents.

The Mackie Company focuses upon the human market for guns, using their human-only hiring policy to an advantage. Mackie weapons are simple to maintain, slow to break down, and emphasize accuracy and range. This has made them popular to the soldiers of the Mutual Defense Alliance as well as to the farmers and commoners of the Core. Weston, on the other hand, builds weapons for the discerning consumer and the firearm fanatics. Their weapons are harder to maintain and generally have a shorter range. However their power and penetration is unrivaled by any weapon on the Core.

The real winner of the battle between the companies is the consumer. Both companies have kept prices down and improved the quality of firearms exponentially. Some scholars believe that if as much effort was put into medicine as in weapons, mankind might be immortal. It is true that firearm technology is much more advanced than might otherwise have been.

The Mutual Defense Organization between Borca, Dementlieu, Richmulot and Mordent has purchased countless weapons from either company. The militaries of these nations plays either company off against each other, keeping quality up and costs down. Artillery weapons called cannons have begun to show themselves, and though these mammoth contraptions are unimpressive, both companies swear that they will become critical weapons in the future.

Penetration

There is an important distinction between the primitive matchlocks and wheel locks of the first few firearms and the quality weapons made by the Mackie and Weston companies. These firearms project bullets with such force that the metal bullets can tear through metal, bone and the thickest hide.

All of the firearms described below are capable of negating some of the armor class bonus granted by natural armor and mundane forms of armor.

Whenever a character makes an attack with a firearm, the target of the attack only receives a bonus equal to half of that that should have been granted by natural armor or by mundane forms of armor. The enhancement bonuses from magical effects, dexterity bonuses, deflection bonuses, bonuses from cover and circumstantial bonuses are not halved in this manner.

For example, a Borcan rifleman takes aim at a Falconovian knight, dismounted. The knight has a total AC of 19, with a bonus of 8 from his full plate armor and +1 from dexterity. However, in regards to the rifleman's attack the knight has only an AC of 15.

Prototypes

The design of weapons is an ongoing process. Both companies are in a tight competition to devise new weapons. Both companies compete with each other for the same market, yet they try to attract the same market by focusing on a different angle. The Mackie plays up the race angle; they design their weapons for humans and advertise their products to the common man. Consequently, these guns are designed for simplicity. The Weston Company focuses on the gun aficionados, men who appreciate a powerful firearm no matter how complex it might be to maintain.

The following is a list of the prototype firearms appearing all over the Core. They represent the latest advances in firearm technology.

Mackie Dueling Pistol

This weapon was designed to appeal to the nobility of Borca, Dementlieu and Richmulot. The Dueling pistol is a long and elegant weapon, the barrel and stock are decorated with gold plate and the barrel is polished to a shine. The striker is made of brass, except on the nose of the hammer and the wood of the stock is always of a fine, dark maple.

The dueling pistol has a very long barrel, designed for maximum accuracy. Attacks made with the pistol gain a +1 masterwork bonus. Furthermore, a man who bears an elegant weapon of this variety gains a temporary +1 bonus to charisma based skill checks while interacting with individuals who appreciate firearms.

Dueling pistols like this are costly; they cost twice as much as conventional pistols. In a CL 9 domain a Mackie Dueling pistol can command as much as 100 gold pieces. The dueling pistol

deals 1D10 points of damage on a successful hit and threatens a critical range of 20/*3. The dueling pistol is built for increased accuracy but only within a short range, hence the range increment is only 50 ft.

Belt Pistol

Firearms are a valuable tool to pirates, brigands, highwaymen and the men who would try to stop them. These men respect the great power of a pistol, yet they need weapons that are ready to use at a moment's notice. The master craftsmen of the Weston Company took this need to mind when they built the belt pistol.

The belt pistol features a recessed powder chamber, which can hold a bullet, wadding and powder safely in place. Belt pistols can be jammed into belts, thrown back and forth and even operated in the rain without reducing their effectiveness. Most importantly, the belt pistol features a snub nosed barrel and a specially designed pistol grip.

When placed in a holster or jammed into a belt or bandolier a belt pistol can be drawn as a free action. A character may only draw one belt pistol as a free action in a single turn. Belt pistols deal 1D10 points of piercing damage on a successful hit and threaten a critical range of 20/*3. Belt pistols are short ranged weapons; they use a range increment of 30 ft. Belt pistols are sold cheaply and the price is generally kept constant. Except in extenuating circumstances, a belt pistol costs 50 gold pieces.

Mackie Rifle

The Mackie Company has invested a great deal of its energy to take over the hunting market. Traditional muskets are too inaccurate and short ranged for

effective use as a hunting tool. The master gunsmiths of the Mackie Company spent years developing a way to make bullets move in a straighter path for a greater distance. A “rifled” barrel proved to be the most effective method. Grooves cut into the barrel cause the bullet to spin as it leaves the barrel, causing the motion of the projectile to be a tight spiral that causes it to move in a straighter line.

Since its release the rifle has fulfilled the greatest desires of the Mackie Company. The Mackie rifle has become extremely popular amongst the peasant farmers of Borca, Mordent and Dementlieu. The Weston Company has since created a cheaper clone of the rifle, but it is much less popular amongst the human peasants, and such was never produced in significant numbers.

A Mackie rifle deals 1D12 points of damage with each successful hit and threatens a critical range of 19-20/*3. The rifle uses a range increment of 200 feet and weighs 10 pounds. The Mackie Rifle is exceptionally accurate; all attack rolls made with the rifle are made with a +1 masterwork bonus. The Mackie rifle is only sold in Borca, Mordent and Dementlieu, where it costs only fifty gold pieces.

Weston Thunder Stick

The Weston Company found that penetrating the markets of foreign lands was difficult. Many of the primitive peoples beyond the core had never heard of a firearm and were ignorant of its power. The Weston Company built the Thunder Stick to emphasize the usefulness of a firearm in placing massive amounts of power into a single, unstoppable blow.

The Thunder Stick is an advanced form of musket. It uses state of the art metallurgy to create a powder chamber

capable of compressing the explosion of powder and adding extra force into the shot. The result is a weapon with unsurpassed “stopping power”. The mighty force of the charge makes the bullet tumble through the air. While this allows the bullet to deal more lacerating damage, it makes the shot less accurate at long ranges. In the more advanced areas, the Weston Company adds a second barrel to the rifle. This allows the Thunder Stick twice the firepower of another rifle, making it the most powerful handheld weapon to be bought at any price. Each barrel must be loaded, as if a separate rifle. Both barrels can be fired as a single attack, or as two separate attacks.

A Thunder Stick deals 1D12+2 piercing/slashing damage on a successful hit. The Thunder Stick threatens a critical range of 20/*3 and has a range increment of 100 feet. The Weston Company is attempting to sell their Thunder Sticks to a market that has very little confidence. Thus, the price is kept at a paltry 60 gold pieces, though in more advanced domains the price jumps to a respectable 70 gold pieces. The double-barreled thunder stick is only sold in the most advanced domains, and there they fetch the princely sum of 80 gold pieces.

Cannon

Cannons were developed by the Mackie Company mainly as a method of arming ships on the Sea of Sorrows. They were adapted for use in ground warfare as a means of destroying fortifications and striking large groups of infantry. The nations of the Mutual Defense Pact arm their fortresses and castles with these cannons, making them almost impossible to assail.

A cannon is a large sized weapon, weighing five hundred pounds at the

least. The cannon fires an explosive ball at great velocity. Each shot requires nearly thirty times the amount of gunpowder used in a pistol. The cannon is fired by making an attack roll against an AC of fifteen, modified by range. On a miss the cannon ball veers off from the target by 10 feet for each point by which the attack roll missed.

When a cannon ball lands it explodes, dealing 4D6 points of fire, piercing and slashing damage to everything within a fifteen-foot radius. A successful reflex save against a DC of

15 allows a character caught in the blast to take only half damage. Reloading a cannon requires at least three rounds and a crew of at least two men. Firing a loaded cannon requires only an attack action. Cannons have a range increment of 200 feet and they do not threaten any critical range. Cannons are expensive weapons; a single cannon costs at least three hundred gold pieces. Actually obtaining a cannon is more than a matter of money since both the Mackie and the Weston Company have signed exclusive rights to cannon weapons to the MDP.

Whispers in the Dark

Black-Powder Magic

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutfon

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Arcane Accuracy

Alteration

Level: sorcerer/wizard 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 3

Range: Touch

Target: One light firearm

Duration: 1 round per level

The firearm has long been a favorite amongst mages who prefer the massive power and penetration of a firearm to traditional missile weapons. However, few classic spells can augment the power of a rifle or pistol. To address this problem several wizards in the Core devised a spell to turn mundane bullets into lethal magical missiles.

This spell allows an arcane spell caster to temporarily enhance the accuracy of a firearm. So long as the firearm is enchanted thusly, the range increment is increased by 50%, the threat range of the weapon is doubled and the bullets gain a +2 magical enhancement bonus to hit and damage.

Penetration

Alteration

Level: sorcerer/wizard 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 2

Range: Touch

Target: One firearm

Duration: 1 round per level

This spell is designed to augment the natural penetrating power of a

firearm. With the casting of this spell all bullets fired from the target firearm penetrate through any armor. Attacks made with the enchanted pistol are made as ranged touch attacks, thus ignoring any deflection or natural armor bonuses to the target's armor class

Reload

Conjuration

Level: sorcerer/wizard 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 3

Range: Touch

Target: One firearm

Duration: 1 round per level

Wizards and sorcerers prefer the firearm to regular missile weapons, however during a combat situation reloading a cumbersome rifle or pistol is difficult. A mage in Borca was the first to address this problem.

For the duration of this spell the firearm does not need to be reloaded. At the beginning of each round a quantity of powder and one bullet is conjured into the chamber, where it may be fired. Only one quantity is conjured each round.

The material component for this spell is the quantity of gunpowder and bullets to be used through the spell. The spell only lasts a number of rounds equal to the quantities of gunpowder and bullets used up in the spell. Powder and bullets not used by the end of the spell are not returned.

Children of the Night

The Invisible Man

By David Gibson aka the Jester

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When I first conceived of this I was unsure why I should write this, or more accurately for whom. It is unlikely I will ever show this small tome to anyone, no more than I would speak aloud the contents. It is not for myself that I put quill to paper. So it is for prosperity that I write. For someone to read after I am dead so my actions and deeds will not be forgotten. Yes, for if there is one thing that sends a dark chill up my spine it is the thought of vanishing without a trace. I have been forgotten enough in my life...

My tale begins many years ago in a land some leagues away in the realm known as Tempest, in the very Core of this land. For me it was never a happy land, for I was born different. My skin and hair were pale and white while my eyes were a dark pink in hue. Later I would learn I was named an albino, but at the time I only knew myself as a freak. At first the people of the town ignored me. If they did glance in my direction I could feel them looking down on me. Judging my appearance as some form divine punishment for some unknown sin of my parents. There was no pity from their harsh accusing eyes. The children were worse. When they saw me they would throw stones at me while shouting taunts and insults. I cannot remember which stung more. It did not take me long to learn it was better to hide than face them. I sometimes spent hours crouched in the sharp underbrush

avoiding my tormentors. Then things grew worse.

I was still young when it happened that the incident is a blur in my young memory, but still old enough to remember the shaking of the earth, the blackness of the sky and the rise and fall of the thick, cool mist. My young arms wrapped tight in ignorant fear around my mother's legs as I buried my face in her rough skirt. When it ended two of the neighboring lands were gone, seemingly wrenched from the ground. The simplistic folk blamed magic and like the frightened sheep they were lashed out at anything they saw as different, things such as a inhumanly pale child.

They did not come right away. I still remember that. They talked about it first for a long time. Looking back my parents had ample time to pack and leave, but they did not believe the villagers would really turn on them. But they did. They came with torches and farm tools with the priest urging the crowd forward. He didn't lead himself but gestured the way behind the safety of several of the larger villagers. In a panic my parents turned to their last hope, the Vistani.

The vagabonds were camped nearby and my parents fled to them with what little savings they had. They handed me over without a thought and paid the clan to take me past the borders into another realm. My parents then left me alone and returned home confident that they would be unmolested now they had disposed of me. Their house was burnt to the

foundation during the night killing both. As for myself the gypsies kept their word and carried me away, smuggled in one of the wagons.

Once we crossed over into Darkon they declared they had fulfilled their end of the bargain and the treacherous folk immediately sold me to the nearest buyer. I gain a sliver of satisfaction from the knowledge that they did not receive too large of a sum for my bondage as I was 'flawed goods'. My condition left me sensitive to the burning glare of the sun; the rays of which could leave me with burns and horrid growths over my body with too much exposure. Given my little usefulness I passed from employer to employer for a number of months before landing in the employment of one Captain Peck, a sailor on the Nocturnal Sea. The dark and overcast sky that clings to that forsaken body of water proved to be a blessing for me. I was able to earn a worthwhile living without suffering burns to my sensitive flesh from the sun. The work was hard and I will not repeat in writing the many cruelties inflicted on me during my stay on that vessel, but for the first time in my life I felt like I was not a useless being. My stay was not permanent and I was soon sold to a scientist who made his home in the land of Zherisia. This was how I came to reside in the city of Paridon.

The alchemist who was fascinated by my condition paid the captain in full for me. He was curious on why I was different and the mysteries I might hold the answers to. He put me to work in his shop where I spent many long hours pasting labels on bottles of pharmaceuticals. The work was long and I received but a few farthings in payment. During my stay the doctor gave me a rudimentary education so I could better serve him in his studies and

experiments. I write experiments but to my younger self they were torture sessions. I was subjected to all manner of tests and examinations. I was electrocuted and bled, forced to imbibe numerous foul tasting chemical cocktails, all in the name of science.

I had been in the service of Doctor Carradine, for that was his name, for the better part of two years before the pharmacist announced he had realized that my condition had to do with light, or rather how my skin reacted to it. He announced that it would not be hard for him to cause my skin to react as a normal person's would. He was also convinced that it could aid someone who was normal in avoiding burns and cancers from the sun. He carefully tested his chemicals on a few samples patches of my skin before forcing the burning chemicals over my body. He rubbed it into my hair and dripped it into my eyes. I cannot describe the sensation; there are not the words to express the pain. My body felt as it were on fire. I was paralyzed with the intense pain that wracked my thin frame. I could not even truly scream for the extra suffering it inflicted on the flesh of my poor neck and face.

It took hours for the agonizing burning to stop, or at least decrease to tolerable levels. But the joy I felt the first time I looked in the mirror. The light pink or my skin and the blonde locks of my hair. The light gray shade of my eyes. I stepped out into the sun, my body still tingling for the doctor's treatment, and let the warmth of the sun roll over me. I walked through the crowd and felt accepted. No, more than that, I felt desired. I was not average, I was better, a handsome young man. The pain that had tortured my body only a day earlier

seemed to have been worth it. But my joy was short lived.

I spent much time in front of a looking glass. In all honesty I still do. Touching my face to test if it was real and not some beatific dream. But joy gave way to horror when the paleness returned. Slowly my face lightened to its past whiteness then grew even more pale and transparent. So pale that I could see through my skin as if it were the finest crystal. But it was not just my skin. I watched as my muscles and sinews and bones faded one after the other and before long I was looking at nothing. In a rage I shattered the mirror and attacked the traitorous chemicals that had removed me from the world. Doctor Carradine hid in fear until my rage subsided. He was shocked to witness the once docile servant of his explode. The rage of years of abuse matched with a stolen dream pushed my young mind beyond the limit. It was not the last time.

I sat in silence attempting to look at my nonexistent hands for hours. I was oblivious to the inevitable passing of time and did not notice the moonset and the sun gradually begin to rise. I did, however, notice my hand become flesh and bone again instead of a transparent ether. The doctor later explained it to me but I had already surmised what was happening. As long as the sun was in the sky I was a ruddy flesh and blood man, but once it set I would fade into a solid phantom. I begged the doctor to finish his experiment and find a way to make me normal permanently and he agreed. But he lied.

I began to experiment with my newfound bodies. At first with the unseen one I discovered the privilege of observing other and how people act when they think they are alone. I surprised myself with my actions, things

I would normally hesitate to do I did anyway without regret. I stole and burgled repeatedly. I laughingly tormented others. Later the doctor would discover why. In the meantime I also enjoyed the benefits of my charming new human face with the handsome and charismatic appearance that won the hearts of many a young maiden that I by chance I encountered in the streets. A few soft words and a gently offered flower and how they swooned for me. Ecstasy! They consumed my thoughts and how I could not follow through with my early attempts at wooing due to my being held prisoner to the waxing and waning of the sun.

The doctor quickly became secretive and ignored my queries on his progress. Eventually, fearing the worse, I crept into his study and read through his notes. To my horror I discovered the doctor was working not on a way to make me visible but a way to return me to my previous condition, the pitiful half-life I had led. The pale youth, the albino, the forgettable freak! It also described the potential side effects the chemicals might have had on my mind. He was questioning my very sanity! What little humanity his foul concoctions had left me with! After meticulously copying his notes over a fortnight I confronted the doctor with my knowledge and accused him of withholding from his aid. He retaliated by accusing me of spying and treachery. Before I knew it we were literally at each other's throats.

I sometimes wonder if the potion that cursed my being really did impair my judgment. My faculties are unhindered and my mind is as sharp and quick as ever, however the lingering doubt remains. My actions give me reason to pause and reflect, reflect of such times as the struggle. We thrashed

senselessly around his laboratory upturning tables and chemicals. Soon the room was ablaze in fire that had ignited by some unknown means. Flammable chemicals spread the blaze quickly throughout the building as I quickly fled as fast as I could. I leapt through a window cutting my arms and sides in the process. Looking behind me I could not see the doctor through the smoke of the raging inferno. Later I would return and poke through the ashes for remains for naught. All his equipment and notes had been consumed leaving only my protected copies. Incomplete at best and lacking the knowledge Carradine committed only to his innermost thoughts.

Freed from responsibility I took what valuables remains and sold them to start a new life. I discarded my old name and took up a new name, one for the new person I was. It did not take long to establish myself through careful blackmailing and theft. In the right hands information is power beyond reason. And I had the means to procure it. I wasted no time setting myself up in respectable society, buying all the proper clothing and a nice estate. Building an identity as a old relative of a respected family who had only just recently returned from foreign lands where I had been receiving the education deserving of me. Now I just have to claim everything else that I deserve.

Raine Gryphon, the Invisible Man

Male human Rog6/Exp2: CR 9; Medium-size Humanoid (human); HD 8d6+16; hp 65; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atk: +7 Melee (1d6+2; crit 18-20/x2, *rapier*) or +8 Ranged (1d10; crit 19-20/x2, *heavy crossbow*); SQ

Evasion, Invisibility (see below), Low-Light Vision, Immunities, Sneak attack: +3d6, Uncanny Dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 17

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +11 (13), Appraise +4 (6), Bluff +11 (14), Diplomacy +5 (8), Disguise +5 (8), Forgery +6 (8), Gather Information +3 (6), Hide +11 (14), Innuendo +3 (3), Jump +4 (6), Listen +5 (5), Move Silently +11 (14) Search +4 (6), Sense Motive +5 (5), Spot +5 (5), Swim +3 (5), Tumble +4 (6); Blind Fighting, Expertise, Iron Will, Power Attack.

Languages: Darkonese, Tempesti, Zherision.

Equipment: Backpack, noble's outfit, alchemy kit.

Current Sketch

Gryphon continues to live life in as grandiose a manner as he can while perusing a permanent cure for his condition. Or at least a way to control his invisibility. The few notes that he recovered are woefully incomplete and only offer a fragment of the procedure that gifted him with invisibility. He has performed a few crude tests on subjects; mostly stray animals, to test his progress with no positive results as of yet. His skills as an alchemist are highly inadequate and he is seeking someone who can aid in his research. Willingly or not.

Gryphon is also heavily concerned with his businesses and day-to-day affairs. He owns several smaller businesses and some minor property that he leases out. Currently Gryphon is primarily interested in expanding his holdings and portfolio.

Gryphon is a bright, intelligent individual that has devoted himself to become a public figure and the center of attention. During the majority of his life

he has been ignored and feared and labeled an outsider for being different. Now he considers himself normal for the first time in his life, at least during the day. He despises being ignored or being treated as if he does not matter, despite the power and potential his invisibility offers he hates the anonymity of it. Nevertheless he continues to use it to get whatever her desires. He does not view his actions as wrong; he is merely making up for an inequality in nature.

Gryphon is fond of parties and social events and often throws large balls. Over the years he has been slowly improving his social standing and reputation throughout the domain. However, Gryphon's ambitions are hindered by the fact that all his events have to end before night falls and his secret is revealed. This is coupled with the fact that Gryphon is often associated with 'new money' in the elite circles of society and labeled a young upstart. His claims to 'old blood' and a rich heritage are still questionable and tentative, something he is trying to fix.

During his life Gryphon sees himself as having been repeatedly betrayed; in his mind his parents, the villagers, the Vistani, and doctor Carradine all stabbed him in the back. As a result Gryphon is paranoid of being double-crossed. He uses his power to ensure the loyalty of his associates and habitually spies on his allies. Due in part to his upbringing and also to its ability to discover him Gryphon fears and distrusts magic. Given the rarity of mages in Paridon he does not encounter them often, but has heard tales of other lands where they are common. Likewise Gryphon is distrustful of demihumans. He has heard tales that seem see heat and fears that they may be able to see him even in the dark. He still does not know

if these tales are true, but unwilling to take the chance.

Combat

Gryphon prefers to strike quickly and suddenly in the dark before his victims know they are even under attack. He then waits until they light a torch or candle and are assured their attacker has fled before striking again. Given he cannot carry or hide a weapon he has to resort to using whatever is handy to strike, he does prefer using the victim's own weapon against them. If possible he will use poison or drugs to make the death seem natural or sabotage the area for an accidental death.

If faced by powerful foes with area-effect spells or powerful magic Gryphon is more likely to flee and attack when he has the advantage. He knows that he cannot wear armour while invisible and is venerable to being struck by a lucky blow.

While not invisible Gryphon avoids combat directly. He is more likely to summon the town constabulary or servants than fight directly. However, if pressed into a fight, such as through a duel, he will equip himself with the appropriate armor and weapons.

Invisibility (special): Gryphon's invisibility is a chemically induced supernatural ability and is unaffected by such spells as *dispel magic*. At sundown of every day Gryphon slowly fades away and is undetectable within ten minutes. The reverse happens every dawn. The invisibility only affects Gryphon and not his clothes or any items he happens to be carrying or pick up. However Gryphon's invisibility is not dispelled if he makes attacks.

As his invisibility is not truly magical in nature and manipulates the very light around him, spells that detect invisibility do not function as efficiently

against him. *See Invisible* only shows a misty outline of a figure and likewise *True Seeing* only reveals a cloudy humanoid figure. This lowers Gryphon's concealment to nine tenths or one-half cover respectively. Neither spell offers enough detail for an identification to be made other than such broad descriptions as humanoid.

Gryphon's body is photosensitive and partially absorbs and responds to the amount of light around him. When there is an unlimited amount of light he becomes visible and as the light dims he vanishes. Unnatural sources of light such as candles and lanterns off too limited a source of light to cause a reaction. Even the *Daylight* spell proves ineffective in making Gryphon visible. This photosensitivity also grants Gryphon another added ability in that his eyes absorb more light while in darkness giving him low-light vision. He can see twice as far than normal under dim conditions. A side effect of this is a mild light sensitivity. As he partially absorbs available light a sudden change in brightness may blind him. The casting of *Light* of a similar spell is too gradual but a large spark or explosion is painful. Gryphon must make a Reflex Saving

Throw (at a DC of 15) or be blinded for 1d4+1 rounds. While blinded he suffers a -2 to attack rolls, saving throws, skill and ability checks. During the day the sensitivity is lessened but Gryphon is still wary of the light. During particularly bright days he has taken to wearing darkened glasses while outside.

The potion that gave Gryphon his powers did not actually have any mental side effects. The change in his personality was a result only of the sudden lack on inhibitions and the removal of the possibility of being caught. The sudden freedom and power affected the reserved and repressed individual more than he realized. This has worsened since he discovered the potential of the treatment affecting his mind, he now has an excuse to blame his questionable actions on. The more foul deeds he commits the less responsible he feels.

Immunities: Due to his unique condition, Gryphon is immune to any attempt to magically discern his location, scrying, and any attempt to detect his thoughts or discern his alignment. No magical divination can detect his presence, whether in the present, past or future.

The March of Progress

Cultural levels in Ravenloft

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutton

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The world is an ever-changing place, caught in the ceaseless march of progress. The land and the people are never static, for forces of advancement and decay are relentless in pulling a society in either direction. As each generation comes ascendant, they bring with them the lessons learned from their forefathers, gaining and losing the wisdom of those who came before them. As the years pass the old are replaced by the young, the mind controlling the flow of society are ever changing. As a generation ages and becomes more experienced their views and philosophies change, altering their behavior.

The interactions between primitive and advanced societies stimulate change, for good and for ill. Wars, trade, entertainment and art cause changes in societies, either by making institutions stronger or weaker. Society can never remain static; it is always changing; becoming simplified or complex, open or conservative, intellectual or emotional.

A cultural level is a snap shot in time, a measure of the advancement that a society has reached. They are a series of generalizations used to describe a society, to sum up the philosophy ruling a society and the sophistication of science and technology. Civilizations at the same cultural level may still vary, there plateaus of advancement within each level and often a given society straddles two or more different levels in different areas of development.

The lands of the Demiplane of Dread represent areas taken from a multitude of worlds. Each of these areas special and unique, they contain societies at different stages of sophistication. In the years after their incorporation into Ravenloft, these societies have interacted with one another, becoming more and less advanced in certain areas. These domains still vary from one another, and can be distinguished by their cultural levels. While domains are meant to be the representation of their Lord's torment, it cannot be denied that there are living people within the domain. So long as there is time and a number of sentient beings within a domain, change is inevitable.

Cultural levels represent the themes at work in a domain, not merely the level of technology. A domain of high technological sophistication is not plagued by the same problems that hinder life in primitive domains, nor are primitive domains vexed by the ethical and moral dilemmas arising in more advanced domains. This article we will explore the different cultural levels of a society, as they relate to the people and places in that domain. Given the themes described in this article, a Dungeon Master might decide to alter the cultural levels of his campaign, either rising or lowering the level, to fit the atmosphere that he wishes to create.

Signs of the Times

Cultural levels can be differentiated by a number of criteria. These areas of development represent the most important and most visible differences that separate one society from another. The first area in which domains vary is in thought. Thought represents the theories governing the actions in the domain, the beliefs held by the people within. Thought encompasses several topics; the first is political theory, the method by which leaders are chosen and the justification that those leaders use for governing their people. The next is religious theory, the spiritual beliefs of the people and the application of those beliefs to real life.

Following this is the guiding principles of morals, ethics and laws held by society. The next topic is science and education, the methods by which people investigate the world around them and the manner in which they instruct others in that knowledge. The final area of thought is economy, the underlying principles by which people make their economic decisions.

