

For All Character Levels

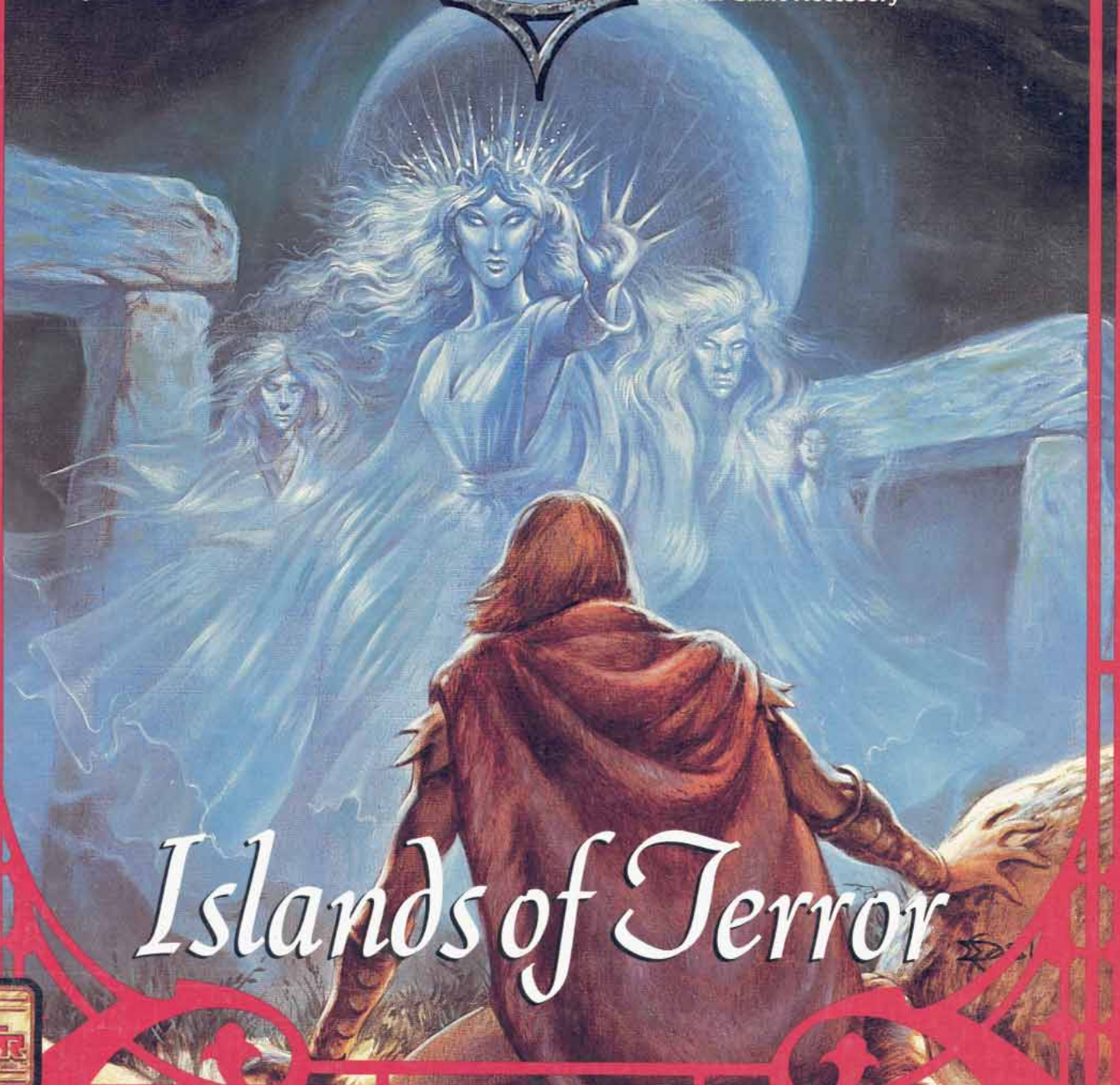
RR4
Accessory

9348

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®]
2nd Edition

Ravenloft™

Official Game Accessory



Islands of Terror



ISLANDS OF TERROR



By Colin McComb and Scott Bennie

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TSR, Inc.
POB 756
Lake Geneva
WI 53147
U.S.A.