After thought comes the second means of distinction for a cultural level, technology. Technology is expressed by a number of different means. First and most notably is the level of armor and weapon technology; the armor that protects a culture's warriors and the weapons those warriors wield. The next area of technological development is equipment, the sophistication of the tools society uses to accomplish its goals. The third area is architecture, the manner in which structures are designed and built.

The fourth level is that of transportation, the method of moving people or objects from one location to another. The fifth and final area of technological development is art and

communication, the manner in which members of society express and communicate thoughts and feelings.

Diversity

Some societies do not follow the general path of cultural evolution. A given culture might never have left the Stone Age, but rather increased the sophistication of their primitive technology to accomplish goals deemed impossible by more advanced societies.

Some societies may possess only stone and wood as tools, yet organize themselves with the sophistication of a Bronze Age people. If a culture is at a given level but does not exhibit the same themes and ideologies of that level then the DM must decide which he feels is more important in deciding the CL, technological sophistication or the theme.

Savage Culture: CL 0

This is the most basic stage in cultural advancement, the very bottom. At this stage in development there is no form of life that can be considered sentient. While they may be animals that are intelligent, perhaps even capable of being civilized or domesticated they are still trapped in the mindset of an animal. There is no mode of thought in this cultural level, evolution is the only law and those who refuse to change will inevitably vanish from the earth. The strong eat and the weak starve, the foolish are killed and the clever survive. This is the most simple and basic level, and for that reason it can continue to exist for countless millennia until circumstance causes some intelligent species to evolve and shatter the monotony.

Domain

There is no domain in the demiplane that represents this level of advancement. The Wild Lands are the closest approximation, though since the animals of this domain are capable of speech and rational thought, they can hardly be considered mindless beasts.

Stone Age: CL 1

This is the first true stage of cultural advancement. In this stage, sentient life has gained self-awareness, the ability to make complex plans as well as the intelligence to implement those plans. This results in the birth of society, and from that, a new culture. Stone age cultures are governed by primary philosophy, survival.

Thought

Individuals and families group together to form tribes. Within these tribes individuals take on roles that reflect their abilities, together they accomplish the numerous tasks required to gather food and water, raise their young and defend themselves against hazards. Leaders are chosen from those men and women who are best able to lead the tribe.

Spiritualism is a natural occurrence, intelligent beings yearn to give order to the universe as well as communicate with nature. At this stage of development spiritualism is limited to primitive spirits.

Morals and ethics are directly linked to the need to survive, whatever benefits the tribe is considered good and what ever harms the tribe is considered wrong.

Science and education are woefully undeveloped. Science is limited to experiments with wheels, mud and fire and education is limited to shared

experiences. There is no economy in a Stone Age culture, trade is accomplished with barter and exchange rates are set by the current need for the item.

Technology

Weapons are extremely primitive in early Stone Age cultures, but war like cultures quickly develop sophisticated weapons. Arrows, clubs, daggers, darts, javelins, sling stones and spears can be made from bone, flint and wood. Armor is limited to leather, hide and small wooden shields.

Equipment is significantly primitive. Metal is completely unavailable, so anything that cannot be made of bone, leather, stone or wood is unavailable. Items like flint weapons and rope require a great effort by the culture to create, as such rope is a precious commodity with which Stone Age societies are reluctant to part. Architecture is very primitive; homes are made in natural caves, piles of insulating snow, trees or in primitive huts.

Transportation is limited to tamed animals or rafts. Artistic impulses are channeled into a wide variety of crafts, ranging from wood and stone carvings, to cave paintings, to songs and rhythmic music. Language develops quickly in a Stone Age culture, though no form of writing has been developed.

Domain

An example of a Stone Age culture is the goblins living in the forests of Tepest. These goblins live in tribes deep in the shadowy forests, struggling to survive. These stoic creatures have honed their mastery of flint weapons to an art, an art unappreciated by the humans who find themselves on the receiving end.

Bronze Age: CL 2

The Bronze Age is the dawn of true civilization. In this stage a society has left the forests and jungles and begins to reshape the land to better suit its own needs. In the safety of the first cities, Bronze Age people are finally able to focus all of their efforts on cultivating a select few skills. This specialization will cause their society to be much more efficient at providing for itself, though it will generate a rift between those who's specialty is to lead and those who's role is to serve.

Though society is more efficient, survival is a struggle. Life is very uncertain and there is but a fine line separating feast from famine. As a result, the people are very fatalistic and concerned with death.

Thought

The guiding political theory of the Bronze Age is the rule of a single, hereditary leader. This ruler guides the efforts of a small number of people. Life is still simple in the Bronze Age, so this ruler can make all of the important decisions by himself. The ruler is served by a number of personal guards and advisors, who ensure that his decrees are carried throughout society.

Religion is advancing beyond the worship of spirits. Bronze Age cultures worship a plethora of Gods, sometimes paying homage to as many a single God for each individual person. In the Bronze Age man has become separate from nature, and it is believed that this separation is reflected in the afterlife. The aforementioned Gods usually take the role of administering this afterlife. To ensure passage into death, elaborate tombs are devised. The body of the deceased is considered sacred as is the property placed within a tomb.

Morality, ethics and laws become codified by the ruling religion. The Gods also have a temporal role, for the ruler usually justifies his power by associating himself with the will of the Gods. Obedience to the ruler and to Gods is considered good, while dissent and heresy is wrong. Punishments for the breaking of laws can range from slavery, to mutilation to death. Slavery is a brutal institution in the Bronze Age, slaves have no rights and may be slain by their masters without reason.

Scientific development is painfully slow. Medical knowledge advances beyond simple herbalists; in fact primitive surgery can be accomplished. Metallurgy is still beyond a Bronze Age civilization; they treasure items such as copper for its hardness and gold for its malleability. Astronomy is of great value to the people of the Bronze Age, and it is believed that through the understanding of the stars one can predict the future. Economy develops in the Bronze Age; a single important commodity is used as a standard for trade in the earlier period and the first coins are created in the latter periods.

Technology

Weapon technology is a low priority for a Bronze Age culture. Combat is ritualistic, mostly comprised of a loose confederation of men meeting at an agreed place and attacking one another until one group yields. It is only at the latter part of the Bronze Age where true armies evolve and the need for superior weapons and armor arises. Axes, daggers, flails, hammers, maces, scythes, sickles and whips can be made, though the most advanced material available for these weapons is bronze. Armor is mainly ceremonial, the advances in technology have allowed for the creation

of padded armor and the small shields known as bucklers.

Since the move to civilization, the level of sophistication in tools has increased substantially. Copper and bronze are used to create hardened tools, capable of breaking stone. Oils can be extracted from plants and animals and kilns can be used to make decorated bowls and pots. Architecture has advanced to mud brick houses, walls and huts. It is this advance that allowed the society to leave the caves and forests that once sheltered them from the elements. Transportation now includes well-made rafts, boats powered by paddles, chariots and large carts pulled by animals.

Art is developing to express the growing religious feelings of the people, as well as glorifying the society's rulers. This art is usually very conservative, static and unchanging throughout great stretches of time. The first written languages appear, though these are usually hieroglyphs that are often stylized drawings of the object to be described. This simple format makes reading simple, which is an important consideration since the citizens of the society are too busy with their work to spend time learning to read and write. Communications are tightly controlled by the ruler for parchment, papyrus, stone walls and clay tablets are the only tools for recording words and they are all too expensive for commoners to buy for themselves.

Domains

An example of a Bronze Age culture is the people of Har'Akir. The people of this land live under a theocracy, which fills the gap left by the absent God-Kings. The people of Har'Akir lead very uncertain lives; the waters of their Oasis are fickle and unstable, so the

muddy plots along the banks struggle to produce enough to support the population. As a result, everyone in Har'Akir understands the proximity of death. Death is naturally sacred to these people; the dead and their bodies are respected and protected. The people are very concerned with the afterlife, so they obey their priestly leaders without question for fear of damnation.

Iron Age: CL 3

The Iron Age evolves from the Bronze Age, only after several millennia. This is an exciting age, the struggle for survival is over and mankind has won. Advances in agriculture have made life more stable, the folk no longer fear starvation of drought, so now they can turn their attention to other matters. The people concern themselves with changing the world around them, the conquest of nature and the civilization of the savage. The people of the Iron Age are obsessed with heroic individuals, those who use human qualities like bravery, logic and reason to overcome nature. Indeed, this is the era of heroes, where mortal legends walk the earth.

Thought

The god-kings of the Bronze Age have disappeared and been replaced by relatively more humble kings. These kings are vibrant individuals that lead city-states. These kings hope to earn their people's love and respect and are happy to associate with men and women of great renown. In the Iron Age, kings, who are assisted by numerous advisors, rule the government. These kings are absolute in their power; no one who may question their decrees and no law binds them. They are responsible only to the Gods.

At this cultural level religion is becoming more refined. Gods are much more human than the Gods of old, for they are motivated by human needs and human emotions. Gods take on much more defined domains, such as war or wisdom or nature. The priests of these Gods oversee sacrifices, rituals and festivals held in these Gods names. Since life is so much more stable, the public concerns for death and the dead become much less pressing. Tombs are still well designed, but they are much less conspicuous and much less important to the spiritual afterlife.

The laws of this age are codified and published in public. Punishments run from death to slavery. Slavery in this form is different from the slavery of the Bronze Age. Slaves have a few legal rights and are treated as an indentured servant rather than actual property. Slaves often become friends with their masters and most eventually earn their freedom.

In this stable and secure culture, scientific thought blossoms. Now that man has free time, he can pursue intellectual pursuits. Logic is being perfected as are mathematics. Philosophers use both logic and math to create a theoretical picture of the world, skillfully approximating fundamental scientific constants without the use of experiments. Metallurgy is the hallmark of this age, the ability to purify iron allows civilization to create the tools it needs to remake the land and ensure a stable flow of food and water. Advances in sailed boats and clay pottery allow Iron Age cultures to send foods and other goods over long distance to trade with other civilizations. As a result, the economy is vibrant. Precious metals are exchanged as currency, which greatly speeds the exchange of goods.

Technology

With so much money flowing in and out of an Iron Age civilization, greed is bound to lead to war. Iron Age weapons are not much more advanced than those of the Bronze Age; the main difference between the two is the use of superior iron as opposed to brittle bronze. Relatively light iron is being used to create large sized shields and tower shields, as well as breast plates and helmets. New tools can be made with iron and a variety of other metals now purified by the same processes used to refine iron.

Canals, dams, and aqueducts allow the farmers of the Iron Age to bring water and nutrients to more land than before, allowing them to grow much more food than was ever possible. Architecture is making bold new leaps forward, stone is carved into ornate columns to support huge structures above them. Carpentry is becoming much more important, with iron tools to cut lumber elaborate homes can be constructed from wood. Land transportation is still limited to carts and animals, but sea travel has expanded into sailed boats called triremes and massive seagoing crafts called galleys.

Marble busts are appearing, as are statues of bronze. The walls of homes and tombs are painted in slavish detail, mimicking the real image of the subject matter. The pottery that facilitates trade becomes the medium for art; they are finely decorated with images of mythology and history. Plays and stories told in the form of prose are appearing as well. Written communication is blossoming with the creation of an alphabet. Not everyone in society can spend the time to learn to read, so those with the ability to read and write are in high demand.

Domains

The Iron Age is a short-lived period, for its progressive attitudes quickly lead the people into the Classical Age. The only domain possessing an Iron Age culture is the city of Necropolis. Necropolis has not lost their ability to forge iron, though other advances have been lost. The undead of Necropolis lead a parody of an Iron Age existence.

These creatures lack the vocal spirit of living Iron Age peoples, but they share the same feelings. The people of Necropolis are driven to expand the realm of the dead; they feel that their undead existence is the first sign of the hour of ascension. They have thrown themselves into the role and seek to claim all of Darkon for the dead. Their hero is none other than Death, the one creature who exemplifies all of the qualities of the dead. The denizens of Necropolis dream of “civilizing” the chaotic life around them.

Classical Age: CL 4

The Classical Age is the next step beyond the Iron Age. The Classical Age is the zenith of civilization, a time of unprecedented confidence where civilization has become more than was ever dreamed possible. Humanity has elevated itself to unprecedented glory, filling his civilization with wonderful beauty. The people of this culture are proud of their society and never restrain themselves from expressing the glory of their culture. Yet when a society has reached its peak, it must by definition face a future decline. The people of this culture have lost the sense of survival that drove their Iron Age ancestors, and as such, they will not be able to recognize the dangers that will befall them.

As time passes the civilization will fall into unimaginable decadence, depravity and decay. The age of heroes has long past; morals and ethics are meaningless and physical prowess is all that is respected. The decadent people enjoy nothing so much as seeing a champion fall to the next. This is an age where civilization places its trust completely into the wisdom of mortal men.

Thought

Republics are born in this age, free men are given the ability to “vote” to either directly make decisions or elect representatives to government. This is the age of the first politicians, as well as the first bureaucrats. Towards the end of the Age ambitious despots replace the republics. These despots usually accommodate some limited democracy, as well as the institutions of the former part of the Age. The culture of the Classical Age is organized into a nation or an empire.

Religion is in a serious decline. The human champions of this culture take greater precedence than the gods of old. Clerics of the old gods are respected; the common man has no use for religion. Cults arise in isolated areas, heralding the beginning of newer, more powerful gods. More often than not these cults are persecuted and ridiculed by the mainstream culture. Laws and justice in these cultures are becoming very advanced. Courts are now being used to try criminals, rather than sending men before nobles. At this age slavery is still an integral part of civilization, though as society decays the respect for slaves diminishes.

Science is advancing at a much slower rate than in the Iron Age. Medicine is advancing to service the ruling classes of society, allowing these

corpulent degenerates to indulge in hedonism for decades longer than they might have lived. The economy has grown considerably since the Iron Age; trade can be accomplished across oceans and continents. The self-indulgent despots will bankrupt the nation to immortalize their glory, after which the whole economy begins to collapse.

Technology

Warfare is very advanced at this period. Huge armies are organized and equipped with steel arms and armor. Cavalry are being perfected; saddles and stirrups compliment riders with long swords. The first professional soldiers are begging to appear, men who dedicate their lives to fighting for the glory of their civilization. Chain mail makes its first appearance, though in very limited quantities. The rank and file soldiers are equipped with short swords and spears, pikes, or javelins.

Steel is replacing iron as the metal of choice for tools, allowing them last much longer. As a consequence, they are a much wiser investment and are wider spread throughout the nation. Architecture is an integral part of the glorification of the state, so naturally it advances. Ornate columns and statuesque carvings adorn every building. The arc and dome make the construction of massive structures possible. The use of bricks in place of stone blocks allows for the creation of huge walls and elaborate fortresses. Large mansions can be built for the wealthy; the commoners live in communal urban buildings. Transportation has not expanded, though the galleys of the Iron Age have been improved upon. Roads and bridges make land travel easier; as well they allow the state to erect toll stations.

Art has expanded in small increments. Colorful arrangements of hundreds of tiny stones, known as mosaics are used to illustrate scenes from life on any surface. Communications have not expanded much, despite the introduction of paper. The written word is used almost exclusively as a means of disseminating political propaganda.

Domains

There are several domains at the same level of technology as a Classical Age culture, yet few represent the all of the cultural traits. Shri Raji is the best example of a Classical domain, for it represents a civilization just after its peak. Society is extraordinarily sophisticated, but it is decaying.

There are no republics in this domain, but the people view religion in the same light. The cults of Kali have taken power, yet the people of Shri Raji have no more respect for the Gods than any other classical culture. Natives of this domain despise the evil around them, but they are too apathetic to strike back. The people are losing faith in humanity, yet they have nothing better in which to place their trust, at least for the moment.

Dark Age: CL 5

The Dark Age comes after the fall of a classical civilization. Civilization placed all of its trust in humanity, and for its faith it has been rewarded with destruction. Natural disasters cut off travel and trade, barbaric invasion demolish the civilization or perhaps civil insurrections. Whatever the cause, the corrupt Classical civilization is too weak to survive the challenge. The economy collapses leaving individual regions to fend for themselves. The militaries that

once kept law and order vanish, leaving civilization under the law of the jungle.

The cities begin to decay, and while they remain civilized they degrade back to a more primitive state. The people of the Dark Age retain some of the most practical advances in science and culture, forsaking the decadence that plagued their ancestors. A Dark Age culture is a stoic culture; the people are interested only in practicality. Steel is still widespread, as are many of the advances in weapons, riding equipment and architecture.

A true Dark Age culture has lost faith with weak humans and placed its faith in the hands of gods. Cults that once were ridiculed and persecuted gain power in the dark corners of the nation. New religions form, creating strange and exotic pagan pantheons. Throughout the Dark Age these faiths battle for supremacy.

Thought

Politics have become extremely simple in the Dark Ages. The strong lead and the weak serve. Kings, thanes and random despots unite warriors beneath them and carve random spheres of influence. These rulers administer over peasants, who are treated as nothing more than slaves. There are no constants in religious thought in a Dark Age culture. Some areas may believe strongly in a monotheistic religion, others may partake of a cult, and still others may have degenerated into the worship of nature. These faiths are a serious issue, for faith alone drives the barbaric Dark Age people to civilization. Law and justice is a simple affair, the will of a ruler is law. The only way of enforcing the law is by the sword. Punishments are typically brutal.

Science and learning is stagnant in the Dark Age. There are no institutions

of learning left; all knowledge is passed from parent to child. The economy of the culture has collapsed, and the majority of trade is accomplished through barter. Crops are grown and sent directly to the ruler, with the farmer skimming his meager share. Slaves, also known as serfs, own nothing and earn nothing.

Technology

Technology has not decayed to same extent as civilization, but the stifled economy makes arms and armor terribly expensive. In a land few useable roads cavalry become much more important. Tools have barely changed since the classical age, though they are harder to come by. Only a ruler can afford to purchase metal implements for use by his slaves.

The architecture of the cities is in decay and the rural structures are primitive. This is not due to a lack of knowledge; rather the poor economy makes stone and brick too expensive for common use. Primitive motte-and-bailey castles are the structure of choice for the rulers of the rural areas. Homes are either small huts or large communal long houses. Galleys are no longer practical, since it is nearly impossible to gather a number of rowers to power the vessel. Instead, smaller long ships dominate trade. Barbarians in Dark Age cultures perfect the shallow bottomed long boat making transportation quick and easy by ocean and by river.

Art initially declines due to the impracticality of the past time. Communications are at an all time low; for with so much chaos and confusion over the land it is nearly impossible to send messages over great distances.

Domains

The cruel weather and the surrounding cliffs isolate the domain from more civilized cultures, making Vorostokov a perfect example of a Dark Age culture. The boyar Gregor Zolnik and his brutal minions rule this land. The people of this land are ignorant of science and technology, though they possess the secret of steel and many other advances. Faith in the domain is no issue for there are no other competing religions. Without another religion to offer contrast, the true theology of Vorostokov is undefined and unimportant.

Early Medieval: CL 6

Though the Dark Age represents a tremendous fall, it is a temporary set back. The Medieval Age arises from the labors of the stoic Dark Age people. Of the faiths battling in the Dark Age, one religion eventually finds a method of civilizing the culture again. This religion then becomes a supreme, universal religion.

Indeed, this universal religion unites the rulers and transforms the barbaric peoples into a semi-organized empire of kingdoms. The most influential leader in this Age is the chief religious leader of the dominant religion. The dominant church wipes away all other religions, offering minimal tolerance for other faiths.

Thought

The major political theory governing the Early Medieval Age is a dual government. The nobles and monarchs take on the military responsibilities of government, an important role since religious wars and forced conversion are extremely common. These nobles live under

feudalism, a system where rulers trade land to other nobles in exchange for military service. This creates a complex and convoluted web of loyalties between vassals, which results in confusion and divided loyalties.

Nobles are associated with ruling religion; in theory monarchs derive their authority by the will of the dominant god. The dominant church owns its own land and its own serfs. More over, the church is the official leader of the entire empire, serving as the only intermediary between mortals and Gods. Theology is slaved to the doctrine of the ancient past, though religious leaders have a limited ability to set new doctrine. It cannot be overstressed how tenuous are the secular bonds between early medieval kingdoms. It is the church that mediates disputes, encourages trade and organizes efforts between individual rulers.

Without the church, the society is no more organized than its Dark Age predecessor. Religious leaders tightly control the flow of theological information, since this information is the basis for all laws. The church has a court system separate from those used by the nobles, though both are unfairly biased against the poor serfs. Heresy against the dominant religion is never tolerated and always severely punished.

Scientific advancement is greatly retarded by the collapse of trade and communications. Learned scholars still labor in the cities but religious organizations are the main source of learning. Science is mostly ignored, replaced with alchemy and superstition. Craftsmen have too little free time to explore new ideas and technology; as a result new products must come from an outside source. Apothecaries, herbalists and midwives dominate medicine. In truth, these people are amateurs, relying

completely upon experience, superstition and good judgment.

The economy is ruled by Manorialism, a socio-economic system under which peasants are bound to the land of nobles. In truth, this is a formalization of the same quasi-slavery under which the Dark Age peasants lived. Serfs are bound to a low level nobleman called a lord and may never leave the land that they are allotted. Peasants pay taxes to their lord, rent the land they farm, tithe to the church and are charged for the use of mills, bridges, smithies and any other service offered. As well, each serf is required to work a number of days on the lands of the lord and may be conscripted into military service.

This is harsh deal for the serf, but in this arrangement he is guaranteed a safe and stable life. Lords make only a little profit from Manorialism, though they still live lives of luxury. Nobles, who use a terribly complex system of individual privileges to skim off of the top, carry out all taxation. This makes taxation very inefficient and keeps the nation poor. Taxes are usually collected in the form of grain, which is later bartered for gold or goods by nobles.

Technology

Arms and armor have advanced due to their increased importance to violent medieval culture. Chain mail armor becomes wide spread, as does heavier, and more rare forms of armor such as scale mail and banded mail. Long swords and lances appear to arm mounted warriors called “knights”. Infantry are armed with pole arms and armor piercing swords to counteract the mounted legions. Bows and crossbows are appearing, though the nobility as a cowardly scorns them. It will only be at the very end of this period where the

need for victory outstrips antiquated ideals.

Steel tools are cheap enough for lords to give them to their subjects. Smithies can create any tool that is not standard, but they charge high prices as well as collecting their Lord’s cut of the profits. The spinning wheel allows for the creation of a weaving cottage industry, where peasants convert raw wool into thread, and thread into finished goods. This allows serfs to make more money by which they may support themselves while making clothing and textiles much cheaper and more readily available.

Architecture is advancing to meet the needs of society. The high importance of religion is reflected in architecture. Pointed “gothic” arches appear everywhere and flying buttresses allow structures to become huge man-made caverns. The small temples of the Dark Age are replaced with inspiring churches. Castles are built of stone, allowing the lords within to fortify their lands. Homes are made of wood, a far improvement over the huts of their Dark Age forefathers. Transportation is still limited to the level of the dark ages. Small improvements have been made to long ships, which can now carry much more goods and many more soldiers. The best means of land transportation remains man’s reliable servant, the horse.

As religions become ascendant art becomes a growing outlet for faith. In these cases, art usually portrays Gods and their servants as mighty conquerors, brining order to a chaotic land. Art seeks to illustrate real life, but images tend to be flat. Nonetheless, they portray more emotions than were seen in the ages long past.

Domains

There are only a few domains that can retain this instable state, one of which is Tepest. Tepest is a land without nobles; it is merely a collection of independent settlements united only by the Church of Belenus.

The church oversees all matters that lie beyond the scope of a village elder, and retains authority within villages as well. Faith is the focus of all artistic endeavors in Tepest; active belief in the church is required of all Tepestians. Deviation from the norm is not accepted, nor is anything that can be construed as heresy. The pitiful economy of the domain is strangled by the tithes of the church, used to fund the expensive inquisition against the fey.

Late Medieval Age: CL7

The differences between the Early Medieval Age and the Late Medieval Age are subtle but important. The late medieval age is the perfected version of the early medieval age. The institutions that were created in the early medieval age have been shaped into efficient organizations. Life in this period is very stable, and though there is still war, starvation, and plagues, society has the ability to adapt and survive.

Thought

Feudalism remains the reigning political system, however by the late medieval Age it is a much more polished version. Monarchs sit at the head of intricate hierarchies of vassals. The nobles are ranked by their importance, with each noble being directly overseen by another noble of the next higher rank. This system is much more efficient and gives the Medieval society a line of succession.

The ruling religion is losing some power, since it is no longer necessary to unite the culture and must now contend with the ambitions of kings. Nonetheless, the church serves as the chief advisor to nobles, holds land, retains legal authority and is the single most important body in all the civilization. The religion is similar to a step in the noble hierarchy, albeit the highest such step. Theology is focused upon offering morals and ethics to the people, offering a guide for life as well as a vision of the afterlife.

Monasteries dedicated to theology appear and the men and women within steadily expand their studies of their god and the world he or she created. This creates a scholarly atmosphere of learning, making these monasteries islands of learning on a sea of ignorance and superstition. Despite the professional attitude, these monks are little more than historians. They do not conduct their own experiments but rather memorize the knowledge of ancient peoples and regurgitate the presuppositions of their extinct predecessors.

Manorialism remains unchanged, though certain advances make the system less effective. In some cases the taxes imposed upon peasants is converted from amounts of grain into coinage, which may backfire upon the nobles should the value of the coins drop. Monarchs enforce written agreements between peasants and nobles, entrapping short-sighted lords in a permanent and unprofitable agreement.

Technology

The late medieval age is characterized by the appearance of longbow and crossbows. The longbow will remain the weapon of choice for hunters, though its role as a weapon of

war has not yet been realized. Long composite bows are also making their debut, though they are viewed more as an experimental weapon than as a finished product. The crossbow, however, is an immediate hit among mercenaries and any lord wealthy enough to outfit a unit with the expensive weapon. The crossbow remains a rare and expensive item, but its ability to pierce solid armor and deliver massive force becomes the stuff of legend.

Armor is advancing to meet the challenges of warfare. Half plate mail is invented, giving knights a heavy armor that offers almost complete mobility. The craftsmen of the late medieval age are privilege to technology of which their forefathers could only have dreamt. Mechanical gears power the first clocks, though these are huge clocks powered by large gears. Glasswork is advanced to an art, and block printing appears to facilitate the faster production of bound books, replacing the scribes of the early medieval age and giving the wealthy nobles an amazing new luxury upon which they squander their fortunes.

Architecture advances to service the needs nobles and churchmen. The simple churches of the early medieval age are replaced with great cathedrals. Huge spires and towers appear with increasing frequency, serving as towering metaphors for man's efforts to reach the heavens. Stained glass appears in the windows of cathedrals, giving the parishioners an inspiring vision of the glory of their god.

Men and women that fail to fall into the mould of Manorialism might become wandering minstrels and poets. These "bards" sing the glory of the medieval world, intermixing the concepts of faith and "perfect love" into tales of chivalry.

Paper is becoming wide spread, proving to be an excellent material upon which the scholarly monasteries may record their theological and scientific discoveries. Indeed, these monks are reproducing countless volumes of holy texts.

Domains

A late medieval civilization is a very stable society, capable of remaining in that state for several centuries. There are many domains that remain at this stage of cultural evolution. Nova Vaasa is one such domain, though it must be recognized that the Church of the Lawgiver has much less influence than a traditional medieval church.

The people of Nova Vaasa are beaten down beneath the oppressive hand of the nobles, who have a stranglehold on the economy. Noble privileges allow these aristocrats to drain the life from trade, harshly taxing the movement of goods and making themselves wealthy in the process. The Church of the Lawgiver maintains a number of Cathedrals, taking an active role in stamping out political dissent and maintaining order.

Chivalric Age: CL 8

The chivalric age is a period of unprecedented glory and nobility. The civilization has refined the institutions of the late medieval world to create a much more efficient and powerful civilization. Like both medieval eras, the chivalric era is time of faith and devotion to the church. While the people are much more confident in the strength of humanity, they remain humble before their gods. Despite its devotion, society cannot hide its ambition. This is a period where society is driven to expand

and conquer, crushing heathens and believers alike.

The knight is the main military unit of this era. These horse-mounted warriors bear enough weapons and armor to make them into unstoppable terrors upon the field of battle. It is only after the evolution of huge units of bowmen that the knights are finally curbed. Knights hone their art through elaborate tournaments that feature jousts, sword duels, and many other forms of mock combat.

Thought

In the chivalric age Monarchs are absolute rulers. To best take advantage of the expanding economy, the chivalric age requires a strong leader. The monarchs seize the reins of power and take a much more active role in governing, taking on many of the roles traditionally left to nobles. Though the feudal hierarchy remains in place, they have drawn all the authority from the system and focused it upon themselves. The nobles derive their power from the king; serfs are the property of the king, and all land in the nation is the property of the king.

The kings of the chivalric age are free to break and rewrite law as is their will. The nobles of this time period are still powerful in their own right, but the hand of the monarch is an ever-present challenge to their authority. The ruling church may be the only body untouched by the king. This church allows the king to gain power equal to its own. The church loses some of its temporal power, its lands and serfs, but it retains the same influence it once had over monarchs and nobles. The church remains the one institution the monarch cannot intimidate.

The monasteries of the Chivalric age take the curiosities of their Late

Middle Age counterparts and intermix faith with scientific reason, creating a method of applying logic to problems of philosophy, theology and science. This method is known as scholasticism and it Scholasticism is the mode of all scientific thought in the late medieval world. Scholasticism allows the church to create institutes of education, which binds society's intellectuals to the church through indoctrination. As a consequence, science is supported by the church, but is bound by religious ideals.

Monks, priests and church educated laymen conduct real experiments, trying to reveal their god's hand in the perfection of the natural world. The first doctors begin to appear; defeating apothecaries, herbalists, and midwives with their church sanctioned degrees in medicine.

The economy of the Chivalric culture falls under the control of guilds. Craft and professional guilds are formed; creating an organization that sets the price of goods and labor. Members of this guild include apprentices, journeymen and the master craftsmen. Master craftsmen train apprentices to become journeymen, who then travel to other masters to learn the craft. The guild requires journey men to create a "master work", an item of amazing quality before they themselves can become masters and set up their own business.

Guilds allow monarchs, nobles and the church to influence the population with minimal effort. To fund the many wars fought in this time, money lending is invented. Lending money for profit, or usury, becomes an extremely profitable venture. This is the dawn of banking, and though it is slow to expand in the Chivalric age, it will explode in the Renaissance.

Technology

This is a particularly violent period of time, where kings vie with one another for power. The mounted warrior is perfected in this age, producing the chivalric knights for whom the age gains its name. These knights are protected by full plate, an armor that completely protects the warrior but conserving freedom of movement. Heavy lances and bastard swords appear, allowing these mounted warriors to pierce the armor of their enemies and deliver massive damage upon their foes. Long bows and crossbows finally gain the popularity they deserve. When in the hands of an expert, these long-range weapons are lethal, even to knights.

The first matchlock rifles appear, giving even the most inexperienced warrior the ability to penetrate armor and strike the vulnerable humans within. These weapons take a full round action to load however, like all firearms, their bullets ignore half of the armor class bonus applied by mundane and natural armor. Tool craft is highly advanced; small tools can be created to facilitate intricate work. Clockwork is appearing with greater frequency; in fact a household clock is a common feature in the house of a noble or aristocrat. Compasses appear, allowing for better navigation.

The architecture of the Chivalric Age resembles that of the medieval age, however society finds itself creating more and more elaborate structures. Bridges, aqueducts and dams are made into grand edifices of stone brick. Religious buildings are the focus of amazing architectural advances, huge domes and ornate arches support breathtaking cathedrals. The homes of rural peasants remain almost unchanged, but the castles of nobles and the

cathedrals of the church become ornate structures. Castles develop the classic appearance, with moats, drawbridges, and multiple defense walls protecting a keep.

Cities are growing to serve the needs of the wealthy nobles; a bustling town, filled with craftsmen, services most castles. The carpentry of these cities is amazing to behold, applying advanced ideas of mathematics into the structures and shaming the architects of less advanced cultures. Transportation has seen a few modest advances. There are slight improvements on horse carts and sleighs, allowing farmers and merchants to move their wares further with greater speed and efficiency. Long ships are becoming larger, allowing kingdoms to ship more goods through rivers and over seas. Sailing ships appear, allowing civilization to traverse the expanses of oceans, though these ships are extremely expensive.

Art is still a major outlet for faith, however it reflects a different view of faith. The Chivalric world is much more stable than the earlier ages, the need for a powerful orderly god has past. Gods and their servants are portrayed as more human, either more loving or just more merciful. While these religious figures are still infallible, they are more closely associated with human emotions and needs.

Poetry becomes popular even amongst the amateur nobles. In this age, worship and love become intermingled in art, making love poetry and religious poetry indistinguishable. Paintings and portraits are becoming extremely popular, since the artistic community has abandoned the antiquated ideas of flat 2 dimensional form and replaced it with a three dimensional mimicry of reality.

Domains

Borca is a fine example of a chivalric culture. Ivana Boristi is the absolute authority of Borca. The nobles and churchmen derive all of their power from Ivana, all of Borca's land is her property to be distributed by her will. Under her singular guidance Borca's economy is consistently expanding, utilizing the advances in technology to create manufactures products for sale in other domains. The crafts of Borca are run by the highly organized guilds, which allow Ivana and her minions to enforce policy throughout Borca's industries.

The Renaissance: CL 9

The Renaissance is entirely an urban movement. The advances in the chivalric age allow the population to soar, which in turn generates a massive population explosion in cities. Advances in banking and money lending draw craftspeople and merchants into the cities, turning them into crowded city-states. These city-states are easily as wealthy as large kingdoms, and with the use of professional mercenaries, equally as dangerous.

The Renaissance cities are thriving metropolises built entirely upon trade, whether that is usury or the exploitation of trade routes. Merchant families control the cities; they exercise more political and economic influence than most monarchs. These families compete fiercely for control, and though they are exceptionally wealthy they are constantly struggling to turn a profit. This is the age of "conspicuous consumption", where the rich middle class of non-noble merchants buy items of art, fashion and literature to increase their social status. Philosophy, science and works of literature are signs of

power and the source of prestige, and are thus in high demand. This is the driving force behind the Renaissance.

The Renaissance is the rebirth of civilization. Indeed, humanity has reversed all of the damage caused by the fall of the Classical civilization and created a new golden age of art, culture and science. Like the classical culture before it, a Renaissance culture puts its faith in humanity. Yet unlike the fallen classical civilization, the Renaissance tempers its confidence with faith in a God. Faith in religion is intermixed with humanism, a liberating philosophy that, to a limited extent, frees mankind from the religious dogma of the medieval age. This is an important feature, for this is an age where the growing tide of capitalism is working its way into religion.

Despite the confidence of the renaissance age, it is a time of death and disease. The urban centers that birthed the Renaissance are havens of death and disease. While the wealthy live long, healthy lives, the urban poor wallow in filth and infections. Indeed, the only thing supporting the population is the constant influx of rural peasants seeking a better life in the city.

Thought

To enter the Renaissance age a city must be both huge, and enjoy autonomy. Most often this means that the city is an independent city-state, though the capital city of a kingdom might also enjoy this status. The management of such a city is a task far too complex to be left up to a monarch, even one as powerful as a Chivalric monarch. Indeed, the needs of the city state give rise to the two political theories of the Renaissance: Republics and Despots.

In the republic system a quasi-democratic council of men is organized

to set all of the laws, policies and regulations to support the city. This “commune” is made up of wealthy merchants, men elected to their position by land owning citizens, rather than hereditary nobles. These men are chosen for their skills, ensuring that qualified leaders fill the important offices of the commune. In truth, these communes are gatherings of the leaders of the wealthiest merchant families.

The next theory is despotism. In this case, the head of the single most powerful merchant family rules as an absolute dictator. This patriarch, or matriarch, makes all laws and policies, and pays lip service to a figurehead republic.

Both forms of government fulfill the needs of the ultra-dense cities of the Renaissance. They give citizens a chance to observe government in action as well as participate in that governing. The renaissance rulers are many times more efficient than typical hereditary monarchs, for they could neither have reached nor maintained their position without extensive expertise in diplomacy, economics and politics.

The Renaissance is an age where the religion from the medieval age becomes arrogant and corrupt. No religion, no matter how devout, can help but become arrogant after so many centuries of absolute power over civilization. The unique nature of Ravenloft cuts off communication between clerics and the deities they worship. This allows priests to become self-assured and conceited. Inevitably, these priests become so self-assured that they succumb to some form of avarice. These churchmen become more like nobles than like priests, they seek personal wealth and power as well as the luxuries that those bring.

It is this corruption that has weakened the oppressive hand of the church and freed culture from antiquated doctrine. Indeed, in the depths of decadence, the church sponsors the very culture that undermines its power. The church becomes the main patron of the Renaissance, commissioning works that glorify mankind with lip service to religious undertones.

The Renaissance is a golden age of scientific discovery. The wealthy nobles, churchmen and merchants fund learned men with incurable curiosity. These scientists may be amateurs or scholars trained in scholasticism, they may be logical and methodical or they might be eccentric and irrepressible. Whatever their personality, these scientists are free of most of the barriers that held their forefathers. While they must be cautious not to openly challenge Church doctrine, they are free to explore almost every topic under the sun. Doctors open large medical schools, producing large numbers of educated men to service the growing population of wealthy patients.

Massive trade drives the Renaissance economy. Banks and private usurers offer loans to merchants, explorers and warlords, allowing them to undertake grand endeavors. The need to stimulate the economy forces explorers to drive further into the world beyond the city, to discover new resources and new customers.

Inevitably, the Renaissance culture sets up colonies outside of its own lands. These colonies are designed to extract natural resources like gold and send them back to the mother civilization, where they are bought for a pittance and greatly enrich the mother civilization. These colonies are the first of their kind, and as such they are primitive,

inefficient and entirely dependant on the mother country for support and leadership. Usually these colonies are formed through the settlement of unoccupied lands, though subjugating an indigenous people to the will of the mother country could also create such a colony.

Technology

The renaissance is the age where armor becomes obsolete. Though breastplates and other forms of protection will still be in use, they are no longer considered to be practical. Indeed, the Chivalric age has shown that armor is no match for arrows or crossbow bolts, let alone the bullet.

Firearms, for the simple reason of logistics, dominate warfare in this age. Bullets and powder are much easier to transport than bulky arrows and quarrels, making an army outfitted with muskets much easier to move than bowmen. Matchlocks still make up the bulk of the firearms in the culture, though expensive wheel lock cavalry pistols begin to appear. Horsemen are still critical to a renaissance army, though these men rarely wear more than breastplates and carry blades called sabers. Pikes and pole arms remain extremely popular as a cheap way to arm ground forces for battle against both infantry and cavalry.

The first pocket sized watches appear, allowing everyone from the middle class to nobles to own a piece of time. Telescopes and microscopes begin to appear as well. Diamond cutting technology increases, as does sewing and weaving. In fact, huge spinning and weaving machines appear, making the process of turning raw wool into a textile product a much faster process. Most importantly, the first movable type printers appear. For the first time, books

can be mass-produced at a cost low enough for anyone to buy.

Architecture in the Renaissance is as rich and elaborate as an artist's dreams. With the unlimited wealth at the hands of patrons architects are allowed to run wild and create masterpieces of marble and granite. Domes and arches are used frequently, as are giant vaulted ceilings. Columns similar to those from the Classical age make an appearance as well. Renaissance cities are wild jungles of brick and stone. The population of these cities is so dense that almost every building is some form of a residence. Apartment buildings allow dozens upon dozens of families coexist within one huge structure, utilizing the same plumbing fixtures. The Renaissance age heralds the return of plumbing, the transportation of water to and from buildings through pipes. Not since the classical age has civilization enjoyed the benefits of plumbing, though even in the Renaissance only the urban apartments and wealth manor houses can afford this luxury.

Transportation goes hand in hand with trade. By the renaissance age the sailing ship is perfected, resulting in massive vessels capable of moving hundreds of men, or many tones of goods over huge distances. This is a critical advance, since this bulk transportation is crucial to the trade that powers the Renaissance.

Free of many of the religious controls of the past, and sponsored by the permissive middle class and decadent churchmen, art explodes in the Renaissance. Art is everywhere in a Renaissance city, it is so prolific that even a commoner can afford to purchase a small trinket or two. The human form becomes the subject of intense study; human bodies are rendered in lifelike

detail in paintings, drawings, stone and metal sculpture. Portraits and other paintings are created with beautiful oil paints and preserved by exciting new methods, which promise to keep Renaissance artworks nearly immortal. The interior walls and ceilings of buildings are often decorated with original artworks. Writing and poetry are not idle in this period, indeed great works of poetry are being sponsored and written by the wealthy elite of society.

Communications are exploding with the invention of the printing press. The printed word is as cheap as water and almost as prolific. Pamphlets regarding philosophy, politics and religion circulate on the streets, causing Renaissance leaders to pass laws to limit and, to an extent, protect freedom of the press. More importantly, books are being published at an astounding rate. Books are written on every subject, disseminating Renaissance ideas at an astounding rate. Indeed, holy books are now copied and sold, allowing anyone to read the words of their God. No one can foresee the conflicts that will arise when nearly every commoner has access to the holy texts and can interpret the word of God for themselves.

Domains

The best example of a Renaissance culture in Ravenloft is Dementlieu. Dementlieu is essentially two cities; Port a-Lucine and Chateaufaux, and the inconsequential rural areas divided up between the two.

The cities are free from the tyranny of religion; indeed the local church of Ezra behaves as a patron of the arts. The wealth of Dementlieu is fluid; the nation is based upon trade rather than agriculture. The constant ebb and flow of money enriched the middle class of the domain, making spendthrift

merchants and their loose money abundant.

Art and culture in Dementlieu is unbound and flourishing beneath the permissive aristocracy. Science and medicine are similarly advanced. Indeed, Dementlieu is the envy of the core.

The government of the domain is neither despotic nor truly democratic, but a hybrid between the two systems. This unique position gives Dementlieu an amazingly efficient and reactive government, capable of passing laws and policies to counteract the quickest crisis.

Game Modifications

It should be recognized that by the Renaissance period certain elements in society have changed significantly. It might be prudent for Dungeon Masters to offer players the ability to use the aristocrat or expert as a basic player character class. Furthermore, the DM might consider using the modifications to these classes proposed in Quoth the Raven: Issue #1 in the article "Those Who Delve the Dark".

Next, in the Renaissance setting the use of the firearm has become much more common than that of more primitive weapons. Indeed, though the complicated matchlocks of the Chivalric period were unwieldy and exotic, the much more reliable wheel locks of the Renaissance are many times more easy to use. Dungeon Masters should be encouraged to give characters native to a Renaissance culture proficiency in rifles though they were martial weapons and pistols as though they were simple weapons.

Age of Absolutism: CL 10

While the Renaissance was a movement of freedom, the age of absolutism is an age of oppression. The freedoms of a Renaissance city eventually end in chaos and governmental impotence. Independent city-states inevitably prove inferior to their enemies, massive kingdoms.

The nation state truly takes shape in this era, as the land is divided between the families of kings, rather than by nobles who's allegiance might shift.

The age of absolutism is an age of constant warfare. The imperialistic desires of the monarch, coupled with the obligations to the dominant church create a drive for conquest. Absolutist nation states will throw themselves into the bloody fray, risking everything for the possibility of gaining precious land.

Thought

The political system of the time is absolutist monarchy. This monarchy differs greatly from monarchies of the past because of its emphasis on the individual power of a single monarch, rather than a hierarchy of nobles. Absolute monarchs assume all authority in their kingdom; they delegate as little power as possible and involve themselves in every matter of state. This creates an atmosphere where common born officials can advance above nobles. Indeed, the Monarch is so confident that he can afford to appoint officials according to ability, rather than loyalty.

Independent city-states and principalities are cowed to the monarch, and the kingdom becomes a true nation state. To keep the people placated and to further undermine the power of nobles, the monarch sets up a parliament where representatives from the three estates, the church, the nobility and the

commoners, can meet and advise the king.

The importance of religion resurges in the Absolutist regime. Indeed, the justification for absolutism lies in the divine right of the monarch. For this reason, absolute monarchs become enforcers of the dominant religion. The religion prospers from the power of the monarch, though they technically have lost power.

Early in this period, monarchs embroil their nations in wars of religion. Since the crown is attempting to win the trust of the church, it finds itself driven to do battle with other kingdoms over religious matters. However, as the age progresses monarchs lose this dependence, and so religion eventually becomes a political non-issue.

Scientific development is maintained at a level almost equal to that of the Renaissance. The economy of the culture is booming, so there is pressure on scientists to discover new technologies to be exploited. Science conflicts with the blind religious faith that has characterized society for millennia. Logic, reason, and experimentation conflict strongly with superstition and spirituality. Though science is struggling against the yolk of religious doctrine, the necessity of scientific discovery prevails. The eccentric curiosity of renaissance scientists is replaced with the rigid scientific method, a mode of analytical thought that eliminates personal bias and stresses experimentation.

With the increase in the monarch's power, so does his share in the wealth of the nation. The king focuses much of his attention on the economy, and the nation naturally benefits. The nation becomes specialized to produce profitable products.

The exploitation of colonies in the Renaissance is replaced with the superior Mercantilist system. In this system the colonies become more self sufficient, yet treaties with the mother country bind them. The colony is forced to send raw materials to the mother country at a cheap cost, and those materials are transformed by the mother country into finished goods, which are sold back to the colony or other nations at an inflated cost.

Technology

Arms and armor make a small leap in this age. Flintlock rifles begin to appear towards the end of the Age of Absolutism, making the unwieldy matchlocks obsolete. Bayonets appear in massive numbers, allowing musketeers to double as spearmen. As well, batteries of cannons appear in land warfare, making the castles of the Chivalric age obsolete and nearly useless. Armor is vanishing from the battlefield. Shields are gone forever, and the breastplate is on its last leg. Aside from their symbolic significance, armor is useless. Cavalry remains an important unit, but the pikes and pole arms that once countered horsemen have been discarded.

Mercenary armies are found throughout the absolutist society, allowing a nation to gather large numbers of quality soldiers at a moments notice. The trade ships crucial to shipping are pressed into military service during times of war, allowing nations to gather a huge navy without suffering the burden of paying for a standing navy.

The Agricultural Revolution characterizes the age of absolutism. This is an exciting time for farmers, because new developments in science have revealed the usefulness in advanced irrigation, land reclamation, crop

rotation and planting techniques. These new procedures have necessitated the advancement of farming and construction tools. Even a simple farmer makes use out of the tools of an architect or an artisan.

Now that cannons have made castle walls useless, the homes of noblemen become monuments of decadence and opulence. Pointed towers, adorn many castles and manor houses, and huge arches appear in bridges and other buildings. On the more common end of the spectrum, buildings are becoming much more refined. The old peasant shacks and hovels are replaced with houses of wood or brick. Windmills appear in larger numbers, making grain milling much more common and inexpensive.

To facilitate trade dams, canals and locks have been built to allow merchant barges to travel far up rivers and deliver goods. Indeed, locks allow boats to travel into the highlands and lowlands of a kingdom. Ocean shipping is becoming even more advanced. Ships are becoming bigger, armed with cannons and even armored. Horse carriages are becoming important for land travel, allowing nobles to travel in style.

Communications are expanding rapidly. Though the monarch might desire to control the media more closely, the proliferation of the printing press is too powerful a force for even an absolute monarch to control. The first newspapers begin to appear, allowing current events and political commentary to reach even the lowliest citizen.

Wealthy aristocrats, who intend to immortalize themselves sponsor art. These oil paint portraits give future generations an idealized view of these individuals, forsaking realism for beauty.

The Enlightenment: CL II

The scientists and philosophers of the Age of Absolutism open a window of thought and allow the light of reason to penetrate society and banish the darkness of superstition and ignorance. The enlightenment is the triumph of reason and humanity; it produces a brave new world filled with men and women who can freely question anything and everything in society.

“Philosophers”, the new breed of philosophers, preach enlightened ideas in the cafes and salons of society. While aristocrats and nobles struggle to stamp out the enlightenment, the movement remains popular with students, fashionable bourgeoisie and ambitious monarchs. The new ideas of philosophy, art and politics flourish in cafes and fashionable salons. The cafes are the haunts of artists, radicals and university students, and as such they are hot beds of rebellious thought. The much more moderate and acceptable salons are maintained by wealthy women and attended by the more moderate philosophers.

One of the most important elements of the enlightenment is the transformation of civilians into citizens. From the chaos of war and the economic explosion, peasants are forced to become motivated, independently minded workers and on occasion, militiamen. With these skills comes the ambition to play a role in the governing of the nation.

Thought

The Absolutist monarchs inevitably disappear. With the amazing challenges of a thriving economy, only the most outstanding monarch is fit for the challenge. Eventually a weak monarch comes to power, and one of two things

comes to pass; either the monarch willingly shares power with parliament or the nation fails and a violent revolution ensues. Either way, the nation stabilizes and becomes prepared for the challenge of the enlightenment.

In some enlightened societies the absolutist monarch becomes an “Enlightened Despot”. In many ways, this is nothing different from the absolute monarchy; say that the mandate of power comes from the rational need for a powerful, educated ruler, rather than divine right. The enlightened despot tries to spread some, but not all enlightened ideas. Amongst these ideas are codified laws, reforms to make a freer economy and increasing the legal status of peasants. These despots are assisted by parliaments, organized bodies of representatives from the different areas of the kingdom. These parliaments handle minor details and are still subject to dismissal at the monarch’s whim.

Religious tolerance is the hallmark of the Enlightenment. After the bloody religious wars of the Age of Absolutism, the foolishness of intolerance is exposed. The dominant religion loses even more secular power; by the end of this age it will be a purely spiritual organization with little or no political importance. New modes of religious thought appear in this atmosphere of tolerance.

Science and religion fought one another in the Age of Absolutism, and by the Enlightenment science has emerged as the victor. Chemistry, mathematics, engineering and every other science are advancing at an amazing pace. Universities are infected with the scientific method and produce countless scientists, who delve into the secrets of the universe with limitless courage and curiosity. Certain

enlightened despots experiment with cheap, state-run schools for the youth of the nation, creating the first “high schools”.

Medicine is free of antiquated ideas; autopsies, surgeries, transfusions, vaccines, pharmaceuticals and many more miracles of scientific medicine increase the length and quality of life.

Of the many discoveries made in this time, electricity is the most noticeable. The mystery of harnessed lightening perplexes science, and goads it forwards.

The economy of an enlightened society is vastly superior to that of the previous ages. The old barriers of trade tariffs and noble privileges are under attack; new forms of taxation appear to increase efficiency. The mercantile colonies are more important than ever, though the colonists themselves buck the oppressive limits the mother country has imposed upon them.

Technology

There is little change in the technology of weapons in the Enlightenment. Rifled barrels make an appearance, allowing bullets to be fired at greater distance and accuracy. Cannons are becoming bigger and more specialized, antipersonnel grapeshot appears as well. Armor has vanished completely from the field of battle, even as a ceremonial costume. The real advancement comes in organization. Men appointed for their skill lead armies, and the promise of advancement drives soldiers to be all that they can become. Citizen militias supplement professional armies in times of crisis.

Tools have made only a scant few advances since the age of absolutism. Theories of mathematics and physics have allowed for the creation of pendulum-powered clocks, making

timepieces inexpensive enough for even common folk to own. Hand driven machines allow tool and gun makers to mass produce items, giving them a universal form that allows for the quick exchange of spare parts.

Hot air balloons appear, giving mankind the first taste of flight. Slow and clumsy, these behemoths will spark the imagination and drive man towards the conquest of the air.

Communications are expanding as newspapers and printed books proliferate. National postal services allow for cheap communication in cities and throughout the nation. Competing with these post offices are private delivery services. These heavily armed riders carry letters, packages, cash and anything else, for the right price.

The ideas of philosophers spread by way of the written word. Plays and other forms of drama entertain the elite and the masses alike. As well, new and exciting ideas are being fostered in the medium of painting, though decadent Rocco portraits are the most prolific.

Industrial Revolution: CL 12

The enlightenment transforms the minds of civilization, but it is the arrival of the steam engine that truly changes the world. All societies require someone to accomplish labor, but after the Industrial Revolution that the burden of that labor is borne by a machine. The peasants from the enlightenment struggle to provide a better life for their children, who themselves become the businessmen of the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution takes to heart the theories of the enlightenment philosophers. Free economy, greater democracy and rational ideas are all incorporated into society.

Thought

The changes of the enlightenment are taken to the next step. Scheming parliamentarians and silvered tongued lords replace weak monarchs. While monarchs remain as figureheads and heads of state, the leaders in parliament are the true head of government. This atmosphere of freedom breeds amazing confidence in society. The economy soars with invested capital. The colonies of the nation, assuming they didn't revolt during the previous ages, are important cogs in the nation's machinery. An industrial revolution society tries to advance preexisting colonies and exploit new lands.

The laws of an Industrial Revolution Age society are enforced by a publicly funded police force, under the control of government. Judges, who oversee the arguments made by opposing councils, conduct trials. The judicial system of the Industrial Revolution is separate from the monarchy and the government. All citizens are, at least in theory, equal before the law.

As the rural regions conflict with urban industry, there are bound to be violent clashes. Civil disturbances, and even civil wars are not uncommon. As most as a concession to the rural areas, power in parliament is divided up based on region rather than population. The rural areas often have disproportionate power, creating "Rotten Boroughs", areas with little if any population that enjoy representation as great as whole cities. Corruption runs rampant in the Industrial Revolution parliament. Votes are bought with bribes and threats, and power is brokered to the highest bidder.

The disastrous conflict with science proves to be nothing more than the death rattle of organized religion. Religion is not an important part of the life in an

industrial culture; it plays no part in politics and has little sway over the thought of the time. Though while religion has lost power, it has gained the freedom to concentrate totally upon offering moral guidance to society as well as food and shelter to the needy. Though the battle between science and religion is decided, there will be numerous classes in the future.