TSR Ltd.
120 Church End,
Cherry Hinton
Cambridge CB1 3LB
United Kingdom

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: Introduction	3
CHAPTER II: Nidala	6
CHAPTER III: The Wildlands	18
CHAPTER IV: Scaena	23
CHAPTER V: I'Cath	32
CHAPTER VI: Saragoss	38
CHAPTER VII: Timor	51
CHAPTER VIII: Pharazia	59
CHAPTER IX: Staunton Bluffs	64
CHAPTER X: Nosos	83
Lycanthrope, Wereshark	92
Marikith	93
Mist Ferryman	94
Sea Zombie	95

Credits

Design: Colin McComb (Nidala, Nosos, Pharazia, Saragoss, Scaena, Staunton Bluffs, Timor, Marikith, Mist Ferryman, Sea Zombie, Wereshark) and Scott Bennie (I'Cath, Wildlands)

Editing: Anne Gray McCready

Project Coordination: Timothy B. Brown

Cover Art: Jeff Easley

Interior Art: Jaime Lombardo and Ron Hill

Cartography: John Kencht and Dave Sutherland

Graphic Design: Roy Parker

Typography: Angelika Lokotz

Production: Sarah Feggstad

Thanks to: Rich Baker, Tim Beach, Anne Brown, Timothy B. Brown, William W. Connors, the Garbett-McCombs, Andria Hayday, Slade, Rob King, Paul Nelis, Bruce Nesmith, Kevin Pohle, Dave Sutherland, Pierre Yu, and Dave Zenz

INTRODUCTION

*hat though the field
be lost?*

*All is not lost; the
unconquerable will,
and study of re-
venge, immortal
hate,
and courage never to
submit or yield.*

Milton

Whatever paths a traveler may tread, the call of Ravenloft is irresistible. When the mists spring from the cobblestones of the road-

way, it is much too late to plan an escape. Ravenloft beckons and even the most resourceful and courageous cannot avoid its summons.

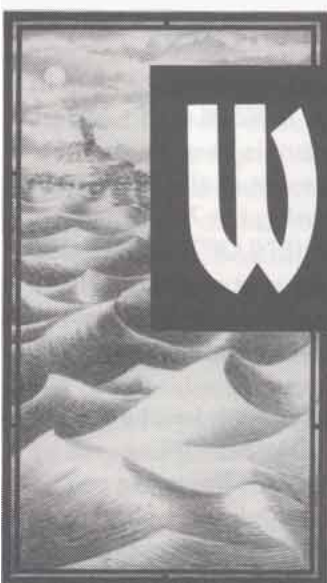
Within this book you will find several domains and stories of the lords and ladies of the islands. Some are human, such as Elena Faith-

hold, and have fallen from grace through corruption or the lack of virtue. Others, like Draga Salt-Biter, make only a pretense of humanity, revealing their true selves only when their prey is defenseless. And then there is the Hive Queen, who does not affect the guise of humanity, burning instead with bestial desires no human can comprehend.

These are only a few of the lords of the Islands of Terror. This book is the final decaying lock on the crypt of insanity and dread, the key to thrusting your players into ever more horrifying situations.

Playing in the Islands

Although some consider the lords of the islands to be less foul than the dread Darklords of the core, nothing could be farther from the truth. Their malevolence rivals that of the most evil lords of Ravenloft and their lands reflect this. They draw their power from the land itself. The lords of the islands are indeed creatures to be feared.



INTRODUCTION

Since their domains are generally much smaller than the Lands of the Core, the lords of the islands take a more personal interest in what transpires around them. This does not mean that the lords have nothing better to do with their spare time than to lie in wait in dark corners, hoping that adventurers will chance by. Rather, they are more likely to keep an eye out for circumstances which threaten their well-being. So the adventurers must keep their presence quiet or risk the personal intervention of the lord.

Each island offers many opportunities for role playing and can recur periodically in the lives of the characters.

The Darklords

The lords of the islands are not foolish individuals. As a rule, they will not risk their lives in mortal combat against adventurers unless they are confident of victory or have no choice. There are always exceptions, such as Elena Faith-hold who is so confident in her abilities that she is frightened of nothing. Others, like Sir Torrence Bleysmith of Staunton Bluffs, will do everything in their power to avoid a direct confrontation.

The lords are the pulsing heart of evil in every domain. They are attuned to changes wrought in their lands and are capable of wielding great power themselves. Some are able to alter the topography of the domain, while others can control the weather at whim. The players should find it difficult to use the land against the lords, for the lords are integral parts of their domains.