Advancements in science are occurring at a tremendous rate. Universities are the source of every advance. The term scientist becomes synonymous with an accredited degree. The growing need for machines drives advances in metallurgy. As well, theories in chemistry, biology and mathematics are occurring with each month. This age begins with the birth of steam engine, which powers machines capable of performing more work at a faster rate than any human.

Many of the mysteries of electricity have yet to be explained. However, mankind has finally made the connection between electricity and magnetism.

The economy of an industrial culture is booming. The appearance of steam driven machines has allowed a given nation the ability to produce much more goods than it ever could have produced with purely human labor. Raw materials like wool or metal are turned into finished goods by machines. Entrepreneurs and partnerships form companies. Clever, self-motivated men can literal move from rags to riches in their life times. Banking becomes a critical element to the economy, since it is through bank loans that the businesses are created.

This booming economy has a darker side, however. The cost of the opulence of society is borne by the poorest citizens. This age is the death of the

manorialism economy. No longer do laborers and employers meet face to face. The factory owner and the factory worker are permanently separated, resulting in disputes over hours, wages and safety. Labor laws are nonexistent, as are the rights of laborers. Worse off are the rural peasants. The advances in agriculture allow a few small farms to produce the same amount of crops as the huge farms of the past. As well, the industrial economy encourages landowners to focus efforts on the production of a single crop. This makes thousands of peasants obsolete and in the way of profit. Owners enclose farmlands and cast the tenant farmers into the streets.

Technology

Advances in firearm technology occur quickly as gunsmiths devise more efficient weapons. Rifles are much more accurate, powerful and longer ranged than their ancient flintlock predecessors. The invention of the “bullet” revolutionizes firearms, finally combining cumbersome powder, wadding and other firing compounds into a single, easily loaded cartridge. Repeating rifles appear, as do shotguns, capable of firing cones of lethal steel pellets. Pistols known as revolvers appear, allowing the wielder to rapidly fire bullet after bullet without reloading. However, due to matters of cost, logistics and a lack of trust in the self-restraint of armed soldiers, armies of this cultural level still utilize single fire muzzleloader muskets. Artillery expands as well. Cannons become more accurate and longer ranged, and Gatling guns emerge.

To service the wide variety of machine in existence, mechanical tools have become much more common and sophisticated. The first wood powered steam engines appear as water pumps,

allowing for mining operations at great depths as well as allowing greater sophistication in urban sewage systems. More importantly, these steam engines power human operated machines, which can accomplish more work in a faster time than any human.

Ships continue to grow larger and more heavily armed and armored. The sailing ship remains the foundation of most trade, but steam ships are steadily overtaking them. The first, clumsy steam ships appear in the last years of the Industrial culture. Horse drawn buggies and carts are popular for both rural and urban transportation, though for peasants the reliable foot, or a horse when possible, is the transport of choice.

As this age goes on, some imaginative inventors experiment with a land based steam engine. These clunky, steam driven “locomotives” are slow and ugly, but they can pull huge trains of carts along tracks of steel, making the ox and horse carts of the past obsolete. Indeed, by the end of the age, these trains become very useful in moving people across long distances.

Communications in the industrial age are critical for the economy. Newspapers are a critical tool for the dissemination of news regarding politics, economics, religion, science and any other subject under the sun. Books are cheaper and more readily available than ever before. The first telegraphs appear in this age, utilizing the relatively new electromagnetic technology. Quick communications can be made over huge distances, fostering democracy, newspapers and all other forms of communication.

Art in the industrial age is bolstered by the confidence of the age. Novels appear as a method of pure entertainment, as well as a medium for

social commentary. Romanticism appears as a reaction to the rational enlightenment. Emphasizing emotion, the Romantic dramas and novels look back to the simple passions of the past. Nature becomes a popular subject among artists, as does the simple lifestyle of farmers. Other artists take a more intellectual look towards art and begin pioneering new methods of painting, abandoning the desire to paint realistically and experimenting with imagery.

Victorian Age: CL 13

The Victorian Age is a glorious age, where the successes of the Industrial Revolution have made a nation into an empire and elevated the middleclass citizens of the nation to a lifestyle enviable by the aristocrats of more primitive cultures.

Mankind marvels at its own glory, for no goal seems beyond its grasp. Steamships ply the oceans and coal-burning locomotives crisscross the land on ribbons of steel. So proud is society, that it is blind to the follies of its own ambition. Sooner or latter a Victorian Age society goes to war with another. A Victorian society easily crushes a primitive appointment, but against a technological equal the inevitable war becomes long, drawn out and disastrous for both sides.

Thought

The parliaments of the Industrial Age are firmly entrenched in the Victorian Age. There are numerous token reforms to the ruling political system, and the most blatant corruption from the Industrial Revolution is removed. Government settles into a moderate balance between idealistic honesty and cynical greed. The

government serves the interests of both the wealthy captains of industry and the masses, arousing the ire of neither group and retaining support from both.

Religion and science continue their eternal battle. Organized religion has become much more tolerant of other faiths, it now focuses all of its efforts upon setting morals standards for society. Now that mankind has been elevated so highly above nature, the Victorian society is encouraged to behave accordingly. Death, sex and anything else beyond the grasp of pure science are considered to be taboo. Death is hidden away from society and wrapped in the last vestiges of mysticism. Sex and other biological functions are condemned by religion and polite society, hidden away from society.

Science continues on in its golden age. Universities and colleges train scientists and technologists, both of which are in high demand. New theories emerge to describe the universe around mankind, theories which are put to the test and used to create new products.

The economy remains the most important issue to an industrial nation. The civilized nation continues to make its profits by selling its manufactured goods to less advanced nations, but a new emphasis is placed upon lending money. Victorian nations become embroiled in the disputes of smaller nations, since the capital lent to these nations represent an investment of significant economic resources. The corporate system becomes more and more important to the Victorian culture, these investments allow the middle class to save money, without draining the economy.

Labor rights often conflict with the needs of the economy. After the violent clashes in the Industrial Revolution

come the much more bloody battles between management and labor. Despite the resistance of government and the upper class, labor either organizes and makes collective bargains, or forms a socialist resistance.

Technology

Since the dawn of time man has invested his intellect to that most pressing of goals: slaying his enemies. The Victorian age sees the birth of the most deadly weapons ever seen. Advances in metallurgy and munitions allow for the creation of amazing new weapons of war. Most importantly are bolt-action rifles, efficient and long ranged weapons that replace the repeaters of the Industrial age. These rifles can be augmented with telescopic sights, which allow snipers to strike down victims like the hand of God. Semiautomatic pistols appear as a side arm, as do hand held explosives called grenades. Artillery makes a huge leap forward with field guns, mortars and the lethal machinegun. Barbed wire and landmines also make bloody debut.

Armor remains ineffective against these horrible weapons of war. The cavalry of ages past begins to vanish. Replacing it are the armored vehicles of all types.

Tools become many times more sophisticated than they were in the past. In this age of machines man finds use for a plethora of wrenches, screwdrivers, bolt cutters, and hundreds of other devices. Advances in chemistry produce electrical “batteries”, which can deliver electrical power. Towards the latter part of this age electrical power plants appear in cities. Most are powered by the burning of coal in a steam engine, though waterfalls power a few hydroelectric plants. With the appearance of cheap electricity comes a

wave of new inventions are offered to the public, including light bulbs and even ammonia refrigerators.

In this age, the first combustion engines are devised. Land machines called automobiles are seen, though in the beginning of the age they are nothing but novelty toys of rich men with too little sense to purchase a horse cart. Towards the middle of the age the automobile gains more acceptance, and by the end of the Victorian age they are appearing in every corner of the nation. Diesel engines also appear, allowing huge automobiles called trucks to lug loads almost equal to that of a train car.

The sailing ships of the past remain in the seas, though only as a novelty. Steamships grow to be huge vehicles, larger than most structures ever built by man. These steam ships can even be built into massive weapons of war. These battleships are not alone in the waters. Towards the very end of this age the technology of batteries and diesel engines, creating submersible attack boats. The U-boats terrorize the ocean, sinking enemy ships like the vengeful hand of Neptune.

Zeppelins replace hot air balloons as mankind’s leading method of air travel. These great behemoths appear in the latter half of the age and grow in popularity both as a means of transporting people and also as a weapon of war.

The final advancement in transportation is the airplane. In the middle of this age the airplane appears as a synergy between aerodynamics and internal combustion engines. These airplanes grow more and more sophisticated, though their very nature as powered flying machines their size. In the latter part of this age the airplane becomes a lethal weapon of war,

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deploying machineguns, rockets and even bombs.

Communications are influenced greatly by the recent scientific discoveries. In the early half of the age telegraph wires appear everywhere. By the middle of this age these telegraphs are replaced with a new invention known as the telephone. To increase efficiency these machines use “party lines”, allowing a small community to share a single line.

The telegraph is replaced with the wireless telegraph, a device that sends

out “radio waves”, which are detected by the mechanism and converts the signal into the same code as telegraphs. In the very end of this age the wireless evolves to the level of sophistication where sound waves can be sent back and forth.

Literature and drama continue on their way. As literacy increases through society, the market for novels and other books increases. Paintings continue to become more and more abstract; eccentric artists explore the natures of form and imagery, creating strange works that forsake realism.

Character Development

Thrill Seeker

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutton
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Character Archetype

The thrill seeker is an adventurer in the classic sense. A free spirit by nature, a thrill seeker yearns to travel, to explore, and to learn. Thrill seekers chafe on the confines a day-to-day existence, so they live every moment of their lives as though it were their last. The thrill seeker ventures out into the world looking for excitement and adventure. They thirst desperately for sensation; they seek out strange new sights, sounds, tastes and smells. Indeed, the thrill seeker is always on the move. In a world as rich and diverse as Ravenloft the thrill seeker is constantly bombarded with stimulation. Thrill seekers sail the Nocturnal Sea, go on safari in Shri Raja, trek through the wastes of the Frozen Reaches and happily tell their tales to enthralled audiences in Borcan cafes.

Background

Oddly enough, thrill seekers often come from mundane backgrounds. They grow up in the heart of monotony and are fed a diet of constancy. Sooner or latter they begin to gag on that diet. At first the thrill seeker explores his home. They climb trees, poke into cellars, and tramp through the swamps and forests and any other place that no one else has seen.

Most thrill seekers are wealthy people. Often they are noble children, born beneath an older sibling, and thus blessed with both freedom and money.

These thrill seekers travel extensively. Their fortunes allow them to spend money freely and move all over the world. The families of thrill seekers describe their black sheep as an "explorer". This is semi-legitimate profession allows thrill seekers to be accepted by the mainstream society that looks down on such irresponsibility in the aristocracy.

Other thrill seekers are poor drifters. Born in a less than wealthy family, they have no money to support their habits. Yet rather than settle down and make a living, they become drifters. These vagabonds are wanderers, trekking by foot from village to village. They make their living however they can, often as seasonal workers. Others become true adventurers, joining others of like interest and forming adventuring parties.

Personality

Thrill seekers are full of energy; every moment is like a crazy whirlwind. These characters live for the moment and throw caution to the wind. This attitude is often associated with carelessness, for thrill seekers are driven to take unnecessary risks. These characters have little patience as well. With so much curiosity pushing them forward, they rarely think before they act. Planning, research and calculations are foreign words to the Thrill Seeker, who would rather jump straight into the fray.

Actions speak louder than words, and thrill seekers say a great deal. When

they want to express a feeling, they do it through a grand gesture, the more public the better. They think with their hearts, their stomachs, and other parts of their anatomy. They are almost always joyful, glossing over sadness with a hearty laugh and a stiff drink.

Psychology

Patience, good judgment and cool heads are not to be found on a thrill seeker. Thrill seekers have a deep wanderlust; they hate to stay in one place for too long a time. Ever since childhood the thrill seeker has been looking to escape the monotony of an ordinary life. The thrill seeker desperately wants to avoid the same fate that befell his parents. Repression is the worst fate that can befall a thrill seeker because he wants to live passionately and to express all of the feelings within. When a thrill seeker becomes trapped in a mundane existence, he becomes morose and melancholy.

Patterns

Thrill seekers love to take risks. They see themselves as the ultimate gamblers; they enjoy leaving everything to chance and reacting to the resulting chaos. Wherever there is danger, thrill seekers flock. They congregate on the frontiers of civilization, but also in the dark places where people fear to tread.

Thrill seekers love to experience new sensations. They often experiment with alcohol and drugs, but also with exotic foods and beverages. Thrill seekers like to take the back roads in life. Always looking for the possibility of adventure, they happily sacrifice speed for the scenic route.

The thrill seeker joins adventuring parties to explore the world and find new experiences. They like to travel to strange and exotic places and go to

places where few men have ever seen. In Ravenloft, this often draws the thrill seeker into conflict with creatures that would rather have been found.

Role-playing

Thrill seekers are almost always joyful and outgoing. They enjoy taking risks and bragging about their accomplishments. Sometimes these people can be arrogant, the details of other people's lives often seem boring since they themselves lead such interesting lives. Thrill seekers hate responsibility, so they avoid it at all costs.

Thrill seekers are loath to research, calculate or plan ahead. This kind of preparation takes far too long and tests their patience to the fullest. Forethought takes the fun out of life, as far as the thrill seeker is concerned. It is best to let the eggheads do all the thinking.

Finally, thrill seekers hate to follow orders. It's not that they mind sharing the spot light, but rather, they don't like being told what to do. In any organization the thrill seeker is sure to make a bid for leadership. Thrill seekers like to be leaders, which comes naturally to them since they are always charging forward. They don't actively undermine the authority of others, but when the opportunity to take charge arises they pounce on it.

Classes and Prestige classes

Thrill seekers are often members of the aristocrat class, since they were raised as aristocrats. However, thrill seekers abandon this class almost immediately.

Bards and rogues are common class choices for thrill seekers. These classes give the thrill seeker the skills and abilities that complement their style.

Classes like cleric, monk and wizard are very out of character for a thrill seeker. Praying to gods requires more devotion than a thrill seeker is willing to show, and studying musty spell books is the most boring torture known to a thrill seeker. While the abilities of a monk are attractive to a thrill seeker, the harsh discipline and lawfulness contrasts too sharply with their personality.

The sorcerer class is not uncommon, since many sorcerers are homeless drifters. These sorcerers are already

possessed of the charisma that marks a thrill seeker. As well, the thrill seeker's exploration of his free spirit ties directly in with his exploration of his powers.

Suggested feats

Courage, and Open Mind are excellent feats for thrill seekers. The feat improved initiative characterizes the impulsiveness of a thrill seeker, as does lightning reflexes. Thrill seekers make excellent muses, as described by the feat, and often possess the feat nine lives.

Dr. Rudolph van Richten

A Hero through the Ages

By David Gibson aka Jester

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In all of the Demiplane of Dread, there is no hero as well known or respected than Doctor Rudolf Van Richten. No single adventurer has ever brought so much hope to the land, or banished so much evil. His name is synonymous with his three weapons: knowledge, wisdom and an indomitable will.

Yet heroes are not born, they are made. Even the great van Richten began his career as a lesser man than he eventually would become. While van Richten might always have carried a brilliant mind, he earned his wisdom and relentless spirit. The following statistics represent van Richten during the different phases of his life: as an amateur investigator, an expert hunter and, at the pinnacle of his career, the legend.

Rudolph the Amateur

Male human, Exp5/ Rog1: CR 6; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 6d6+6; hp 33; Init +3; Spd 30ft; AC 16 (+2 studded leather, +4 Dex); Atk: +5 Melee (1d6+2; crit 19-20/x2, *short sword*) or +7 Ranged (1d10; crit 19-20/x2, *heavy crossbow*); SA Sneak attack: +1d6; AL LG; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 12

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +8 (11), Craft: books +8 (11), Gather Information +8 (7), Heal +10 (12), Hide +2 (6), Intuit Direction +6 (8), Knowledge: Nature +6 (9), Knowledge: Local History +8 (11), Knowledge: Arcana +1 (4), Knowledge: Monster Lore +2 (5), Move Silently +2

(6), Profession Apothecary +10 (12), Prof: Herbalist +8 (10), Wilderness Lore +6 (8); Literacy, Skill Focus: Heal, Skill Focus: Profession: Apothecary, University Education

Languages: Balok, Darkonese, Draconic, Falkovian, Mordentish, Vaasi.

Equipment: Backpack, traveler's outfit, holy symbol, wooden stakes (short spears), and a healer's kit.

The statistics represent Rudolf Van Richten just after he first started his quest and adventures, in the period from around 706 in the Barovian Calendar. He is almost middle aged, probably just less than 35 years old since he was born in 671 BC. His hair is blonde and neatly trimmed, although it shows signs of growing sparse on top. He is a small and thin man with a crooked smile and a twinkle in his eye that still shines through his burden of grief.

He still resides in the city of Corvia in central Darkon although he has not lived there long. He moved from his ancestral home of Richten House in Rivalis after the death of his family.

Van Richten is new to his role and probably shows it. While still a force for good he has not yet published any of his guides, neither has he so much as thought of recording his experiences or methods. He is more of a doctor and a healer than the slayer of night stalkers, though he is driven to remedy that situation. In this period of his career, he is more likely to find himself in over his head than triumphant. In fact, he has yet

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to even encounter a werewolf, a golem or anything other than the Vistani or vampires.

Van Richten wages a war against evil and self-doubt. He is neither as strong nor as young as the adventurers he meets during this period. These are the formative years when van Richten realizes he cannot simply charge into the lair of the beast armed with a sword, he must arm himself with something more powerful than bravado: knowledge.

Dr. Van Richten, The Expert

Male human, Exp 5/Rog 3/Sch 2:
CR 10; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 10d6; hp 45; Init +3; Spd 30ft; AC 15 (+2 studded leather, +3 Dex); Atk: +6 Melee (1d8; crit 19-20/x2, +1 *saber*) or +9 Ranged (1d10; crit 19-20/x2, *heavy crossbow*); SA Evasion, Sneak attack: +1d6, Uncanny Dodge; AL LG; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +11; Str 11; Dex 17; Con 10; Int 18; Wis 16; Cha 14

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +8 (12), Climb +4 (4), Craft: books +8 (12), Decipher Script +4 (8), Gather Information +10 (10), Heal +10 (13), Hide +4 (7), Intuit Direction +6 (9), Knowledge: Nature +6 (10), Know: Local History +10 (14), Knowledge: Arcana +11 (15), Knowledge: Planes +5 (9), Knowledge: Monster Lore +10 (14), Know: Ravenloft +5 (9), Listen +4 (7), Move Silently +4 (7), Open Locks +4 (7), Profession: Apothecary +10 (13), Prof: Herbalist +8 (11), Ride +2 (5), Search +9 (13), Sense Motive +5 (8), Spell craft +4 (8), Spot +6 (9), Use Magical Device +5 (7), Wilderness Lore +9 (12); Literacy, Skill Focus: Heal, Skill Focus: (Knowledge: Monster Lore), Skill Focus: (Profession: Apothecary), University Education

Languages: Balok, Darkonese, Draconic, Falkovian, Mordentish, Vaasi.

Equipment: Backpack, traveler's outfit, holy symbol, a small mirror, wooden stakes (short spears), holy water vials, silver dagger, a healer's kit. He also has access to numerous books and volumes of lore, very few of which he carries at any given time. He also carries whatever items are necessary for the hunt he may currently be on.

Van Richten currently has possession of the *Crimson Obsidian Ring*, his magical saber *Plato's Legacy*, an enchanted/cursed stake *Vitae Seeker*, and just recently acquired the *Amulet of Anubis* while researching his next book.

These statistics represent van Richten during the period just after the Grand Conjunction, around 740 BC. He is a man in his old age; balding with blonde-gray hair he allows to grow long in the back. He has seen so much pain and over the years lost everyone he has ever grown close to, yet the sparkle in his eye shines as brightly as ever. The doctor currently resides in Mordentshire, the place to which he fled after discovering the true nature of Azalin Rex. When not investigating evil, he maintains a herbalist shop.

Van Richten survived his early years and inspired a new generation of monster hunters. His first text on the subject monsters, *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires*, has been continuously published since 735. Since that time he has done four more, regarding the topics of ghosts, liches, lycanthropes and the created. The guides to the ancient dead and fiends have yet to see publication. The reputation and legacy of the good doctor will be cemented through the publication of his guides.

Rudolf Van Richten, The Legend

Male human, Exp5, Rog5, Sch5:
CR 15; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 15d6-30; hp 31; Init +2; Spd 30ft; AC 14 (+2 studded leather, +2 Dex); Atk: +8/+3 Melee (1d8-1; crit 19-20/x2, +1 *saber*) or +11/+6 Ranged (1d10; crit 19-20/x2, *heavy crossbow*); SA Eldetic Memory, Evasion, Sneak attack: +3d6, True Scholar, Uncanny Dodge; AL LG; SV Fort +1, Ref +8, Will +12; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 7, Int 20, Wis 17, Cha 15

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +8 (13), Appraise +2 (7), Climb +4 (3), Craft: books +8 (13), Decipher Script +4 (9), Gather Information +15 (15), Heal +11 (14), Hide +4 (6), Intuit Direction +6 (9), Knowledge: Nature +8 (13), Know: Local History +12 (17), Know: Arcana +20 (15), Know: Planes +7 (12), Know: Monster Lore +21 (26), Know: Ravenloft +14 (19), Listen +7 (10), Move Silently +4 (6), Open Locks +4 (6), Profession: Apothecary +11 (14), Prof: Herbalist +8 (11), Ride +2 (4), Search +11 (16), Sense Motive +5 (8), Spell craft +5 (10), Spot +8 (11), Use Magical Device +5 (7), Wilderness Lore +9 (12); Library: (Know: Arcana, Monster Lore), Literacy, Skill Focus: Heal, Skill Focus: (Know: Monster Lore), Skill Focus (Prof: Apothecary), Track, University Education

Note: Monster Lore and Arcana get a +2 when Van Richten uses his Library.

Languages: Balok, Darkonese, Draconic, Falkovian, Mordentish, Vaasi.

Equipment: Backpack, traveler's outfit, holy symbol, a small mirror, wooden stakes (short spears), holy water

vials, silver dagger, a healer's kit. He also has access to numerous books and volumes of lore, very few of which he carries at any given time. He also carries whatever items are necessary for the hunt he may currently be on.

Van Richten owns the *Crimson Obsidian Ring*, his magical *saber Plato's Legacy*, an enchanted/cursed stake *Vitae Seeker*, the foreign *Amulet of Anubis*, and the doctor also took possession of the *Pocket watch of Jugend* some years ago.

This is the elder van Richten, from the period of 750BC, just before his disappearance. Age is creeping up on the renowned slayer. He is weak and lacking much of the vigor of his youth and middle years. His health has recently taken a turn for the worse and his own treatments are proving ineffective. He has lost most of his friends and his eyes carry the deep burden of sadness and survivor's guilt. His face is heavily lined with both years and the remainders of many battles and roads. His thinning gray hair is once again trimmed. If amused he still demonstrates his lopsided grin although much melancholy lurks in the expression.

He has published all of his guides and has been working on-and-off on other projects. He has been attempting to maintain some semblance of a retirement for many years and he has made peace with both life and the Radanavich clan. However there are still monsters to be vanquished and research to be accomplished. If asked for help the good doctor still might offer his aid, if only in the capacity of an advisor.

Heinrich's Curiosities

Van Richten's Lost Arsenal

By David Gibson aka Jester

David@fraternityofshadows.com

The golden rays of dusk filtered through the clouds on the horizon. With night falling the streets were being emptied. The shopping crowd was disintegrating as the dinner hour approached and the trendy streets of Port-a-Lucine were being steadily evacuated. As the sun slowly fell only one store remained open; a quaint little hovel surrounded by fancy boutiques and salons.

In the shade of the taller buildings, this edifice had rotted. The remains of a once fine boutique, the paint adorning the store was pealed with age and the windows were boarded up. Light filtered through the spaces between the boards, blocked by the occasional movement in the store.

The collector frowned as he examined the item. From behind thick spectacles, two eyes scanned the amulet. The collector has the sharp eyes of an eagle, searching for even the minutest sign of prey. But it was not field mice or sparrows those eyes sought, it was imperfection.

From the other side of the counter, Heinrich glowered. His Borcan pride was severely hurt by the man's scrutiny. Impatiently the gnarled old man butted out his crude cigarillo into a gorilla-hand ashtray. The primate paw was steadily filling with white ash. The collector looked up from the amulet for a moment, a look of displeasure carved into his face. There was only one thing that could make a collector that sour;

the item was perfect. Heinrich smiled back with rotten, yellow teeth.

"How much did you say?" Inquired the collector. From the tone it was obvious that he already knew the price. This was the first move in haggling. Heinrich glared back.

"Vive hundred corona," He spat back, his accent as thick as the smoke that filled the room. There would be no haggling this evening.

"Five hundred?" Repeated the dementlieuse collector, emphasizing the F. "That's outrageous," He laid the triangular pendant upon the counter, feigning indifference. "I won't pay it." The second attempt to negotiate roused Heinrich's ire. The old man reached out with his twisted claw and retrieved the amulet.

"Stupid boy," he scolded as he put the item back in its place beneath the glass counter. "Don't you know who last owned this amulet?" The aristocrat stifled a condescending chuckle.

"Who could make that bauble worth five hundred corona?" The old man didn't bother to hold in his mirth. He laughed out loud, hacking and wheezing when his ancient lungs ran out of breath.

Crimson Obsidian Ring

This is a small ring carved from unusually red obsidian. The naturally produced glass is typically formed from volcanoes or lightning strikes, similar in texture to the much more common black obsidian. The ring has carefully been

polished and smoothed to prevent cuts but has numerous scratches and scrapes from years of use.

History

There were only a handful of these rings crafted and only one has been known to survive the ravages of time. Legend tells that more than a century ago a brave party of adventurers was engaged in pitch battle with a powerful undead being. The melee raged for hours as the heroes' weapons all proved useless against their powerful foe. One by one they slowly fell to their lifeless foe.

At last, only two men stood to fight the lich. The party's wizard gathered the last of his energy for one final spell; he knew it would be wasted against the deathless fiend for the foe was already preparing a counter-spell. Seeing the dilemma, the group's fighter tackled his enemy and pinned him to the ground even as the lich drew the mortal's life from his body. The magic user took the opportunity to cast the conjuration and brought a powerful lightning storm down on top of both the hero and monster. Lightning hailed down from the heavens and obliterated them both.

When the smoke and debris cleared the survivors examined the crater and found the two mangled corpses. After disposing of the bodies, one of the group noticed the bottom of the crater where the bodies had lain was covered in large shards of dark red colored glass. Obsidian formed in the storm and permanently stained by the mixing blood of the two fallen. Cursed with the twisted ichor of the damned but blessed with the valiant blood of the heroic. The glass was carefully harvested and crafted into jewellery and the magic user carefully brought out the inherent power trapped inside.

Powers

The wearer of the Crimson Ring is defended against the powers of undead and their negative energies. Every month the ring defends the wearer against losing a maximum of 1d4 levels and 1d8 permanent ability score points. If the wearer chooses he can sacrifice the remaining protection of the month, provided that at least half is left, to cast Negative Energy Protection as a fifth level sorcerer. Undead suffer no ill effects from casually touching the ring, but if such a creature were to wear the ring, it prevents the use of its energy draining attacks. The ring is not cursed and can be removed at any time.

Van Richten's History

Long after those that had crafted the ring all retired or passed on, the ring was passed to other crusaders of light. Sometimes from a retiring hero to a younger one, while other were pulled from the dead hands of less successful adventurers.

In the year 736, just after the publication of his guide to vampires, a retired adventurer showed up at Doctor van Richten's home. The maimed hero presented van Richten with a small ring wrapped protectively in a rag as a gift. For many years the old adventurer had been looking for some worthy hero who needed the ring. The old hero explained the powers and creation of the ring in great detail, along with the warning that being a champion was not the occupation for the faint of heart. The doctor graciously, if suspiciously, accepted the gift. The former hero limped away slowly into the parting mist, never to be heard of again. Since then the ring has proven useful on several occasions and even saved the good doctor from almost certain death.

Platlock's Legacy

+1 Magical saber

An ornate and functional weapon forged in the style used by the elves of Sithicus. The long curved blade is stylized with leaves and vines inscribed into the blade, a closer examination will show the leaves to be wolfs bane and mistletoe. Platlock's Legacy does the standard 1d8 damage and has a threat range of 19-20 (x2). It weighs only 3 lbs, a pound less than standard sabers, given the high quality of the metal and featherweight elven make. As with all sabers it gives a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls while mounted during combat.

History: Platlock the Forsaken was a scholar and wizard in Sithicus. He was orphaned at a young age when both his elf parents were devoured by ghouls. Platlock himself was mauled and bore the scars of their attack on his face for years afterwards. At an early age the youthful elf dedicated himself to the magic arts as a means to exact revenge against the undead that plagued his people.

Over the years he grew skilled with the art and was responsible for saving many lives while also sending many undead to the world beyond. He met up with several other champions and joined with them in several crusades against the living dead. Once such hero was the elven ranger Jameld of Hroth. The two did not see eye-to-eye and both thought the other to be arrogant and cocky. Platlock often ignored the elder elf's advice on preparation and forethought. After years of a loose companionship Jameld introduced Platlock to one Rudolph van Richten, a scholar associate. Together the three journeyed for a brief time, but long

enough for Platlock to develop a firm respect for the middle aged human. The young elf respected the doctor as a fellow educated adventurer and scholar and they stayed up late in the nights discussing matters pertaining to magic and the arcane as well as the forces they fought against. When the doctor returned home to Mordentshire the pair continued their talks through written correspondence.

One night tales reached the pointed ears of the Forsaken of a large pack of ghouls infesting a local slaughterhouse. There was talk that the butcher was insane and raising them to use against his enemies or anyone he thought had wronged him. Platlock, despite the advice of Jameld, snuck into the shop solo to investigate and slay the ghouls. Platlock trusted in his elven blood to defend against paralysis and his magical skills to release the cursed souls. He was mistaken. To this day Platlock is still unsure if the butcher was a ghoul lord, a twisted necromancer, or something else. Yet whatever its true nature might have been, Platlock was sure that the supposed ghouls were in reality, ghosts, and powerful ghosts at that.

He quickly felt his flesh harden and stiffen with their blows and collapsed rigidly to the ground, all too conscious and alive as they fell hungrily on him. Eventually help arrived in the form of Jameld and several torch wielding guardsmen. Platlock's life was saved but it was too late for his legs. He would remain crippled and injured for the rest of his days. The damage done had weakened his health and Platlock was in a constant state of illness and infirmity. He would often disintegrate into prolonged coughing spasms or seizures.

The elf resigned himself to research and training the young children of rich families. Mostly in the art of reading and writing acting as a private tutor, but occasionally in some of the simpler magical skills. The elf grew bitter and angry at his fate and longed to once again fight the good fight. He did his best to train new heroes and champions but longed to be personally responsible for dispatching undead again. He would never avenge his family in a chair.

Platlock poured himself into magical research and had a special sword crafted. It cost much of his life savings to pay for the ornate and delicate weapon. Over a period of months the wizard labored placing incantations and enchantments on the blade, devoting his energy and what little power he had left into the blade. The final part of the spell proved too much for his weakened frame and he expired with the casting. He was found the next day slumped over his legacy. Detailed instructions told that it was to be delivered to Rudolph van Richten in Mordentshire.

Van Richten whole-heartedly accepted the weapon; it was the only way for Platlock to ever avenge his family and any other family. It serves as constant reminder to the doctor of what is worth fighting for but also the price of revenge and rashness.

Powers: In addition to the standard +1 enchantment bonus to attack and damage, Platlock's Legacy grants the wielder lowlight vision when unsheathed. The saber is also able to inflict critical hits upon undead, which are normally immune to critical hits. The sword also bestows a +2 enchantment bonus to fortitude saving throws to resists a ghoul's paralyzing touch.

Vitae Seeker

+1 Mutated Heart-seeker Short Spear

Vitae Seeker is a long ash short spear with a fire hardened and blackened tip. The tip shows wear and use but is as sharp and deadly as ever. It was carved from a single long branch or trunk of a tree and polished smooth. The spear used to be longer but was cut to a manageable size and a leather and bone grip added to the lower half.

History

The elite Talons of the Falkovnian army are ever vigilant against infiltrating Kargat spies or agents. Especially undead ones. Knowing the fondness Azalin has for the undead and the fact that members of the Kargat at higher echelons are often vampires (revealed after numerous grisly torture sessions), Drakov is often less than civil to any vampires who make a nuisance of themselves in his realm. Many are accused on the spot of being agents of the Kargat, brutally tortured, and summarily executed. In keeping with Drakov's preferred form of execution they are impaled on large stakes and left outside, luckily (or unfortunately) for the vampires they are instantly immobilized and only suffer for a single night before the sun rises and the burst into flames.

In order to assure the death of the captured vampires, several pikes were enchanted as heart-seekers. Several of these spears were used repeatedly and over the course of a few decades began to change. The magical blood of the undead empowered the wood; the inherent power of the blood strengthened the already enchanted weapon.

Several of the pikes were lent out during vampire hunts over the years. In the event that the blood suckers were revealed to be undead under the thrall of

Azalin. The Lich quickly stopped sending high members of the Kargat to spy, if he ever did, but vampire spawn were easy enough to dominate and create and if any survived to bring back information they would have proved their resourcefulness and skill. The Falkovnian army still continues these vampire hunts, but not every group returns.

Powers

Vitae Seeker is treated as a normal +1 Heart-seeking short spear unless it is used against a vampire. When it is held against its desired foe it becomes a +2 Keen weapon (double the threat range, 19-20/x3). Even if the spear fails to pierce the heart of a vampire, it still debilitates the undead by soaking up some of the vampire's blood. After a successful strike the vampire suffers effects as if it had not fed that day. Its powers are reduced as if it had lost an age category and suffers one negative level. The effects are immediately lifted if the vampire manages to consume 4 points of constitution (a day's worth of blood). After feeding the spear turns a dark ruddy red color for twenty-four hours, during this period its thirst is satiated and it cannot drain another day's worth of blood from a vampire.

The enchantment on Vitae Seeker also renders it immune to non-magical fires. Even against magical fires it proves resistant and its saving throws are made with a +4. See VRA for information on the Heart Seeker enchantment.

Van Richten's History

While on the trail of a powerful elder vampire, van Richten encountered rumors of a small pack of fledgling vampires outside the Falkovnian town of Stangengrad. He suspected they had

been quickly sired to slow him down from his prey, but the doctor could still not let the pack continue to exist. He turned around and headed back.

The scholar arrived at the lair several hours after an squadron of soldiers. Cautiously investigating van Richten found the two forces had crippled each other leaving several warriors barely clinging to life and several vampires retreated to their coffins to heal. In one room was a soldier gripping a short spear tightly in his dead hand where it was plunged into the cold breast of a bloodsucker. The pale undead hands tightly gripped the neck of the throttled and energy-drained soldier. The doctor dispatched the remaining vampires and prepared the corpses of the soldiers to prevent their resurrection. On leaving he took the spear the soldier had used.

Vitae Seeker posed a conundrum to the scholar once he unearthed its nature and history. He was worried about the continued exposure of it to vampire blood and possible further change or corruption. He was also worried about it falling into the wrong hands if he discarded it. Destroying it would also prove to be difficult. Instead he decided to continue to use it. If it changed at all he could dispose of it then and at least he would know what to look for if he encountered something similar, and it would be useful and save many lives in the meantime.

Amulet of Anubis

Magical Amulet

The Amulet of Anubis is a small bronze triangular pendant on a brass chain with a small silver ankh in the center of the triangle. The amulet is of a style found primarily in the Amber Wastes, particularly Har'Akir and Sebua.

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The main triangle is three inches on each side and less than a quarter on an inch thick. Its apperances dates it as centuries old, if not more, but remarkably well preserved.

History

In the ancient religion of the Amber Wasters life does not end with death, the soul leaves for the life after. However, a spirit may chose to return to the mortal plane if it so choses and requires a body to inhabit. To make sure the spirits of kings and nobels will find a vessel to inhabit if the soul requires there is an elaborate prepration made of the body, mummification. The king or nobel may also require retainers and servants in the next life so his court is often to be entombed beside him, they are given the great honor traveling onward to the next life with their lord and master. Some are less than willing to make the trip.

Construction of tombs worthy of high kings and great monarchs are often unconstructable within the lifetime of the king. He might commison the project to commence and oversee the construction, but there is no guarantee that he will live to see its construction. The grandest of tombs require generations of labour after the king's passing to complete. As a result workers and slaves are often required to work around the resting place of their departed lord and his servants. Sometimes for many years. Occasionally the occupants are less than pleased with the disturbance, and have been know to kill or assault workers. In order to protect valuable workers and eingeiners the church had several of these amulets crafted.

Since that day the secrets of making the pendants has been lost, as have all the people who owned one. Except for the few traders and explorers who come

across of the the rare surviving tailsmins. The amulets were designed as a defense against the servants of the old pharohs. As they were still honored dead it would be unthinkable to harm them or think of harming them so the tailsmen was simply used to prevent any incidents.

Powers

When worn by living creature the tailsmen shields the wearer from being detected by undead creatures. As long as the wearer remains almost completely motionless the amulet acts as the spell *Invisibility to Undead* cast by a tenth level sorcerer. Free willed undead gain the standard save to resist the effects of the amulet. If the wearer moves the amulet simply grants a +15 enchantment bonus to the hide and move silently skills against undead. Free willed and inteligent undead gain a saving throw to negate the bonus as above, but also add any bonuses gained from a high inteligence to their roll. The Amulet was designed to work on servants, not masters.

If any hostile actions or motions are made the enchantment is broken. Even as simple an act as drawing a sword immediately cancels out the effects of the amulet. Once a month the amulet can, as a special ability, turn or rebuke (depending on wearer's alignment) undead as a cleric of half the bearer of the amulet's level.

There is a hidden side to the amulet's power that few alive know about, even van Richten has yet to dicover this enchantment. The ahnk, the amulet's symbol, represents both life and death. If the Amulet of Anubis is worn by an undead its powers are reversed. The wearer effectively benefits *from Invisibility to Living* and can once a month *Turn Living*!

The final power of the amulet, useable by living or dead, is that it acts as a holy (or unholy) symbol of whatever alignment the wielder is. This effect works only if the wielder truly believes in a higher power and has faith in a deity. The belief does not have to be for a benevolent or even a real god, as long as the faith is present.

Van Richten's History

During his research for his book on Ancient Dead the doctor began a brief excursion to the desert domains in search of first hand documentation and witnesses, if not actual ancient dead. During an exploratory trip into a large tomb van Richten and his guide discovered a secret passage that had previously been missed. The well-disguised trapdoor led into a lower level of the catacomb.

Cautiously they proceeded and found a small party of workers and slaves who had been slain centuries ago by creatures unknown. They had been finishing the construction of the room when something awoke and investigated them.

Partially for fear of letting something out that was supposed to stay in and partially keep the rest of the slaves from panicking the section was quickly sealed off. Most of the group did not last long enough to asphyxiate in the chamber. One of the people trapped inside was the young son of the engineer in charge of continuing the construction. Although it broke his heart to do so the engineer had no choice but to seal his only child in, as a final desperate act the father slid the amulet in a slim hope that its magic would protect his son.

Realizing what he had the young adult slid the warding talisman on and hid in the corner as the fate befell his companions. Frantically they cried to him

for help as he closed his eyes and held his ears tightly. The torches went out as he huddled in the darkness, wedged tightly into a corner, until the screams of his friends and the movement of the unseen stopped. When all was still the youth rose in a delayed panic and ran for the door hoping he would be freed now. Attracted back by his motion the creatures in the tomb moved for him and finished their task. Centuries later van Richten found the youth, the amulet still clutched tightly in the skeletal hand, as if it could protect him from the end itself.

Pocket Watch of Jugend

Enchanted timepiece

This is a large silver watch with a polished silver chain. The face is made of crystal and platinum with gold hands. The numbers themselves are inlaid with gold. It fits easily into the palm of the hand and it requires winding once a day, but after being wound it keeps perfect time. The outer cover is decorated with a carving of the three fates: the maiden, the mother, and the crone. Each of the three figures holds an hourglass, all at varying times.

History

During his time, Hans Jugend was a rich man in Lamordia who owned many of the larger breweries in the land. His wealth helped him acquire shares in various shipping companies and farms. His beer and rye is still shipped to nearby domains and fetches a notable price. His home in Ludendorf was opulent and one of the largest in the city and there was little that he could not acquire if he desired. He was a happy and boisterous man, until his fortieth birthday that is. He reflected that there were now fewer days ahead than behind

and that most likely he would soon be dead.

He was a rich and powerful man but like every wealthy individual discovers there is no way to pay-off the Reaper. But Jugend would be damned if he was not going to look. He poured much of his wealth into cures and potions and attempts at immortality. All in vain. His traders were told to inquire for anything that could be of use while in the foreign lands. The years flickered by. Eventually Jugend was forced to sell many of his side businesses to a rivals to continue his quest. There was no lead so insubstantial that Jugend would not investigate.

It was the patron of a run down bar in Mortigny that offered the most tantalizing information. The patron claimed to be a retired adventurer who had once encountered a mystic watch that could slow or even stop time itself, for a price. It was known as the Timepiece of Klorr. Jugend then devoted much of his remaining resources, which were still quite vast, into procuring and learning all there was to know about the Timepiece of Klorr.

It was not long before rumors of the watch reached Jugend's ears and the aristocrat sent out minions to retrieve it. Anyone that got in his way was eliminated. The longer they took the more impatient he grew. However, every time his employees grew close the watch vanished without a trace or someone beat them to the scene. The hunters were repeatedly blocked and slowed down at every turn, it appeared as if someone else was hunting the Timepiece through the mists, and attempting to prevent Jugend for getting it.

Infuriated Jugend split his attention. He continued to have his men hunt for the watch but he also hired skilled craftsmen from across the core and

beyond to craft a replica of the timepiece. One designed specifically for him. Meanwhile his Adversary, as Jugend named him, continued to thwart his efforts. It appeared as if incidents involving the Adversary were growing nearer and nearer Lamordia, as if he were tracking down Jugend. The aristocrat ignored that and continued with his obsession. The years weighed heavily on him and he felt few were left.

Finally his own timepiece had been built. Jugend hired magicians and wizards to work their enchantments on the timepiece. He kept it continually on him, repeatedly pulling it out to examine it and observe the ticking of the hands. This just drove him further into his obsession as the seconds continued to tick past. But he could not help to watch the small hands flicker past. To make matters worse his timepiece did not work in the way he expected, it did not permanently stop his aging. It merely masked the signs of his age. In desperation hired more and more wizards and brought his coffers closer to emptiness.

The watch was agonizingly close to completeness when the Adversary finally tightened the noose around Jugend. Impotently the aristocrat watched as the public was turned against him and his remaining businesses seized. Facing numerous charges from the local Baron and law enforcement Jugend fled from the domain. But his Adversary anticipated his moves and pursued. He was waiting for Jugend who walked right into his trap. There was a struggle and the former rich man barely escaped with his life. Upon pausing he realized that during the melee the unfinished watch had been left behind in his forgotten jacket. In horror Jugend realized that all the works of his life had

one by one been lost or ruined. Everything he had was gone except for what little valuables he had left. The ruined man impotently rode into the misty night and realized he did have one more thing left, the desire for revenge.

Powers

The Pocket watch of Jugend reverses the ravages of time for a limited duration. The watch requires repeated winding but if it is wound backwards it begins to literally turn back the clock on the winder. The negative effects of aging to the physical stats are removed for a period of twelve hours. A middle-aged individual gains +1 to strength, constitution, and dexterity, an old individual gains +3, etc. The individual does not visibly change with the exception of the renewed vigor. Negative effects to the body such as the loss of sight or hearing are also reversed.

If after the effects take over the watch is turned back again the user regresses physically to as they were during their prime, the late teens to mid twenties. The change is seamless and restores all minor visible physical disabilities, but not severe damage such as the loss of a limb. However the cost of this regression is a reduced duration, it lasts for but six hours.

After the time has elapsed the years catch up to the user in seconds. The sudden aging leaves the user debilitated for one full day for every age category reversed. A middle-aged individual suffers for a single day while an old individual suffers for two, and so on. During this time the person receives a -2 penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and physical skills and heals at only half the normal rate!

There is a limit to this power however. The watch can only safely perform this once every year. If an

individual uses it for a second time that year after the effects wear off it permanently ages the user a year! This sudden aging also doubles the length of the debilitation period. The debilitation period has to have expired for the watch to be useable again.

The watch is unfinished and incomplete. The vital final incantations and spells were never cast on the timepiece. If it is finished the watch functions as above but has the option to transfer the extra years from repeated use to someone else. The user simply has to hold the watch with someone else when the time period expires and the victim suffers both the aging and debilitation in the user's stead. However the user still returns to their normal age. It will never completely and permanently reverse the aging process!

Van Richten's History

Not every case Doctor van Richten works on involves a monster or creature. This is one such case. During a peculiar rash of murders and assaults in a nearby city the doctor noted a pattern to the eyewitnesses' reports and the use of powers that could be deemed supernatural. The doctor decided to investigate but by the time he arrived the attacks had ceased. No sooner had he begun to pack to return home than they began anew, only with different style, targets, and modus operandi.

After several false starts and repetitions to the pattern of the murders stopping only to begin again the doctor began to speculate he was dealing with a new race or category of villain instead of the single entity he had previously assumed. After much research the doctor continued to be confused. The final death of every string almost always involved a victim that matched some of the descriptions of the killer.

Investigation into that individual often proved connections to several of the previous targets. But then the murders would start up again in a different style altogether.

It was only after comparing interviews with the final victims' associates that the pieces fell into place and van Richten realized the thing that he had been hunting was quite literally that. A thing. A cursed object. The doctor sighed and discarded his notes on a time manipulating vampire or disturbed body hopper and instead researched the Timepiece of Klorr.

The doctor began following the trail of the watch as it bounced from hand to hand and pocket to pouch. But often as he grew close he noticed other travelers asking about it; strangers that interviewed people violently or destroyed evidence after they had seen it. The doctor redoubled his efforts to find the timepiece before them and encouraged people to stay with family for their own safety after he had received useful information from them. Noticing the continued attempts of the strangers van Richten began to track them backwards while still investigating the timepiece. It took much time but eventually the good doctor traced them back to Lamordia and the 'Beer Baron' Hans Jugend.

Heading to Ludendorf, van Richten found out as many dirty secrets as he could on Jugend and proceeded to implicate the aristocrat in as many

murders and disappearances as he could. When the doctor tied Jugend to the death of the local mayor's son. The soldiers quickly moved in and seized his assets and stormed the aristocrat's house. But Jugend slipped away.

Van Richten knew that the Beer Baron would not let his obsession go so easily and guessed that Jugend would head for the place of the last known sighting of the Timepiece of Klorr. Quickly heading to the nearest inn on the route he prepared an ambush with several companions in wait for Jugend. After a brief conflict with Jugend's bodyguards the scoundrel made a break for the door. Van Richten quickly tackled the fleeing villain and firmly gripped onto his jacket. Jugend simply slid out of the garment and ran away as fast as his weakened frame could carry him. Before van Richten could catch up Jugend made it to his carriage and rode off.

Inside one of the pockets of the dropped jacket van Richten found the pocket watch. Given Jugend's obsession it was not hard to surmise its purpose and later investigation confirmed it.

Van Richten still keeps and wears Jugend's pocket watch. He knows that it is incomplete and by keeping it close he hopes to prevent its conclusion. He seldom uses it knowing full well the dangers, and saves its enchantment for desperate situations when his plans unravel and he need his youthful speed and endurance to survive or save lives.

Corners of the Core

Missaconic University

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutfon
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Missaconic University

Two miles North of Mordenshire stands Missaconic University, the foremost institution of learning in the land of Mordent. The campus is an acre cut out of the forests on the coast of the Sea of Sorrows. A single road of beaten earth divides the property in two, linking the highway to the University.

The grasses on the property are always kept neatly manicured and free of weeds. The estate also features numerous garden arrangements of local and exotic flowers. The gardens are maintained with great care and due to careful selection they are always in bloom, except for the winter season. Well-manicured shrubs border the gardens and the roadway. There is a deep pond in the Northwest corner of the property, which is a common hang-out for students. A few groves of apple trees make up the last remains of the orchard that once stood on the property.

In the Northwest corner of the property is the gardening shed and the huge glass green house that holds growing flowers and plants of all types.

The cliffs on the edge of the sea are no more than a stone's throw West of the property. Built into the cliff face is a staircase, which leads down onto a sandy beach. This long stretch of beach is mostly empty, except for the large boathouse at the bottom of the stairs. This boathouse holds a number of small sailing vessels, which are the property of

the University. Just on the edge of the cliffs, overlooking the boathouse is the two-story home of the dock master and his family.

On the south side of the property stand the homes of the professors. These houses are fine, two stories tall dwellings, except for the Dean's house that is much bigger and contains a separate dwelling for servants. The groundskeeper, stable master and their families reside in smaller homes, on the other side of the road.

The University itself is made of three buildings, the Desmarais Library, Thorneloe Hall and the Fraser building. The Desmarais library is a three story tall building, adorned with windows on every side.

The bright red brick of the building is showing some signs of graying with age. A thin covering of ivy is crawling up the South wall. The gardening staff has kept the ivy away from the main entrance on that side, as well as the windows. The library is a quiet building, with fine plaster walls to absorb sound. The floor is made of hard wood, but the second and third floors are carpeted. The first and second floor are filled with bookshelves, reference files and reading cubicles. On the second floor is a student reading room, outfitted with leather chairs and fine tables. The third floor is taken up by the Museum, a collection of various artifacts collected by the University. The basement is a cool, dry, and stone structure, broken up

by support columns. The basement is used both for storage of artifacts, as well as old records.

Thorneloe hall is the student dormitory building. The three-story edifice is made of white stone bricks and can hold almost five hundred students, with two to a room. The building contains a small library, a commons room, six classrooms, state of the art plumbing, a kitchen, an extensive storeroom and dining hall. The building is divided into two wings. The North wing is the men's dormitory, while the south wing contains the kitchen, dining room, residences for the university staff, and the dormitories for the twenty so female students. A series of dumbwaiter elevators are built into the Hall, as is a state of the art heating system. Beside Thorneloe hall is a small chapel to Ezra. A Chaplin who preaches from the lawful good sect services this chapel and lectures in the University's limited theology department.

The Fraser Building is a massive four-floor edifice of red brick. The

Fraser Building contains classrooms on the first and second floors, and laboratories on the third floor. The Fraser building is built into the hill, so there are two floors beneath the first. The first "basement" emerges out of the hill underneath the first floor. This floor contains the University infirmary, the surgical theater, and the Fraser Auditorium, a huge room built big enough to hold an audience of five hundred for a lecture, a presentation or any other function. Beneath this floor is the sub basement. The sub-basement contains the furnace room and extensive storage rooms.

Further down the road are half a dozen houses. These are fraternity houses, sponsored by wealthy families. These houses are home to roughly a hundred students in total. The buildings are mostly new, built in various years after 730. The houses are maintained by the fraternity organizations and membership is very exclusive

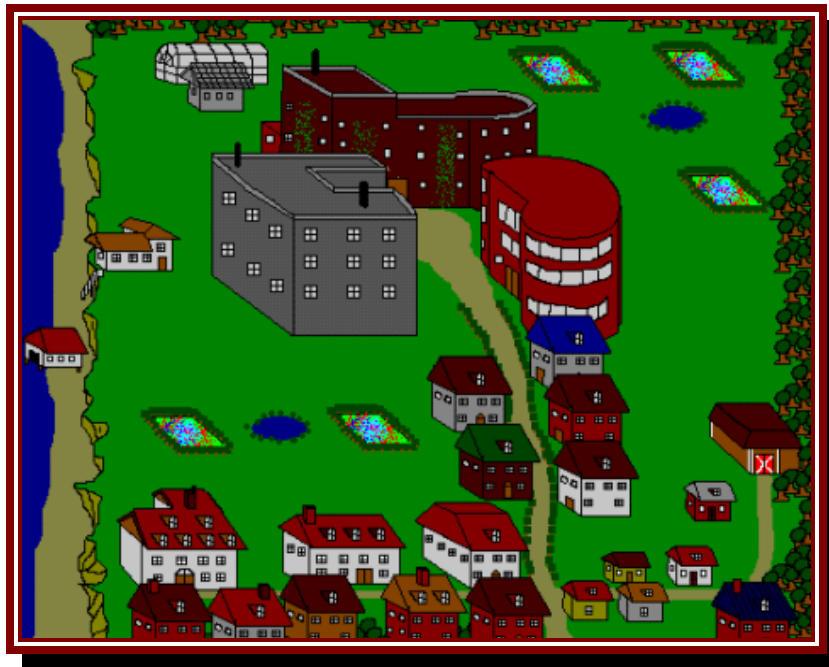


Figure 4: Missaconic University

History

The Missaconic family first moved from Darkon to Mordent in the year 650, fleeing persecution by the cult of the Overseer. Walter Missaconic first bought the property from a destitute merchant and used the land to plant an orchard. The orchard made little money, but Walter was still wealthy enough to build a fine home and send his son Harold to the university of Il Aluk. Harold was little more than an intellectual dilettante, but he was a charismatic young man and made many connections in the academic world of the Core.

Harold Missaconic inherited the orchard after a scourge of woodworms had swept the field in 679. Rather than undertake the tedious task of replanting, Harold decided to build a University. In the following years the land around Mordent changed rapidly. Lands like Lamordia and Borca emerged from the mists, showering the demiplane with educated aristocrats and intellectuals. Harold gathered a number of investors and three partners to oversee the University. Three businessmen, Francis Desmarais, Ian Fraser, and Patrick Thorneloe, put forward money and their own services as the Deans of the faculties.

Never reaching the same level of prestige as the universities at Il Aluk or Dementlieu, Missaconic University languished in relative obscurity. The University has been a haven for less than reputable professors and less than superb students. Periodically there have been murders or other scandals at the university. The controversial faculty of Medicine has always conflicted with the superstitious views of the Mordentish people, especially concerning the

dissection of human corpses. The villagers of Mordenshire have a respect for the University, but also a healthy dose of mistrust. In the 75 years it has stood, the University has suffered a disproportionate share of scandals. Murders, suicides and issues of human experimentation haunt the history of the campus.

The Missaconic family has passed the University through marriage to the current Dean, Edward Thorneloe, in the year 730. Dean Thorneloe has invested his time into increasing the prestige of Missaconic University. Unlike his Missaconic in-laws, his family is native to Mordent, and so is more trusted by the people of Mordenshire. In 735 Thorneloe invited an anchorite of Ezra to found a chapel on the campus, both to service the spiritual needs of the students and to lecture in the faculty of theology. This token gesture has helped to allay some of the fears of the superstitious villagers and foreign intellectuals of academia.

Thorneloe has seen to it that old, unflattering records of the University have disappeared and old grievances settled quietly. The scandals of the past have been covered up with bribes, extortion and lies. For the most part the strategy has worked. Already Missaconic University has become third amongst all of the institutions of learning in Ravenloft. The surviving faculty from Il Aluk's university has mostly overlooked Missaconic University, but the flood of Darkonian scholars displaced many lesser scholars, who found their way to the Missaconic campus.

Present

A new class of students is being admitted. Wealthy young people from the southern Core, who might have traveled to Dementlieu, are heading straight for Missaconic University. Most of these students are bright and curious people, overwhelmed by the academic environment. Freed from the superstition that binds their people, they plunge headlong into science, exploring the secrets of the natural world with impunity. This bold attitude can lead the occasional student into danger; the mist holds secrets that are best left undiscovered.

The Faculty

The Dean of the University is Edward Thorneloe, a white haired man passing into old age. Thorneloe is a fiercely conservative man, bent on maintaining his University's reputation. He despises the careless scientific curiosity that once characterized Missaconic, and works hard to keep the students and faculty grounded in reason. A pious man by nature, he has tried to turn Missaconic into a theological academy. However, the church of Ezra has never forgotten the old horror stories, so they are cautious in their investment. In an attempt to attract more anchorites to the campus, Thorneloe is cracking down on "immoral" behavior on campus.

The University has many different faculties. A professor from Darkon, Bunsen Honeydew, runs the Chemistry department with the help of his assistant known only as Beaker. Professor Hubert J. Farnsworth runs both the faculty of physics and mathematics, teaching the advanced knowledge from his native Paridon. The Borcan scholar Doctor

Carne operates the biology department. Carne's department shares a close relation to the School of Medicine, run by the Lamordian Doctor Bradshaw. An elderly alienist from Dementlieu, Dr. Francis Mesmer, runs the growing psychology department. Finally, the anchorite Father Gladcow lectures in the theology department.

The staff of the university is extensive, including the grounds keeper William Edborough, his brother Shamus the stable master and smith, the Dock Master Jameson Blithe. The wives and children of these men work as servants in the homes of the professors and the fraternities. An elderly Borcan janitor and several maids from Dementlieu and Mordent service the campus buildings. An fairly elderly Invidian woman named Margery Grinka runs the library with a tyranny that rivals the Dukkar's.

The staff positions of the University are filled with many of the people brought in by Thorneloe since 735. As such, they know very little about Missaconic's long history of scandal and secrets. The groundskeeper, the maids and the other staff keep their suspicions to themselves, but if pressed they will share some of the stories they have heard. There are rooms in Thorneloe hall where the maids refuse to enter after sundown, and the groundskeeper knows of some spots of earth on the property that must never be dug up. Thorneloe has threatened the staff into silence, but even he can't keep them from grumbling now and then.

Adventure Hooks

- ❖ Professor Carne has been planning to mount an specimen finding expedition to an exotic land beyond Mordent. His primary desire is to travel to the fabled Wildlands, but he might also sail to the exotic Markovia. Neither cheap nor naive, Carne is looking for some experienced hunters and some sell swords to add security.
- ❖ Dr. Mesmer is desperate to prove his theories regarding hypnotherapy, particularly his studies of the hypnotic state in dying patients. Without the support of Dean Thorneloe, Mesmer might have to

rely on less than reputable means to obtain a suitable subject.

- ❖ Dr. Bradshaw, like most physicians from Lamordia, is concerned with the lack of ethics in the medical profession. Despite his attempts to instill caution in his students, more than one young man has been caught performing experiments in the nature of life and the reanimation of dead tissues. Recently, pieces of corpses have been vanishing from cold storage. Loath to worry the Dean and the students, Bradshaw looks for some outsiders to help him discern the identity and the intentions of the thief.

Growls in the Night

A Watcher in the Woods

By Stephen "Sc8" Suffon

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The wood between Mordent and Richemulot is a place forsaken by man. The wilderness once bore the name of Jersey, an extensive clan of simple folk who eked out a meager existence in the depths of the woods. As the tale goes, the Jerseys were a solitary clan. They were a queer folk, as the Mordentish people would describe them, given to violent bouts of heavy drinking and possessed of the poorest manners. Occasionally one of their numbers would enter Mordenshire trading pelts, herbs and other oddities for strong alcohol and gunpowder.

It was clear to the Mordentish people that since the Jersey's never married into any other family, they must have been inbreeding. As well, there were rumors that the Jersey family had descended into devil worship. Enlightened folk claimed that these rumors were baseless, though some folk claimed they saw strange things moving on the edge of the forest.

After a few decades, the problem solved itself; the Jersey family disappeared altogether. No one bothered to look for the family, though travelers passing through the forest kept an eye out for any signs of the old Jersey farmsteads, purely out of curiosity.

One day a traveler emerged out of the Jersey Forest, pale as a ghost and shaken to the core of his being. The poor merchant babbled a terrifying story, that he had found the remains of a Jersey farmstead, and the remains of the Jerseys

themselves. Their skeletons had been stripped of flesh, the bones gnawed upon and their house torn apart.

In the rubble he had found the journal of one of the Jersey women, a poorly written series of scribbles that told a story of corruption and decay.

The Jersey's had indeed fallen into paganism, for after a series of poor crops, plagues and cold winters they had resorted to devil worship to save them. As insane as it seemed, it had worked. The family had survived, disease was staved off, and one of the women was even blessed with a child. Though, as the journal went on it became clear that the child was no blessing. The ultimate price for the family's survival was the birth of a child of evil.

An evil spawn of darkness was birthed to the Jerseys. A hideous abomination, neither man nor beast. The Jerseys had locked the child in the root cellar, but one night it escaped. Over the years it preyed upon the members of the Jersey clan, until it had scoured the woods of human life.

The poor traveler babbled his own part in the story. For after he discovered the ruins, he was beset upon by the devil. The hideous creature had chased him through the forest, sweeping at him with its claws and harrying him with its ungodly howl. Only by the greatest of luck did he evade the creature.

Since then, no Mordentish man has dared to set foot in the Jersey Forest for fear of meeting the Jersey Devil.

Jersey Devil

Medium sized outsider

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Hit Dice | 7d8 (49) |
| Initiative | +3 |
| Speed | 20 ft, flight 50ft |
| AC | 17 (+4 natural, +3 dex) |
| Attacks | 2 claws +7/+7 bite +5 |
| Damage | 1D4+4 claw, 1D4+4 bite |
| Face/Reach | 5 ft |
| Special Attacks | Unholy screech |
| Special Quality | Low light vision |
| Saves | Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +7 |
| Abilities | Str 18, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wiz 14, Cha 9 |
| Skills | Balance +10, Hide +10, Move silently +10, wilderness lore +8, Listen +8, Spot +8, Search +8, swim +11, animal empathy +6 |
| Feats | Fly by attack, multiattack |
| Climate/Terrain | Lake sides, rivers and swamps |
| Organization | Solitary |
| Challenge Rating | 7 |
| Treasure | None |
| Alignment | Chaotic evil |
| Advancement | By class |

The Jersey Devil is an unholy hybrid of a fiend and a human woman.

The creature was designed by its progenitor as a parody of a civilized man, though its chaotic nature makes it more like a true fiend than any cambion.

The jersey devil appears as a grotesque chimera. The creature has a head similar to that of bighorn sheep, including goatee and curling horns. The creature sprouts huge membranous wings from its back, and its feet are cloven. The devil bears claws and fangs made of black iron. The entire creature is covered in a thick black fur.

Combat

The devil does not need to eat, but it enjoys slaying humans. The creature usually shadows a lone traveler, using different methods to build up fear. Often this means making obvious noises in the night, arranging rocks and sticks in patters around the traveler's camp sight at night, or leaving the remains of former victims to be found.

When the devil is satisfied with the victim's terror, he attacks and devours the hapless human. The devil is loath to attack wild animals. For reasons unknown it has some empathy with these creatures. The creature attacks animals only in response to an attack.

The devil prefers to swoop down, make an attack and then rise just out of the opponents reach. If the devil stalks a group, he tries to use terror tactics and his unholy screech to break the group up, then tracking each one down and slaying them.

Low light vision (ex): The devil can see twice as far as a human in the dark, and distinguish colors. **Scent (ex):** The devil can track by scent, and sense enemies within 30 ft.

Scent (ex): The Jersey Devil has the ability to track by scent.

Unholy Screech (su): As a full round action the Jersey devil throws back its head and issues a hideous cry, while stamping its hooves into the ground. The sound has been described as similar to the whistle of a demonic kettle, as human is boiled alive within. Anyone within 50 ft hearing the scream must make a fear check against a DC 17.

Gregori Ambermist

Bitter Fruit from the Seed of Evil

By Shane Glodoski

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*If a tree falls in the forest,
and no one is around,
does it make a sound?*

Ask the tree yourself.

-Old Mordentish saying

Gregori Ambermist

CR 5; Size M Human/Plant (5 ft., 5 in. tall) Rgr4; HD 4d10+4 plus 2d8+4; hp 51; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural armor); Attack +4/+4 melee (1d4+1, diseased talon, right hand) and (1d6+1, sickle, left hand), or +7 ranged (1d6, throwing axe, Range 10 ft.); SA disease; SQ bark skin, plant, favored enemy (beasts), fire vulnerability, half damage from piercing, spells; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +3; AL CG; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Hide +5, Knowledge [Nature] +2, Knowledge [Religion] +2, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +7; Ambidexterity, Dodge, Power Attack, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Spells per day: (1/0/0/0)

Possessions: Silver sickle, 2 throwing axes, 4 belt pouches

Gregori appears as a squat, dark skinned man. He has long bushy brown hair and a goatee, which are actually tiny roots that sprout from his skin. These roots absorb moisture from the air as well as sunlight for nourishment. Gregori's right arm is covered in bark that ends with a hand that has sharp gnarled talons. He wears a simple

loincloth around his waist, made from his old leather armor. Gregori is always armed with two throwing axes and carries a sickle, which he hangs from his belt.

Background

Born an only child in a small town of foresters, Gregori grew to appreciate the forests. He was at odds with many of the townsfolk, including his father, for their practice of logging. He was apt to run away into the forest and sabotaging the logging effort in a vain attempt to save the wildlife.

Upon reaching adulthood, he joined a small sect of druids in their sacred grove some days travel into the woods. There he came to worship the land and learned how best to nourish it. Yet despite his devotion he failed to attain the gifts of the druids. Knowing his calling must be elsewhere, he headed into the forest for comfort. Over the years of Gregori's absence the town had grown and with it so to did the devastation to the forest. Despite the druids and his best efforts to prevent it, the forest was being mercilessly harvested. One night the villagers awoke to find their homes ablaze.

Gregori saw the smoke from his camp in the woods and he ran to the town only to find his father trapped in his burning home. Rushing in to save him, Gregori tried desperately to pull his father from the blaze, only to find his strength and endurance insufficient. The smoke had nearly brought them both to

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death's door, when Gregori's father choked his last words, commanding his son to leave him and save the town.

Escaping the blaze, Gregori found his right arm was horribly burned and useless. After the fire, the villagers wasted no time in blaming the druids for the fire. Gregori had his doubts but the pain in his body and soul was greater. As the villagers stormed toward the grove, he followed without the slightest intent of interfering.

In truth, the druids had not caused the blaze. A inebriated ale merchant, having dropped his lantern pole upon his own wares, had both started and perished in the fire. The druids pleaded their innocence, begging the mob to disperse. Gregori shouted back at the druids, retorting that they had done nothing to save it either. With that, the town people flew into a violent frenzy and attacked, burning the sacred grove and slaying the priests as they begged for mercy.

As the last druid lay dying, he pointed at Gregori and cursed him, "As you were blind to our faith, and now accept theirs, so shall you embrace both, in body and soul!"

Current Sketch

Gregori's curse has manifested itself in two ways, that of his appearance and in his ability to interact with plants and people. Any person he touches will slowly change into a shambling mound, given enough time and a significant degree of contact. While any non-intelligent plants he touches shall slowly wither and die. He brings misery to all he touches and has become as horrible a blight as any fire or reckless deforestation. Gregori has dedicated his efforts to protect nature from himself, as well as anyone with which he comes in

contact. Gregori is also haunted by the ability to hear animals and plants, though he cannot speak to them without magic. This interaction with nature gives him no comfort, for every plant and animal taunts him with deeds of his past and for his failures.

Gregori has isolated himself from the world around him, he is as unfeeling to the outside as an oak, though his heart beats with a pain that only a human could feel. When confronted with someone wielding the powers of a druid does become much more animated. Druids of any kind arose his deepest anger. Ironically, only by conquering these challenges can he alleviate his curse. To remove the curse, Gregori need only to assist a druid in some significant manner and embrace the ways of nature once more. On some level of awareness Gregori knows that this is the only way to end his suffering. However his hatred is greater than his reason and he refuses to accept this solution.

Combat

Gregori has most of the abilities of a ranger, as well as those from his plant-like gifts. In combat, he initially attacks with his throwing axes to keep enemies far enough away so that he will not infect them. When he is forced to enter melee he attacks with the talon from his right hand and the silver sickle in his left hand.

Disease (Ex): Upon a successful strike from his right hand, Gregori transfers a terrible disease. Those who fail a fortitude save against a DC of 14 begin to sprout vegetation from their flesh. For one round afterwards, for each point of damage suffered from the talon attack, the victim will sprout vines and branches from the infected area.

This has the same effect as the spell *entangle* cast by a 4th level sorcerer centered upon the victim. The only way to keep these vines and branches at bay is to burn the infected area.

After an incubation period of 1-3 days the victim changes into a shambling mound. When used upon non-intelligent plant life the disease merely slays the plant.

Bark skin (Ex): Gregori's dark tanned skin has the texture of bark, giving him a natural armor class bonus of +5.

Plant: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis,

stunning, and polymorphing. Not subject to critical hits.

Fire Vulnerability (Ex): Gregori takes double damage from fire attacks unless the attack allows a save, in which case he takes double damage on a failure and no damage on a success.

Gregori also can be turned by the presence of fire. For this event, the wielder of the fire is treated as a cleric for determining level. Gregori cannot be controlled or destroyed by this vulnerability.

Half Damage from Piercing (Ex): Piercing weapons deal only half damage to Gregori, with a minimum of 1 point of damage with each successful attack.

Okraina

As Cold as a Witch's Heart

By Dmitri Zorin

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Cultural Level: Chivalric (8).

Landscape: Full Ecology (Temperate Forests and Hills). The domain of Okraina (O-KRAI-na) is a region of rolling hills, pristine evergreen forests, small springs and the large river Volra. The animals of the domain are varied and numerous and many forests remain untouched by any man's axe. Large packs of wolves, ferocious bears and mystical "feys" keep people at bay. The job of a lumberjack is considered rather dangerous indeed. Nonetheless, the forests boast a huge variety of trees including birches, willows, ashes, oaks, spruces, maples, and pines.

The Volra River is the only route for trade. Its lazy waters carry barges with goods from the principality's towns Yargorod and Gzhansk to the three small villages on its banks, Dikanka, Sorochinka, and Vlasinovka. Farmers often open up trenches into the river, forming ponds near the fields. There is a pond system along all the length of the Volra. Small and large, overgrown with lilies these ponds make the perfect spots for locals to bathe and wash clothing. The river itself is deemed too dangerous for those activities, with all the tales regarding "vodyanois" and "rusalkas". More dangerous than myth, whirlpools sporadically appear on the river's surface and drag unwary swimmers to

the cold death. The climate of Okraina ranges in temperature from 30 degrees Celsius in summer to -30 degrees in winter. Thunderstorms are common during the spring thaw and snow can descend even in October. Blizzards are commonplace, so much so that they are believed to be sent by Chort, a fiend from local tales.

Buildings in Okraina are made of whitewashed bricks with thatched roofs and gaily-colored shutters. The houses of middle-class sport slanted roofs of wood as well as beautiful wooden figurines placed over the entryway. The homes of the nobility are less houses than they are palaces. Built of red brick, with slanted roofs of green or blue tile, these mansions feature personal shrines, stables and baths. The villages are centered around churches, usually on the hill overlooking the river. Townsfolk are crowded behind the thick walls of white stone, dwelling in houses built wall-to-the-wall along narrow streets. At the heart of either town there is an inner fortress, called a "Kremlin". It contains the palace of the local ruler as well as churches and barracks of town militia.

Major Settlements: Yargorod (pop. 12,000), Gzhansk (pop. 3,000), Dikanka (pop. 300), Sorochinka (pop. 500), Vlasinovka (pop. 250).

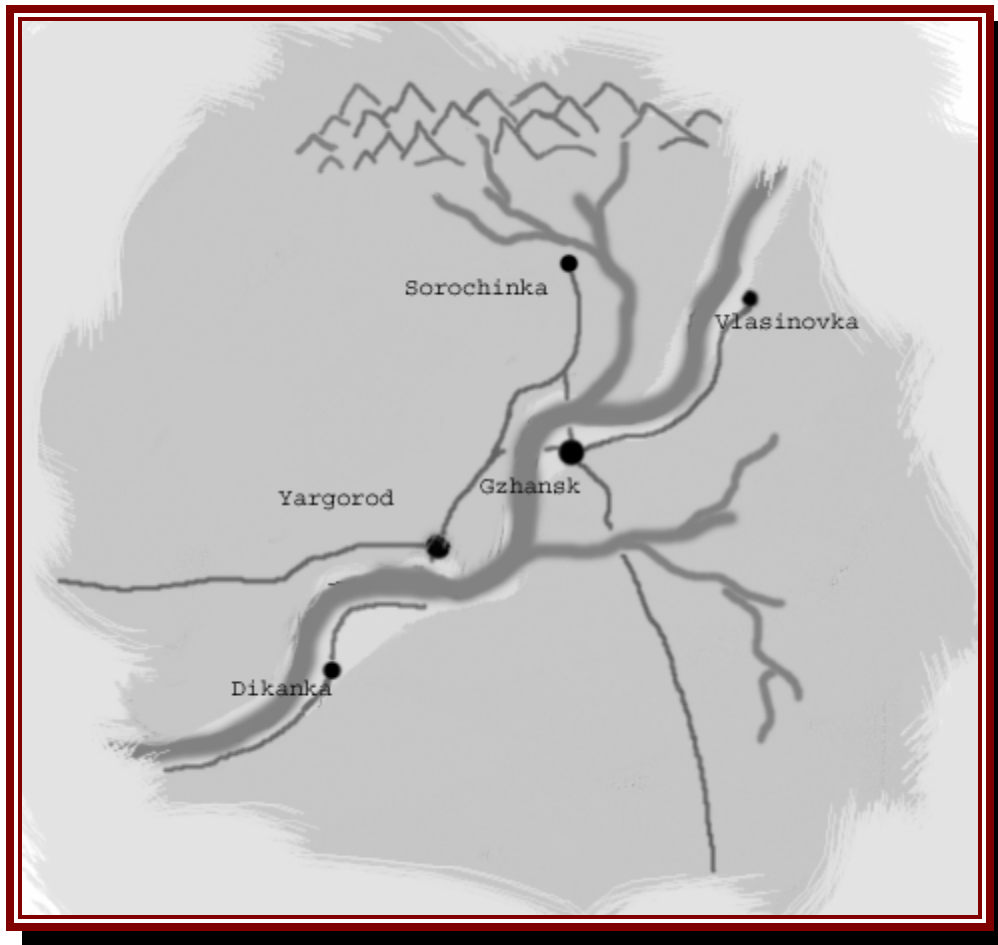


Figure 5: Okraina

The Folk: Population – 17,500. Humans 93%. Half-elves 4%. Elves 2%. Other 1%. Languages – Vaasi*. Religions – Yarilo (a.k.a. Belenus)*.

Okranians tend to be of average stature, with wide hips and large breasts among women. The hair ranges from black to light brown and eyes are usually the shades of gray or blue. The clothes among commoners tend to be simple and practical. Men wear leather trousers and jackets and women wear long skirts and blouses. On holidays white shirts with bright red embroidery are worn, as well as loose trousers with red lines on the sides and bright, multicolored skirts. Kerchiefs are common, for custom dictates that a married woman cannot

show herself in public with her head bare. The nobles always dress in splendid finery, be it holiday or not, for no purpose greater than impressing commoners. The style is generally the same, although the materials vary. Silk, satin and finely cured leather are preferred. Boyars, as local nobles are known, tend to dress in long robes that reach to the floor.

The people of Okraina are perfectly adapted to the cold climate. In fact, they enjoy the cold winters. When the river and its satellite ponds freeze over, young and old alike enjoy skating and playing with snowballs on the ice-covered Volra. The folk are never afraid to brave the night, though they only do so when it is

necessary. A peculiar custom amongst the locals is to maintain a sweathouse. In these saunas men and women alike wash at the same time, without the slightest discomfort. Bathing in the sweathouse is the most common form of hygiene practiced by the peasantry.

The natives view half-elves as people “blessed by feys”. These people are believed to be lucky and are blessed with many traits, such as the ability to discover hidden treasure. Natives rarely encounter pureblooded elves, since the sylvians prefer living in secluded communities deep in the forests. Half-elves are friendly towards strangers and possess amazing patience but once roused to anger they are as cold and merciless as a winter blizzard. Pure blood elves are much less tolerant of humans; they dislike any visitors to their communities although they won’t attack outright. Preserving the culture and lore of their declining race is the chief concern of the elves, though they do not think humans or even half-elves are capable students.

Society varies greatly in Okraina. There is no limit to the depths of poverty that the peasants can befall, while the middle class and the nobles are endlessly rich. Naturally, this breeds enmity between the social classes in the principality. Drunkenness in the peasantry is common as are civil disturbances. With nothing in their future, peasants find solace in a powerful liquor called vodka. The only god venerated in the Okraina is Yarilo, the same God worshiped under the name Belenus. His church maintains a strong grip on the populace minds and occasionally clashes with boyars and prince for the control over lands.

The Law: A hereditary aristocracy, led by Prince Vasili the Cruel, rules Okraina. Vasili resides in his palace in Yargorod and is known, as it is reflected in its name, for the severe punishments he issues to disobedient boyars and commoners alike. He has also enforced large taxes to strengthen his military, as he hopes to bully the church into releasing some of its power. In truth, a civil war is slowly brewing, as his policy met with dissent among the clerics, the boyars, and the commoners alike. Vasili himself is not evil or ruthless, though, for he has been caught in the sway of his councilor. Little is known of this advisor, but it is whispered that he is a powerful enchanter.

The law is enforced by the local boyars and the principality’s militia backs each boyar. The boyars are forbidden to retain a personal army, for ambitious boyars of the past were responsible for multiple coup-d’etats. Peasants who can’t pay rent are used as house slaves by boyars. This indentured servitude is less harsh than true slavery, for the slaves are provided with decent food and lodging and are even paid a wage. As soon as one has saved enough to pay the original debt he is freed.

Bands of rebellious peasants, highway robbers and barbaric goblins pose a serious threat outside the town walls. The clashes between them and militiamen occur with an alarming rate. Deeper in the forests, no law is enforced. Beasts, both magical and natural, occupy the forest depths. Hags, goblins, arayashkas, leshiys (as treants are known) occupy the woods, while feys like nochnicas, polevicks and poludnices dwell in hills and plains. The river and ponds hide vodianoy, aquatic remnants and drownings, which are known to the locals as rusalkas.

Trade and Diplomacy: Resources – wheat, corn, millet, barley, cabbage, potatoes, apples, water-melons, melons, sunflowers, oat, beet, hemp, chickens, cattle, fish, wine, limestone, leather goods, parchment, books, powder. Coinage – ruble (gp), polushka (sp), kopeika (cp).

As the residents have only recently discovered that they are cut off from the other parts of their former world, the domain has no trade or diplomacy connections with other nations. The natural resources of the domain allow it to sustain itself indefinitely. If no trade route is discovered soon the nobles are likely to mourn the loss of their precious silks and satins since they can't be manufactured in the Okraina itself.

Characters: Classes – Cleric, Druid, Fighter, Paladin, Ranger, Rogue, Sorcerer, and Wizard. Skills – Diplomacy, Intuit Direction, Perform (singing, balalaika), Ride, Swim, Wilderness Lore. Feats – Toughness, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms).

Adventure Hooks: The PCs enter the village Sorochnik and encounter a funeral procession. A ruckus ensues when it is discovered that the village's only priest lies in the coffin. The coffin had belonged to the body of the mayor's daughter, who was lain within the casket that mourning. The young girl herself had died under mysterious circumstances only a few days previously. The priest was new to the village and had been sent here by the Yargorod Cathedral. Strangely, the young cleric's hair is completely white. Stranger still, the mayor's daughter's body is missing.

Anna Sparafoga

Darklord of Okraina

Female human Sor 10: CR10; SZ M (5ft. 8in. tall); HD 10d4+10; hp 32; Init +7(Dex & Improved Init); Spd. 30; AC 14 (touch 14, flatfooted 11); Atk +5 melee touch (by spell) or +8 ranged touch (by spell); SA spells; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 17, Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +14, Diplomacy +12, Hide +3, Listen +3, Spot +3, Spell craft +12; Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (Enchantment), Spell Focus (Necromancy), Spell Penetration;

Sorcerer Spells per day: 6/8/7/7/6/3. Base DC=15 +spell level, 17 + spell level for Enchantment and Necromancy spells.

Sorcerer Spells known: 0- ray of frost, detect poison, daze, light, disrupt undead, detect magic, read magic, prestidigitation, resistance; 1- charm person, cause fear, ray of enfeeblement, shield, magic missile; 2- Tasha's hideous laughter, see invisibility, spectral hand, invisibility; 3- hold person, suggestion, halt undead 4- charm monster, polymorph self; 5- summon monster V;

Possessions: Chort's phylactery, kerchief of charisma +3(as cloak), ring of protection +1, ring of wizardry I.

Anna is a woman in her mid 20's, her hair is raven black and her eyes as green as a cat's. Anna prefers large skirts and loose blouses, usually wearing a black jacket over the latter. She never forgets her make-up, considering the issue of looks to be of paramount importance.

Background

Long ago on a distant world, a fiend known as Chort delighted in playing cruel tricks on people. This fiend eventually heard of an unfortunate young girl who lived with her father the village blacksmith in abject poverty.

Eager to corrupt the innocent, Chort set off to the remote village. He tempted the girl with promises of wealth, power and the influence over men she secretly craved and the two managed to strike a bargain. In return for magical powers, he would have possession over her soul after death. Chort thought he had gotten the best of the foolish girl but he would soon come to regret his bargain.

The girl was given power over magic arts and eagerly put them to her service. She began by establishing control over her father, then improving her already pretty and delicate features. During one of their frequent journeys to the regional festival, where all local merchants and craftsmen were eager to participate, she and her father encountered a village elder and the elder's wife. This meeting pushed the ambitious witch's plans further, she understood her next step should be to make this authority figure merry her, whatever the cost. Her father was against his daughter's frequent travels to the nearby village, so after an evening of loud and violent confrontation she summoned a fey creature from a nearby river to murder the unfortunate man and disposed of the body. The following day she set off to the village of her chosen would-be spouse. For several weeks thereafter she bided her time but eventually, using her natural and magical charms, she bound the elder to herself.

However, though the elder was careful to conceal his adultery from his wife, he was reluctant to marry his new

love. Yet with one act of murder committed, it was an easy task to plan another. One evening on the eve of Ivan Cupala Day, an ancient pagan holiday, when his first wife was away in the forest the sorceress and her lover were enjoying each other's affections in the elder's house. At this very moment fey creatures executed the witch's orders to find and lure her rival to the riverbank and drown her. All went according to plan and the elder gladly married Anna. However it soon became apparent that his previous wife's soul did not find rest in the afterlife, her spirit returned as ghost and haunted the couple. After the first few incidents, the witch took it upon herself to protect her recently acquired position of power and, using arcane rituals, managed to keep the ghost at bay. This ritual was required to be repeated everyday to prevent ghost from manifesting, and Anna guaranteed the loyalty of her husband.

Then an unforeseen happened. The elder's daughter from his first wife returned from her studies in the distant capital. The young lady was as old as her new stepmother, so tension arose quickly between them. Anna began to slowly poison the girl's life, first she ordered her to perform an unimaginable number of difficult household chores, having fired the serving maid. Then she started to bully the pure young lady, who was still ignorant of her stepmother's evil nature. As soon as the witch understood she couldn't bully the girl into leaving her father's house, she staged a chance encounter with her stepdaughter during the elder's absence.

The young girl, considering herself alone and deciding to alleviate her suspicions of her mother's intents, sneaked into her parents' room and started searching for anything that could

tip the scales in the favor of her theory, that her stepmother was taking advantage of her father's sickness and grief and slowly poisoning him to take his title for herself.

Suddenly, she noticed a big black cat, staring at her intently from an open door to the room. Never having encountering a cat, the girl started to back off towards the wall as it lunged at her. At the last moment the girl snatched her father's scimitar from the wall and scored a glancing blow on the cat's left paw. The cat, screeching horribly from pain, scrambled from the room.

The next day, when the family gathered around the table, the lass made a terrible discovery: her stepmother's left arm was bandaged and the blood already gathered at the edges of the cloth in some places. Not certain what to think, the girl left her home to wander in solitude on the banks of a nearby river. So great was her boggle that she didn't notice the coming of twilight. In this magical hour, when she came across a small pond near her village, she noticed several young girls playing in the water. Thinking them to be locals, she waded into the pool to join them. The feys dragged her underwater, where she was drowned. The last thing the unfortunate elder's daughter saw was her stepmother's cruel smile from the other side of the water. That night the mists enveloped the region, taking the village and the surrounding area into Domains of Dread.

Current Sketch

Each week she loses one point of charisma if she doesn't perform certain ritual. The ritual requires that she seduce a young man then ride on his back until the dawn and slay him with

the first rays of sun. Since finding fresh youngsters poses a serious problem, Anna periodically endures some cosmetic damage. She can hide her deformities with mundane cosmetics, but these are a short-term solution.

In her secluded village she can avoid unwanted attention, attention which she is sure to draw were she relocated to one of the cities. Since she depends on the ignorance of the villagers, the fear of others discovery can make her desperate. It is at these times that she is most dangerous.

The fiend Chort is unable to leave the secluded land in the mists. Incapable to bring woe to others, he is cursed to play out his frustration on the few denizens of the domain. He hates Anna for ensnaring him but he can do her no harm since she possesses his phylactery. Anna is aware of the phylactery in her possession, but she has never revealed to Chort in which item his life force resides. Since Anna's arcane abilities depend upon Chort, and since he is much more powerful than she, the witch is content to keep the phylactery a secret. Thus far this blackmail has kept Chort bound to her in an uneasy truce.

Combat

Anna avoids combat at all costs; she fears even the slightest harm to her face. When confronted with a threat she uses her spells to dominate the minds of her enemies and turn them against one another. At first opportunity she flees, and summons fey creatures to do her evil bidding. These murders are coordinated so that while the creatures are dealing with her enemies she is elsewhere, creating a perfect alibi for her were something to go wrong.

Crossroads of Gothic Earth

Mining the Demon Ore

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutton
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Sudbury

Hidden deep within the thick forests of the Canadian north is the growing mining community of Sudbury. Sudbury is roughly two hundred miles northwest of Toronto, located in "the Sudbury Basin", a huge valley cut out of the earth. The region is serviced by the Canadian Pacific Railway and is surrounded by countless lakes and creeks. The population is small, numbering only around 3000 individuals. New immigrants are arriving every day to work in the rapidly expanding mines.

In the sea of lush woodland Sudbury stands as a barren island of black rock and mounds of slag. The township is supported by the growing mining operations exploiting the amazing wealth of minerals beneath the earth. Ore is drawn from the earth and brought to the area known as Copper Cliff, where it is smelted. The smelting procedures are devastating to the environment. Huge tracts of forests are clear cut and piled into a trench known as a roasting yard. Raw ore is deposited over the wood, and the entire mix is set ablaze for days on end. The rock of the Sudbury area is so rich in sulfur that the smelted ore releases noxious fumes as it melts. The resulting cloud blankets the entire Copper Cliff area for days, leaving the rest of the Sudbury area relatively unharmed. Though the fumes dissipate, they generate acid rain, which has

scoured Sudbury of native plant life; say birch trees that thrive in the acidic soil.

The people of Sudbury are a diverse folk; the major ethnicities include Finnish, Italian, Ukrainian, German and Irish immigrants. While these immigrant communities have integrated seamlessly into society, they still congregate into ethnic areas. Exclusive social clubs like the Ukrainian Hall and the Caruso Club unite these communities and promote their culture.

The Sudbury region is sustained completely by mining. The two major Mining companies are Falcon Bridge and the International Copper Company, Inco for short. Like any industrial company, both corporations are often at odds with the miners and their attempts to organize labour. Conflicts are frequent, but are kept peaceful by the Sudbury Regional Police.

History

The Sudbury region was first used as the site for a massive lumber operation. The timber felled in the Sudbury Basin was sent down into the United States to rebuild Chicago after the disastrous fire there. Surveys carried out in 1883 by the Canadian Pacific Railway discovered the presence of copper in the rock. Initial tests confirmed copper, but the first mineshaft sunk found a much greater abundance of nickel. This proved disastrous, for nickel was a nearly worthless metal with few applications. This "demon ore" slowly rose in value as the world turned

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to mechanization. The nickel mined in Sudbury makes up four fifths of all of the nickel used in the creation of machines. In 1892 the region of Sudbury became an official township.

Forbidden Lore

Sudbury is located in the depths of North Ontario, so it seems an unlikely location for a cell of the Fellowship of the Crimson Dawn. The Fellowship took an interest in the town early in 1889. The qabal of wizard had difficulty in forging the magical items they needed for arcane research. The extreme temperatures needed to in the creation process were difficult to produce by normal means so locating their operation near the Sudbury roasting yards was a matter of convenience. The qabal owns a stake in both mining companies, allowing it unlimited access to the smelting facilities.

As the mines sunk deeper and deeper into the earth the miners began to uncover deposits of a strange mineral. Though the unusual metal baffled assayers, the Fellowship immediately recognized the mineral as mithral. Since then the Fellowship has taken an obsessive interest in the mines of Sudbury. Mithral is a precious tool to the Fellowship of the Crimson Dawn and they do not wish to let so much as a sliver escape their grasp.

Sudbury is an isolated town in the middle of the forests of Northern Ontario. In the deep shadows of the forests dark things lurk. Like most areas of Canada, Sudbury's winters are fierce. Blizzards and flurries cut off all escape from the town by mid December, ending the siege only in March. Townsfolk are known to go missing in the winter white outs and few bodies are to be found in the thaw. Some people whisper that dark shapes move about in the midnight snow, calling out with voices that sound like the whipping wind.

Secrets and Sorcery

The Brotherhood of Alchamae

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutton
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The members of the Brotherhood of Alchamae are on a quest for knowledge. The goal of the brotherhood is to facilitate the expansion of mankind's understanding of the universe. To this end, the brotherhood believes that there are no secrets that mankind does not deserve to know and that no knowledge, no matter how profound, can be allowed to stay hidden. The Brotherhood is undisturbed by such frivolous ideas like culture or religion, for such concepts only serve to cloud the mind. As well, the Brotherhood is unconcerned with educating the rest of mankind, for most members view the rest of their species as an ignorant swarm of primates. They believe that knowledge belongs only to a select few, those who are prepared to make sacrifices.

History

While the members of the brotherhood are meticulous in recording their scientific and arcane knowledge, they are less than diligent in recording their own history. The records of the Brotherhood only date back to thirteenth century Persia, though there are allusions to a connection to the ancient qabal "The Stone", founded by the legendary Merlin. Throughout history the qabal has influenced the advance of science around the world. The qabal has had its difficulties; many senseless tragedies in history can be traced to a failed experiment in science or magic.

Activities

The primary activity of the qabal is research and experimentation. The individual members of the qabal often work alone on their own projects. The qabal itself is mainly seen as a method of sharing knowledge, obtaining funding, materials and assistance. The Brotherhood often organizes the creation of new scientific institutions in the hopes of training and recruiting new members.

The construction of laboratories, both scientific and magical is another major activity of the qabal. These laboratories are often hidden in rural settings, where members are free to come and go without the fear of scrutiny. The Brotherhood possesses the most extensive libraries of magical knowledge in the entire world, though these libraries are scattered across the world. The qabal occasionally organizes the creation of a scientific device or the crafting of a magical item. Such enterprises always create items of exceptional power. Finally, the brotherhood maintains a network of warehouses for all manner of equipment, ranging from electrical components to magic potions.

Membership and Organization

The brotherhood is made up of men and women who are dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. Members are chosen from the most dedicated scholars

and occultists. High intelligence is the major requirement, though creativity and meticulousness are also critical qualities in recruits. Once in the Brotherhood members are sworn to obedience to the qabal. This obedience takes the form of an oath, which requires members to share all knowledge discovered by them after their admittance into the qabal and to contribute a small percentage of their income. Qabal members are often called upon to consult with other members on projects and to assist in the procurement of special materials.

The Brotherhood of Alchamae is led by a council of ten learned scholars, elected by their colleagues to the council for life. These leaders serve as administrators for the qabal and are responsible for collecting dues, organizing group projects and maintaining the libraries, laboratories and stockpiles of materials. Needless to say it is an unpopular job for all but the most ambitious members.

Beneath this council is a collection of retired scientists and occultists who assist each council member in the execution of their duties. These assistants are the connection between the Council and the individual cells. Cells are often made up of a single qabal member and his or her friends and henchmen. These cells pursue individual projects and report their findings to the qabal.

The brotherhood also maintains a handful of enforcer cells. These cells are made up of one full member and a group of loyal henchmen trained to use intimidation, violence and even murder to maintain secrecy and loyalty in the qabal.

Resources

The Brotherhood of Alchamae maintains the world's biggest stockpiles of chemical compounds, electronic components, manufactured goods, and scientific devices. These stockpiles are located in urban warehouses across the world and are accessible to all members. With a single telegraph, a member of the qabal could have anything from a vat of sulfuric acid to a steam driven walking machine sent by train or boat to his location.

The Brotherhood also maintains huge libraries of scientific data, which are accessible to members and even the educated public. In addition, the Brotherhood also possesses a series of magical laboratories, warehouses of minor magical items, and libraries of arcane knowledge. These labs, warehouses and libraries are well guarded but made accessible to most full members.

Through the cooperation of loyal members, the brotherhood controls a lengthy list of patents, including the patent for the light bulb. The Brotherhood owns and operates a handful of factories and universities. Finally, the brotherhood is well funded from the dues of its members. Requests for funds require some diplomacy (DC check 20), as do requisitions for magical items (base DC 22). Scientific equipment is often shared freely, though any equipment lost or used up must be replaced.

Adventure Hooks

The Brotherhood of Alchamae is an excellent patron for a group of adventurers. A single member of the qabal might be in contact with the party, sending them on all manner of missions

without ever explaining the true nature of the party's work. Members of the brotherhood make poor villains, since they are usually peaceful people possessed of good intentions. There are those jaded scientists who have divested themselves of human emotion, but they are in the minority.

With a single connection to the Brotherhood, a party of adventurers might be privileged to vast stores of scientific devices and magical knowledge. Of course, the price for such assistance usually involves procuring exotic items for the qabal.

Thomas Alva Edison

Male human, 6th level expert/6th level qabalist: CR 12, SZ M humanoid; HD 12D6+12, HP 54; Inn 1; Spd 30; AC 10; Atk 7/2; SA none, SQ none; AL LN; SV: fort 5, Reflex 5, Will 10; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 17, Wiz 14, Chr 12.

Skills and Feats: alchemy 10, appraise 5, bluff 8, craft: invention 20, concentration 5, diplomacy 7, forbidden lore 8, knowledge: applied physics 20, knowledge: chemistry 9, knowledge: mechanical physics 9, profession: engineer 10, profession: telegraph operator 5, research 12, sense motive 5, spell craft 13, spot 5. Skill focus: (knowledge: applied physics), Skill focus: (knowledge: chemistry), skill focus (craft: invention), Skill focus: (bluff), Skill focus: (diplomacy), Skill focus: (spell craft), Skill focus: (forbidden lore), Scribe scroll, craft wondrous item, brew potion, craft magical arms and armor,

Languages: English, Latin, Greek, Arabic

Qabalist spells per day: 4/4/4/3; Base DC=15 + level

Spell Book: 0 level spells; *resistance, ray of frost, detect poison,*

mage hand, mending, open/close, arcane mark, detect magic, read magic. 1st level spells; *alarm, endure element, hold portal, shield, grease, mage armor, unseen servant, comprehend language, identify, magic missile, animate rope, enlarge, erase, feather fall, magic weapon, shocking grasp.* 2nd level spells; *arcane lock, obscure object, Melf's acid arrow, locate object, see invisibility, flaming sphere, shatter, alter self, cat's grace, knock, pyrotechnics.* 3rd level spells; *dispel magic, explosive runes, nondetection, flame arrow, sleet storm, clairaudience/clairvoyance, tongues, gust of wind, lighting bolt, illusionary script, blink, fly, greater magic weapon, haste, keen edge, shrink item, and slow.*

By 1890, Thomas Alva Edison is a man of thirty-three. In that short time he has invented the stock ticker, the light bulb, the phonograph and a plethora of other inventions. Despite the lack of formal education, Edison is an accomplished inventor and is part owner of the General Electric manufacturing corporation. The extraordinary inventor has not limited himself to the world of science; he has also delved deeply into the supernatural. Edison is one of the most prominent members of the qabal known as The Brotherhood of Alchamae. Edison is an accomplished mage, and has created a number of useful magical items for the brotherhood. There may be no one else upon Gothic Earth who so naturally mixes magic with science.

Edison has developed a number of devices that combine the power of futuristic science with magical spells. Edison has never risen to a position of leadership in the qabal; between managing his investments and furthering

both his scientific and magical research, Edison has no time to manage a secret society. Edison enjoys his status as a celebrity within the qabal; he is fed with a steady flow of information and supplies at the cost of lending out his inventions.

When faced with a problem, Edison calls upon his own henchmen. As a co-owner of General Electric, Edison is free to maintain a staff of security officers whom he uses as muscle when the need arises. Edison works with a small staff of apprentice experts and qabalists. These apprentices perform most of the odd jobs, creating mundane magical items or devices needed in the construction of larger inventions. Edison's staff is in constant flux. As the apprentices grow in ability they often

discover that Edison has a habit of stealing their ideas and taking the credit for himself. At the same time, junior members of the brotherhood have much to learn from the master inventor.

Edison's voice pulls great weight in the Brotherhood; he has contributed huge amounts of cash from his corporation, designed dozens of devices and crafted countless magical items. The full resources of the Brotherhood are at Edison's disposal, which makes him a powerful ally and a dangerous foe. Edison is well aware of the horrors of the Red Death and will not expose the Brotherhood. If necessary, he will call upon the enforcers of the brotherhood to eliminate anyone who threatens the secrecy of the qabal.

Knowledge is Power

Science in Gothic Earth

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutton

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Science is not just a skill for strange men in white coats; it is a mode of thought that governs everything in the modern world. When an individual encounters a problem that he cannot resolve by conventional means, one solution may be to use the scientific method to invent a tool to accomplish the task. The 1890's were a time of advanced scientific breakthroughs and marvelous inventions and these new advances in technology are useful tools to the heroes and villains of gothic earth. Scientific skills allow characters to create inventions, real items that they can use to accomplish their goals.

The following rules summarize the procedures for creating a scientific device. Each device requires a unique process to create it, but the process of the creation scientific devices always follows some given guidelines. Devices take all manner of shapes and forms. Scientific devices can be machines, a chemical compound, a specially bred plant, a mathematical formula or even a kind of medical procedure. Characters can create scientific devices by using character skills to create a theory, a design and finally construct the device. There is no limit to the power that can be harnessed by science, though the level of power is proportional to the difficulty in creating the device.

It is obvious that these rules will change the balance of the campaign. Characters with many craft, knowledge and profession skills will gain options

that were previously unavailable. NPCs, villains and player characters have the ability to create items that can accomplish feats that were impossible before, even by magic. Some Dungeon Masters may decide to completely ignore these rules, especially since few Gothic Earth campaigns stray into such science fiction. However, DMs should be encouraged to keep these rules in mind when incorporating scientific devices into their campaigns, even as background material. If an NPC created a device, then he or she should possess the level of skill to have accomplished the task. The DM must take an active role in any design process. The Dungeon Master must be sure that the difficulty in creating the device is proportional to the power offered by the invention. Furthermore, the Dungeon Master must be sure that no character creates a device that interferes with the campaign.

Designing Devices

Designing a scientific device is the process of a character imaging an invention and using his or her skills to make it a reality. Any character of any character class can undertake this process.

Skill Checks

Skill checks are the mechanism for the design process. The design process is not without its pitfalls, for when one makes a mistake one hardly is aware that

a mistake has been made. Even a simple error early in the design process can doom the whole project to failure. When a character makes a check that fails to reach the DC by more than five points, he or she has failed but does not realize their failure. The character continues on from that point, unaware that their attempts are doomed to failure. At every other point in the process, such as related knowledge or profession checks, the character may make another skill check for the failed skill, at the same DC of the check that was previously failed. If that roll succeeds then the character realizes his error and can begin again.

The exact consequences of a failed skill check are left to the DM. Sometimes the error is correctable, with simple adjustments to the project. In other cases the error is realized too late and the entire process must be started again from scratch.

Theory

To create a device, a character must have a general idea of how it will function and what it will accomplish. This part of the design phase is the “theory” check, which represents the formulation of a sensible theory. In this check a character calls upon his or her knowledge of the subject and determines the various qualities that his device must possess to accomplish the desired task. The theory check is made by a related knowledge check against a base DC of 20. Some times a single invention covers two or more areas of science. In these cases, the device will require more one theory check for each discipline of science.

For example, the mad Doctor Westhouse wants to create an artificial ear for his minion, Chew-Chew. This artificial ear must be able to detect sound and transform the sonic energy into

nerve impulses. A successful theory check using the knowledge skill knowledge: applied physics would allow Westhouse to imagine a way to artificially transmit sound into electrical nerve impulses. In addition, a theory check using knowledge: medicine is required to determine the manner in which the ear will interact with Chew-chew’s body.

Design

Once the theory has been developed it is time to design the actual device. Designing a device involves determining the material needed, drawing diagrams of the finished device as well as any other tasks involved in the proper planning of the project. Designing a device requires another related knowledge check, though there is a possibility that it may be a different knowledge skill than the skill used to develop the theory. Furthermore, it is possible that a device that uses more than one discipline in its theory check may require more than one designing check. A design check is made against a base DC of 20.

For example, Professor Plumworth is attempting to devise an antidote to scorpion venom. He will use the knowledge: toxicology check to theorize an antidote. The actual design check, however, is knowledge: chemistry check. For though the theory by which the antidote works is derived from toxicology, the actual synthesis of the antidote requires extensive knowledge of chemistry. This relates to the required knowledge of the chemical properties at work, such as creating a compound that will neutralize the poison and sweep it out of the blood system. Just as Plumworth would never have know how the chemical works without knowledge of toxicology, so too would he have no

clue as how to create the antidote without knowledge in chemistry.

The design phase ends with the construction of a blueprint, a series of plans, a chemical equation or a proposal for an experiment.

Materials

The construction of a new device requires the proper materials. The actual collection of the materials may be difficult, since many of the materials may be expensive, exotic, or perhaps illegal to procure. The actual materials needed are determined by the design check, and are left up to the DM as to how they should be collected. Often new technologies require components that have never before been built. In these cases the character must theorize, design and construct these parts, or contact another individual to have such an item created.

For example, the creation of a massive digging machine requires at least three separate components. The machine requires a power source, an apparatus for both drilling and movement and finally a life support system. Without these three components, the machine cannot be completed. If the three cannot be obtained, they must be designed from scratch.

Dungeon Masters should remember that very powerful or very complex inventions might require the creations of other inventions. One common way in which the Dungeon Master may increase the difficulty of creating a device is to require the creation of a mathematic equation. Indeed, mathematics is the language of the universe. It is mathematic equations that show inventors the finer details of the finished product. A Dungeon Master should feel free to require that a complex invention

require the invention of a mathematic equation.

Construction

The construction of a device is the final phase in the design process. It is a complicated affair. The DM, based on applicable factors, should determine the amount of time that would be required for the construction of the device. Certain rules should guide this decision. A device the size of a house should probably take longer to build than a handheld instrument, furthermore a device of many intricate parts should require more time to construct than a simple solid piece.

Construction requires the successful use of a related skill. Many skills are used in construction checks. The synthesis of a chemical compound requires the use of the skill profession: chemist, the building of a small phonograph device would require the use of the craft: invention skill, the construction of a structure would require the use of a profession: engineer check. Just as with the theory and design processes, devices that cover more than one discipline may require more than one skill check in construction. For example, Westhouse's artificial ear would require a craft: invention to actually build the ear, followed by a surgery check made with the skill profession: medicine to install the device in his minion's head. The base difficulty class for a construction check is 20.

Not all devices need be constructed. Mathematic equations skip this phase, as does any "device" which is not an actual object. This includes medical procedures and psychological treatments.

Collaboration

It is rare that any one individual completes every phase of the construction process without outside help. Sometimes one individual completes the theory phase and publishes this theory. Another individual may take this theory and then complete the design phase. That character could send the blueprints on to others whom collect the materials and then send them to a final individual whom actually constructs the device. In these cases, each character involved makes his own skill checks. In the event that any roll fails by five, no one is aware that an error was made, unless the next individual in line automatically attempts the check to realize the error.

Modifiers

There are a variety of modifiers that apply to knowledge checks and to the process of designing and building devices. The constraints of modern knowledge make skill checks more difficult.

Obsolete Technology

When a character makes a skill check to work with “obsolete technology”, such as the outdated phrenology, the DC of profession checks and knowledge checks are increased by 2.

Modern technology

Modern technology is simple to use for a trained scientist. When working with technology that is in common use during the 1890’s or with knowledge that is well established in the 1890’s, the DC remains unmodified. Steam engines and telegraphs are examples of modern technology.

Cutting Edge technology

There are often problems when a scientist tries to use “cutting edge technology”. When a character makes a check involving technology or knowledge that is new to the 1890’s but is still based upon well-established knowledge, the DC increases by 5. An example of this would be devising anti-venom, which was new to Gothic Earth in 1890. The DM may decide that such a device would require the successful creation of a new mathematic equation before the character can attempt the theory or design checks. Such an equation would be considered cutting edge technology for the purposes of its DC modifier.

Futuristic Technology

“Futuristic technology” is nearly impossible to work with. This scientific knowledge often exceeds the rules of conventional knowledge. When a character makes a check involving science that is based upon knowledge as yet unknown, the DC increases by 10. An example of this would be the creation of an electro-cathode ray or a submersible steamship.

A DM may further rule that the character must devise an original mathematic equation, using the skill knowledge: mathematics before they can even begin making knowledge checks or profession checks regarding the theory check and design check in the creation of such advanced devices. Such an equation is considered futuristic technology for the purposes of Difficulty class modifiers.

Improbable Technology

“Improbable Technology” breaks the rules of modern knowledge. This classification covers technology and science that would be impossible under

the known rules of science. Working with “Improbable technology” increases the DC of skill checks by 15. Examples of such technology would be anti-gravity ships, digging machines, invisibility serums, mechanical automatons or even sentient electrical thinking machines.

As with futuristic technology, the DM may rule that an original mathematic equation is necessary before attempting the theory and design checks. Such an equation would be considered Improbable technology for the purposes of difficulty class modifiers.

Fantastic Technology

While improbably technology may confound modern science, fantastic technology drives it to madness. Fantastic technology contradicts logic itself. Fantastic technology is beyond human understanding, only a few people of a genius intellect can grasp fantastic technology, and even they cannot claim to understand the forces at work. These geniuses work as if on instinct, never consciously understanding the science at work, yet still producing fantastic technology. Fantastic technology includes such things as time machines, inter-dimensional gateways, perpetual motion, and light-speed engines.

Working with fantastic technology modified the DC of any skill check by +20. Furthermore, fantastic technology is a nerve-wracking experience. The human mind is stretched beyond its limit; the power of the brain takes the mind beyond the realms of nature and opens it to infinite possibilities, many of which shatter man’s concept of space, time and reality. Whenever a character makes a check to work with fantastic technology he must make a madness check against a DC 15.

Disciplines of Knowledge

For the purposes of skill checks, science is divided up amongst a series of disciplines. This reflects the nature of a character’s knowledge and education. The disciplines of chemistry are a formality. The same rules that govern chemistry also govern biology and physics, mathematics apply to nearly all disciplines of learning. The separate disciplines are merely convenient ways to divide up the massive amount of knowledge mankind has amassed. It is easiest to study the disciplines separately, and learning the individual applications of universal principles.

Biology

Biology is quite literally the study of life. This discipline is further divided into several knowledge skills.

The skill knowledge: botany gives a character to use extensive knowledge of plants, covering a variety of species, plant anatomy, plant diseases, plant byproducts and so on.

The skill knowledge: medicine gives a character expertise in modern medical knowledge. A character with this skill has an extensive understanding of the functions of a living body as well as the modern methods of treating the body.

Knowledge: pathology is the focused understanding of diseases. This skill can be used to identify certain rare diseases, techniques in breeding microorganisms, and even methods of treating all manner of diseases, in animals, humans and plant.

The skill knowledge: toxicology covers the wide variety of poisonous materials known to man. This skill allows characters to identify poisons by various physical properties and the symptoms the cause. This skill also covers knowledge of antidotes and anti-

venoms, which are a relatively new field in Gothic Earth.

Finally, the skill knowledge: zoology gives a character an advanced understanding of the known species of animals in the world. This skill allows a character to identify animals and to recall pertinent information regarding habitats, behavior and the anatomy of animals.

As a baseline, most knowledge checks from this discipline should be against a DC of 15. For further note, since all of these separate skills are covered within the same discipline, the feat educational degree grants its bonus to all of these skills.

Chemistry

It could be said that everything larger than an atom and smaller than a star falls within the rules of chemistry. From predicting the melting point of steel, to estimating the acidity of a raindrop, the skill knowledge: chemistry covers a huge range of subjects. Though chemistry covers a wide variety of phenomena, the skill knowledge: chemistry gives the character sufficient knowledge to understand the underlying rules of nearly every chemical property.

From boiling points, to heats of combustion, to the rates of reactions, the skill knowledge: chemistry allows a chemist to recall these properties with a successful check against DC 10. This skill also allows characters to make estimations. For example, by noticing the greenish rust like substance on the bars of a prison, a character could determine that the bars contain large amounts of copper. Estimating the composition of a substance usually requires a laboratory, chemicals, equipment and intensive tests, with a DC to the knowledge: chemistry check 15. Without these materials, the DC is 25.

Mathematics

Mathematics is perhaps the most important discipline. To put it poetically, mathematics is the language of the universe. Utilizing algebra, trigonometry and calculus, a mathematician might be able to define nearly any phenomena in mathematic terms. The skill Knowledge: Mathematics is a very useful tool to any scientist. Any character with five or more ranks in knowledge: mathematics gains a synergetic +2 bonus to any knowledge or profession checks in any scientific discipline other than mathematics.

A successful use of the Knowledge: mathematics skill allows a character to develop a new and original equation or to learn a new equation. Such equations come into play in the design of devices. Designing a new equation is the same as the construction of a device. In these cases, the skill knowledge: mathematics is used for each check. When developing a new mathematic equation, it should be considered cutting edge technology or even futuristic technology. In rare circumstances, a new equation may indeed be fantastic technology. Sometimes, when a character is cut off from scientific texts, isolated from outside knowledge, the character must devise equations that are considered "Modern technology".

Physics, Applied

If chemistry covers everything larger than an atom and smaller than a star, then everything beyond those boundaries are the sole property of the discipline of physics. Physics covers a staggering array of phenomena, too many for one skill. For the purposes of game play, physics is divided between two disciplines.

The first discipline, applied physics will include some of the newest discoveries of science in the 1890's. The growing field of electricity, molecular and atomic theory, and radiation all fall within this field, as does light theory (which is a form of radiation), magnetism and electromagnetism. The skill knowledge: applied physics allows a player to identify the underlying principles of these phenomena. A character with this skill could identify the effects of an electromagnet, or of radiation. The DC of such a check would be only 20 if the character had access to a lab, proper equipment and eight uninterrupted hours. Without all of these factors, the physicist must make a risky guess, making the check DC 30.

Physics, Mechanical

This is the second discipline of physics. This discipline covers the better-known areas of physics. Hydrodynamics, gravity, momentum, these are all covered in mechanical physics. Like applied physics, the primary use of the skill knowledge: mechanical physics is to identify the forces at work in a given phenomena. Since mechanical physics works with more visible phenomena than applied physics, the DC to the check is 15 with a proper lab and 20 without.

Psychology

Even by the 1890's, psychology was not an exact science. In many cases, psychologists were forced to work by trial and error in an attempt to determine what techniques were capable of curing dementia. The skill knowledge: psychology represents a character's understanding of the human mind and the techniques of curing madness. Using this skill, characters can theorize and

design a psychological "device". Such a device would be a form of therapy with would assist in the recovery of patients, induce madness or bring about some other psychological effect.

Scientific Professions

There are two aspects of science, the theoretical and the practical. Though the theoretical aspects are a pure intellectual exercise, the practical portion requires intuition, experience and professionalism. The individual divisions of the profession skills characterize the practical aspects of science. Though it is not required, educational degrees are very important to the use of these professions.

Profession: Biologist: This profession is simply the profession of a biologist. A biologist usually focuses upon one of the separate biological skills. This skill has little effect for game play. It covers the ability of a character to write scientific reports and to conduct biological experiments.

Profession: Chemist: This skill represents the characters ability to write formal laboratory reports, to prepare equipment and to synthesize chemical compounds. A character uses this skill in the creation of devices. As well, the character can create items such as acid and alchemist's fire using the same DC as alchemists would use, as described in the Player's Handbook.

Profession: Engineer: This is the skill of applying mechanical physics to the construction of structures and large devices. Though skills such as craft and knowledge can be used to devise the blueprints for large devices and

structures, it requires the engineer profession to actually build the object.

Profession: Medicine: This is the skill of healing. The actual use of this profession is described in the document “Gothic Earth Enhancements” and will not be repeated here as well. The skill profession: medicine is also use to finish the construction of medical related devices, to install such devices, and to utilize medical procedures created by the rules for constructing devices.

Profession: Physics, Applied: Like the other professions, this skill allows the character to create formal scientific reports, and operate equipment related to applied physics. This is quite significant, because the skill profession: applied physics covers the growing science of electricity. A character with this profession can work with electrical circuits, devising them, building them and repairing them.

Profession: Physics, Mechanical: This skill allows a character to write formal scientific reports and operate equipment related to mechanical physics. This skill does not allow characters to repair a mechanical device, that skill is covered by the skill craft: repair.

Profession: Psychology: Though psychology is not the most scientific areas of knowledge, that profession does fit within the realm of science because of the scientific process upon which modern psychology is based. The skill Profession: psychology works in the same manner as described in the Ravenloft Core rules. Using this profession, a character can help others recover from failed fear, horror and

madness checks. This skill can also be used to utilize psychological “devices”.

Using Devices

The rules that govern the use of a device vary with the type of device. A vehicle requires the use of a skill such as pilot: automobile. A device that is fired like a gun would require an attack roll and a proficiency in a similar type of weapon. For example, an electro-cathode ray would require an attack roll as made with a rifle. A surgical procedure or a psychological technique would require the use of a skill such as profession: medicine or profession: psychology. When a character must use a device as a weapon, the weapon might be considered an exotic weapon if it is exceedingly strange, such as a mechanical tentacle.

Sample Devices

Edison's Ethereal Disruptor

Background

Thomas Edison is known to be the most prolific inventor in the world by 1890. What is not generally known is that Edison is also one of the most prominent members of the cabal the Brotherhood of Alchamae. Edison splits his energy between scientific and arcane research, though he tries to combine these two discipline as often as possible. The Ether Disrupter is one of the products of such a combination. As the Brotherhood researched the paranormal, it discovered a link between ethereal resonance and the behavior of certain types of charged particles. Edison explored this phenomenon and began to formulate a hypothesis; if he could disrupt the behavior of the charged particles, he believed he could also

disrupt the ethereal resonance in the general area.

Edison then set about creating a device that could rapidly produce powerful electromagnetic fields of varying strength and intensity. This effect would continuously shake the particles, thus keeping the particles in the ether unstable. Edison built the device in 1885 and successfully tested it in several different locations. The ether disruptor was not only able to disrupt the ethereal resonance but also the magnitude of ghosts in the area. High-ranking members of the Brotherhood and close friends of Edison know about the Disruptor, though only Edison possesses the designs or the theoretical notes. There are three ethereal disruptors in the world, each being held by a cell of the Brotherhood in London, New York and Germany.

The Device

Edison's Ethereal Disruptor stands four feet tall, two feet wide and one foot deep. The device weighs more than two hundred pounds and contains a large number of copper coils, batteries, capacitors and other electrical components. Each of the components must be custom built for a disruptor. The total cost of the parts is a little more than two hundred dollars. As well, the purchasing of such materials may even draw the attention of the Brotherhood. The construction of the disruptor requires a successful profession: applied physics check for cutting edge technology. Edison's notes constitute a successful theory for cutting edge technology; as well his designs contain enough information to constitute a successful design check for cutting edge technology.

Using the Device

The device has enough batteries to be activated for a total of twelve hours. The device can be recharged using an alternating current generator, which should be readily available in a city. Alternately, the device can be run strait from a generator for an indefinite period of time. The device is activated with a single switch. Once activated, the disruptor creates a magnetic field in a radius of two hundred and fifty feet. This field passes through wood, glass and steel. Only lead, concrete, or rock barriers of more than four inches thickness stop the disruptor.

Once activated, the ethereal resonance of area within the radius begins to drop by one rank for every hour. The rank continues to drop until it has dropped a total of four ranks, dropping to a minimum of first rank. As the ethereal resonance of the area drops, so too does the rank of any ghost within the area. Any incorporeal undead lose one hit dice per hour within the diameter of the Disruptor; to a minimum loss of four hit dice. These hit dice return as soon as the incorporeal undead leave the area of effect or the disruptor is deactivated. Undead killed by the loss of hit dice are permanently destroyed.

Side Effects

The device has no real side effects to the living. Edison is reluctant to lend his notes or designs to anyone not of the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood will pursue anyone whom steals the notes, designs or one of the disruptors.

Professor Griffon's Invisibility Formula

Background

In the year 1884, an American scientist by the name of Professor Richard Griffon began a series of fantastic experiments. Griffon had been a chemist with a significant background in applied physics. His early work involved the creation of a material that would emit light of the exact frequency, wavelength and angle of any incident light that struck it from the opposite end. Light particles would be propagated through matter; in essence it would appear that light would travel right through the compound. In his early years, Griffon attempted to generate funding for his research, but because his work was still in the theoretical stage, he failed. In near poverty, Griffon continued his work in the slums of Boston, hoping to create an isolate the elusive compound. In the year 1888, Griffon succeeded in creating and isolating the compound, which he dryly dubbed "refractive serum 8".

Though he had succeeded in creating his compound, further funding proved impossible. Critics dubbed it an absurd novelty, an impractical curiosity. Despite his years of labor, his efforts were lauded and ridiculed. Griffon watched as his hopes vanished like so much refractive serum. It was then that Griffon retired to his lab within the slums and was never seen again.

In the weeks that followed, many of the intellectual elite of Boston began to suffer mysterious accidents. At first the phenomena were subtle, such as unexplained falls and horse carriages that ran amok. Afterwards the circumstances became more deadly. Notable scientists were found

bludgeoned to death, stabbed and even shot. Many of the events not far from eyewitnesses, sometimes even in locked rooms. Though the police grilled countless witnesses, they discovered that no one had seen the murder. The terror increased within Boston until one night, when the home of the Dean of Physics at Harvard University burnt down. The Dean and his family narrowly escaped, after the dean awoke in the night, discovered the fire and shot at an unseen intruder lurking in the shadows. The body of the intruder was not recovered from the rubble, and the remains of the house were carted away.

The lab of Richard Griffon was never discovered. The scientist's former abode was never discovered in the urban maze of decay. Whatever discoveries made by the tragic genius, remain to be unearthed.

The Device

The Invisibility Formula may no longer exist, but surely Griffon's notes remain. With one of Griffon's three personal notebooks, a character has access to a successful "theory" for an improbable technology. If a character possesses all three, he or she has access to enough information to constitute a successful "design" for an improbable technology. Anything that remains of the actual compound is most likely decayed and decomposed beyond all use. The formula is successfully constructed with a profession: chemist check.

The compound itself is a silvery organic liquid. The formula does not evaporate at room temperature, but decays into an inert compound after a day of exposure to air or water. With the original design from all three of Griffon's notes, the time required to synthesize a single dose of the formula is only an hour. To construct one dose of

the formula, a character requires a liter of alcohol, forty grams of silver, ten grams of mercury, a Bunsen burner costing 10 dollars and a set of glassware costing at least 50 dollars. The glassware and the burner can be reused, the alcohol can be distilled from regular spirits with a profession: chemist check against DC 10.

Using the Device

A living organism must ingest the formula. The bloodstream actually circulates the inert compound throughout the body, where it begins to take effect. Once ingested, the effects of the formula are slow to occur. From the inside out, the formula is distributed. After an hour, the character becomes completely invisible. This invisibility confers all of the benefits associated with invisibility.

The formula remains in effect for 36 hours. After that, the user's immune system begins to destroy the invisibility. At this point, the user's body fades in and out of visibility over the course of an hour. During this period, the character receives a +10 bonus to hide checks. After the hour, the user is completely visible until the next use of the formula.

Side Effects

The inert matter of the invisibility formula hinders the functions of nerve cells. Though the effects end when the immune system begins to remove the formula, they remain strong throughout the course of the serum. The moment the character ingests the formula, he or she makes a madness check against DC 25. A failed check indicates that the character suffers from the effects of paranoia. These effects might even persist after the formula is done, if the DM chooses.

Roentgen's Electrical Projector

Background

In 1895, Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen discovered the X-ray, a form of radiation unknown to man. Not long afterwards, a man whom identified himself as an official of the German Military approached Roentgen and commissioned him to build a device that could project a powerful stream of electricity. Not long after Roentgen completed his electrical projector, his laboratory was burglarized. The device and many of the notes within the lab were stolen. The only item that remains is the project book that Roentgen had taken to his home the night before.

When Roentgen reported the robbery to the military, he was informed that the military knew nothing of the electrical projector. Roentgen remains in the dark as to who stole the projector, though he believes that the unidentified man whom commissioned its construction must have been connected to the robbery. The true culprits remain unknown. Whether it was a cabal, the German government, or a foreign military, none can say.

The Device

Roentgen no longer possesses his projector, but he still possesses his notebook and the original designs in his project-book. The notes consist of enough information to constitute a successful theory for a futuristic technology. Further more, both the notes and the project book together contain enough information to constitute a successful design for a futuristic technology. Only one projector has ever been built, though Roentgen is very reluctant to build another.

Once built, Roentgen's electrical projector looks similar to a scattergun

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with a bulky box running the length of the barrel. The box constitutes a primitive electrical battery, containing concentrated acid. This battery supplies the power for the projector. The construction of the projector requires a battery, which is expensive and must be custom built, a series of copper coils, specially cut glass lenses, a huge capacitor and assorted pieces of wood and metal. Designing the projector from the theoretical notes requires a successful knowledge: applied physics check. The construction of the projector requires a successful profession: applied physics check.

Using the Device

Roentgen designed his electrical projector to be used as a weapon. The projector is fired in the same manner as a rifle, though it requires practice to be used effectively. A character must make a wisdom check against DC 15 after using the projector. If the check fails, the projector remains an exotic weapon, but if the check succeeds a character

becomes accustomed to the device and can use it in the same manner as a regular rifle. A successful hit from the projector causes 3D8 electrical damage.

The range increment for the projector is only fifteen feet, with a maximum range forty-five feet. Each battery holds enough charge for fifteen shots. Replacing the battery requires a successful profession: applied physics check against DC 15. Fortunately, the batteries can be recharged while still installed, requiring an alternating current generator. Recharging the battery requires no check, needing only a few instructions.

Side Effects

There are no side effects to the use of the electrical projector. The battery upon the device is fragile and contains concentrated acid under pressure. The battery has a hardness of only 2, and is destroyed after 6 points of damage. Once destroyed, the battery sprays the acid in a ten-foot burst.

Tactics and Techniques

Feats of Science

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutton
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Ahead of the Times

The character is possessed of a far thinking mind, capable of making huge leaps of logic. In short, the character is ahead of the times.

Prerequisites: Minimum intelligence modifier +1.

Benefit: Designing or working with "cutting edge" technology carries no modifier for advanced technology.

Educational Degree

The character possesses an official degree from an accredited institute of higher learning.

Prerequisite: The PC must have attended an accredited institute of higher learning for a number of years. This period of learning takes up eight months of the year, and at least eight hours of work each day of those months. An intelligence of 12 is also required, as is wisdom of at least 9. Except in special circumstances, a significant cost must also be paid for tuition, as well as books, room and board.

Benefit: Each time the PC acquires this feat, he/she must choose an area of knowledge such as archeology, applied physics (electronics), biology, botany, chemistry, engineering, history, law, medicine, physics, or any other subject at the DM's discretion.

This feat adds a +2 bonus to craft, knowledge, profession or research skill checks based upon that subject. An

official degree also confers other bonuses. The degree will allow a +2 bonus on charisma-based checks to interaction with educated individuals whom hold degrees in the same subjects. Although an officer could possess a degree in tactics, this degree does not actually assist that officer in tactics checks. Strategy and leadership cannot be taught from textbooks and lecture, they must be learned by experience.

Special: This bonus stacks with bonuses from the skill focus feat.

First Approximation

The PC has acquired the ability to make quick calculations by making quick and easy approximations of values. This allows the PC to make accurate estimates without difficulty.

Prerequisite: The PC must have minimum intelligence and wisdom bonuses of +1.

Benefit: The PC can make calculations without the need for calculating tools. These calculations are accurate to a significant degree and can be made in a short period of time. The feat gives allows a player to take ten on any knowledge or profession check where calculations are necessary, even when the situation is stressful.

Speed Reader

The PC has the ability to read written text at an amazing speed. This is an amazing skill that anyone might

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develop with a little practice. The real trick to speed reading is not reading quickly, but rather instantly understanding written text.

Prerequisite: There are no prerequisites for this feat.

Benefit: A PC with this ability may read and retain knowledge from written text with an amazing speed. If the PC so

much as glimpses written text he may make an intelligence check against a DC of 15. If the check is successful then the character has read and comprehended the entire page in only a split second. A PC with this ability takes only half the normal time to make a research check. Also the PC may take 10 on a research check even during stressful conditions.

Perilous Pursuits

Mad Scientist

By Stephen "Sc8" Sutton
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"Knowledge Brings Fear!"

-School Motto of Mars University

Science more than a mode of rational thought, it is a lifestyle. To the educated men and women of the world, science is an obsession. More than any philosophy, than any religion, science allows mere mortals to gaze in wonder at the beauty of the cosmos and learn the secret laws that bind reality into a coherent continuum. The thrill of discovery can be as intoxicating as wine, and many times more addictive.

There are a few men and women who become overcome by science. They fall into obsession and eccentricity as science devours their life one day at a time. These are the movers and shakers of the scientific community, the blessed scientists who divine the laws of the universe and bring them back to the world of men.

Yet science is not a benign force. Science violently conflicts with religion, superstition and tradition. Often this confrontation is a minor disagreement, but it can escalate. The machinist view of the universe inherent in science conflicts with traditional conservative thought. Sometimes these conflicts can consume the unstable scientific mind.

When a scientist becomes frustrated with conservative, contemporary society, he stands of chance of abandoning all ties to society and becoming a mad scientist. Mad scientists are reckless rogue scholars, people who would break

all barriers and ignore all risks in a blind pursuit of knowledge. Mad scientists hold nothing beyond the reach of science, everything from doorstops to deities are subject to a Mad Scientist's investigations. More often than not, a Mad Scientist holds a deep grudge for society. Sometimes mad scientists turn their amazing intellect against society, in a petty attempt to strike back. Other mad scientists try to convert modern society to their way of thinking, either through friendly persuasion or by force.

The devotion of a Mad Scientist to his field of study is rewarded with knowledge beyond that of his more orthodox kin. His understanding of his discipline is unmatched by conventional scientists, some would say decades ahead of his time. Mad scientists are often recruited by organizations, both heroic and villainous, and given the opportunity to prove their theories. Other mad scientists are loners and eccentric inventors, who tinker in poorly lit labs, seeking answers to questions no one asked.

Mad Scientist (Mad8)

Hit Die: d6.

Requirements: 8 ranks in any scientific knowledge skill and the feat "skill focus" taken for any scientific skill. Non-lawful alignment.

Skill Points: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Skills: Alchemy, Concentration, Craft (any), Gather

Information, Knowledge (any), Spot, and Profession (any).

Weapon and Armor Proficiency:

A mad scientist gains no proficiency in weapons or armor.

Class Abilities

Adaptive Mind: At fourth level a Mad Scientist gains the ability to flawlessly utilize his own devices. The Mad Scientist gains proficiency in any weapon or armor he personally designs. As well, when making skill checks to use devices he has personally designed he gains a competency bonus to the check equal to his levels in the Mad Scientist prestige class.

Field of Expertise: At first level a Mad Scientist may choose a scientific discipline as his field of expertise. When making craft, knowledge or profession checks that apply directly to this field the Mad Scientist gains a +2 competence bonus. At third level and fifth level a mad scientist may choose another field of expertise. Possible fields of expertise include biology, chemistry, mathematics, applied physics (electricity and electronics), mechanical physics and psychology. A Mad scientist may choose a given field only once. In cases where more than one scientific discipline is required, the bonus is not granted unless both disciplines are “fields of expertise”.

Illogical Mind: A Mad Scientist is defined by his irrational faith in his own genius. A character that becomes lawful in alignment cannot take levels in this class. Furthermore, a Mad Scientist cannot take the feat Logical Mind. If a character with the feat “Logical Mind” takes a level in Mad Scientist, the feat “Logical Mind” is removed and replaced with the feat “Open Mind”.

Mad Genius: The intellect of a Mad Scientist works on a very different

level than any other human being’s. Indeed, the mind of a Mad Scientist is filled with infinite knowledge. Though this knowledge is beyond human comprehension, the Mad Scientist is slowly learning to tap that cosmic awareness on the subconscious level. A Mad Scientist with this ability is never required to devise a mathematical equation to create a device.

When creating a device, a Mad Scientist with this ability can choose to tap into his infinite knowledge and skip the design check. A mad scientist who skips a check taps into his cosmic unconsciousness and instantly derives the necessary design and incorporates it seamlessly into the construction of a device or records it upon paper. Naturally, the use of this infinite knowledge is extremely risky to the character’s sanity. For each check that a Mad Scientist chooses to skip he must make a madness check against a base DC of 5, increased by the modifier for the technological level.

As a Mad Scientist becomes more experienced with the inner workings of his cosmic unconsciousness, the risk to his sanity diminishes. At fifth level a Mad Scientist may use this ability to skip the “theory” check in the design phase. A Mad Scientist may then decide to skip either check or both checks, making a madness check for each check skipped.

Obsessive Focus: The devotion of a Mad Scientist to his work is nothing less than obsession. This obsession makes a Mad Scientist more than a little unhinged. The Mad Scientist suffers a penalty to charisma-based checks equal to his level in the Mad Scientist class. Yet this unbalanced state makes the brilliant mind of a Mad Scientist radically different than that of a normal

human. The Mad Scientist gains a bonus to resist mind-influencing and mind reading effects equal to his Obsessive Focus score. As well, the Mad Scientist gains a bonus to concentration checks and all fear and horror checks equal to his score in obsessive focus.

Unorthodox Materials: Naturally eccentric, a Mad Scientist never frets about the little details in the design process. A Mad Scientist can build

scientific devices using a wide variety of unorthodox materials. When determining the materials needed to construct a device, a Mad Scientist may decide to improvise. The cost for instruments, lab equipment and other components is halved, or, with the DM's approval, removed completely. However, should a Mad Scientist improvise materials, the construction check required is increased by 10.



The Mad Scientist

| Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|---|
| 1 st | +0 | +0 | +0 | +2 | Field of Expertise, Obsessive Focus +1, Illogical Mind |
| 2 nd | +1 | +1 | +1 | +3 | Obsessive Focus +2, Mad Genius, Unorthodox Materials |
| 3 rd | +1 | +1 | +1 | +3 | Field of Expertise, Obsessive Focus +3 |
| 4 th | +2 | +1 | +1 | +4 | Adaptive Mind, Obsessive Focus +4 |
| 5 th | +2 | +2 | +2 | +4 | Field of Expertise, Mad Genius (theory), Obsessive Focus +5 |

Credits

Contributors

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Artist for “Jack the Ripper” and “Pistol Dwarf”.

He has been role-playing for a number of years now, integrating his pictures into games to give a visual image of the fantasy worlds and its inhabitants. For more art check out <http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/loth/s/i/silverhertz/silverhertz.html> and if you have any requests or commissions just send me a mail or leave a comment.

David “The Jester” Gibson

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Creator of D20 van Richten, Van Richten’s Forgotten Arsenal and The Invisible Man among other things.

Repeatedly the token Canadian and Ravenloft fan since the Red Box (which was bought less than a year after being introduced to gaming in general). It’s been a long road filled with many, many crappy ideas and bad adventures. Hopefully there have been a few improvements. The 3E van Richten is dedicated to anyone who has spent the better part of a week updating a character over and over, fixing uncountable mistakes and errors.

Sean “The Godbrain” Poindexter

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Author of The Rat.

I’m a Sociology student at MSSC College in Joplin Missouri. In addition to Ravenloft and 3rd Edition DnD, my interests include writing, movies, and

social activism. I live in a ridiculously small apartment with my girlfriend Amanda, and my cat Odin. I’ve been playing DnD for 12 years, and I’ve been into in Ravenloft since the premiere of the Ravenloft Boxed Set. I’m also well known (and loved?) on the Malodorous Goat Tavern message board as The God Brain: the lovable vegetarian illithid enthusiast geek.

Shane Glodoski

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Creator of Gregori Ambermist

I have always been a fan of Ravenloft, ever since the black box set fell in my hands; I was forever drawn to the lands of mist. When not working in a most vile domain known as the real world, I am an avid reader and writer of fantasy and especially gothic horror. Course I would greatly like to dedicate this to my brother Aaron, who bought me the basic red box set and showed me that I didn’t have to take the dice out of the family board games to play games of my own creation, there already was something like that. Thanks Aaron.

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Creator of Okraina

Born in 1983, Moscow, Russia. Student of Moscow Institute of Radio, Electronics and Automatics (MIREA). Been playing D&D since approximately 1996-97, entered the mists in 1998. Enjoy gothic fiction, movies... jungle music and aggressive skating. Favourite writers: J.R.R. Tolkien, H.P. Lovecraft, B. Stoker, and Ed Greenwood (yes, I play Forgotten Realms too).

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Editors

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With the possible exception of Planescape, Ravenloft has been my favorite setting to both play in and DM. These particular tastes in campaign settings probably explain why I have a tendency to use various fiends in Ravenloft and have a gothic mood in many of my Planescape adventures. When I'm not brainstorming for new adventure ideas, my time is typically spent between finishing my medical degree and helping plan my wedding. In fact, I would like to dedicate this to my

fiancée, Renee, who has been both patient and understanding of all my role-playing interests.

Stephen "ScS" Sutton

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This issue is the second in our line of Reloaded issues, though it was the first issue to set the guidelines for future issues. For a number of reasons, this issue remains one of my favourites. It really gave me a chance to put some of my greatest ideas on paper for every one to see. As always I would like to thank all of our contributors, and our readers for supporting QtR.