It is easy to see that even the weakest of lords would be a match for a well-prepared adventuring party. It is imperative that the Dungeon Master remember this in the rare event that a party encounters a lord. No lord should be an easy target, for they are fully aware of their many powers and will use them to their fullest extent.

The Mood of Ravenloft

There are several important things to keep in mind while running a RAVENLOFT™ game session. Most important is keeping the mood of Gothic horror present at all times. This can be accomplished by using the *Techniques of Terror* described in the RAVENLOFT™ Boxed Set.

Isolation is an important part of mood setting. The characters do not have to be physically separated to be isolated. Establishing a feeling of alienation is enough.

Describe each setting in detail, involving each of the senses in the DM description, not just the visual. If the DM says, "You see a red splotch on the wall. You think it might be blood," much of the effectiveness is lost. On the other hand, it is much more dramatic and helps to set the mood if the DM says, "As you enter this room, the stench of decay assaults your nostrils and the monotonous hum of a buzzing fly invades your ears. A maroon smear covers much of the eastern wall. It looks flaky and dry." If the PCs examine the stain more closely, the DM reveals that this stain appears to be crusted blood. Using vivid descriptions gives the players a much greater sense of participating. The DM involves their entire imagination, not just the visual portion.

The DM must make sure that he describes each scene in terms that can make it seem like the land itself is alive and conspiring against the players. The players will begin to react more and more carefully to each situation, wary for any surprise. This makes them even more vulnerable to any surprises the DM might wish to spring, for the DM can deflate their tension with a simple "boo-scare," as popularized in the movies. Just when they have relaxed from that scare, the real menace pops up like an insane jack-in-the-box.

On the other hand, the DM should avoid too much description. This tends to turn off gamers very quickly if they must listen to an extended series of descriptions; be evocative, but be as brief as possible. The best compromise is for

INTRODUCTION

the DM to judge the mood of the players and use as much description as is necessary.

One feature of RAVENLOFT™ games that can be used to great effect is contrast. Many see the demiplane as a gray, dreary, dismal place, full of evil around every corner. While this may be true in some cases, much of Ravenloft is an awe-inspiring, beautiful place. The forests of Nidala are truly marvelous, the thick trunks of the mighty oaks thrusting high into the azure sky. The illusions Lemot Sedium Juste weaves are breathtaking spectacles of craftsmanship. Nearly everywhere in Ravenloft one encounters beauty and natural splendor.

The beauty of the lands makes the contrast with the lords' evil that much greater. Even the swampy, terror-filled Saragoss has its moments of calm and serenity. The shock of encountering such malevolence in the midst of so much charm is far more horrifying to the players than stumbling across a vampire in the heart of an old, crumbling tomb. Finding the cancerous heart of darkness after relaxing amid the beauty created by it becomes traumatizing to even the most experienced adventurer. Finding oneself that close to temptation before seeing through the mask to the festering darkness beneath it tends to be rather unnerving.

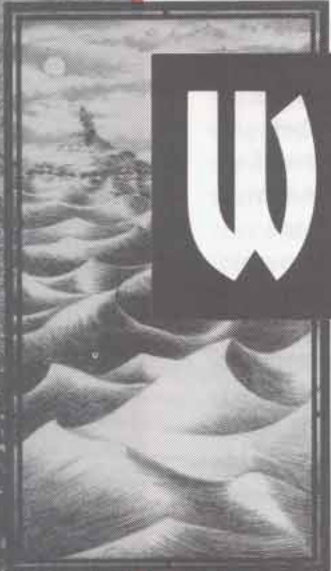
The DM should avoid discussions of game mechanics and curb his use of game terms. Very little deflates a good scary mood faster than *gamespeak*. Instead, the DM should describe each combat as a player would feel it personally. We don't know our hit points in real life and neither would the player characters know how many their characters have.

Optionally, the DM might wish to keep a separate sheet with the PC's ability scores, Armor Class, and hit points listed; keeping this sheet secret, and telling them only how badly their character is feeling from that recent werewolf bite. This also lets the DM perform subtle manipulations of statistics if necessary, perhaps because of vampires, diseases, or malefic magic.

Let it be noted though, that keeping this sheet means a lot of extra work for the DM. If the DM discovers that this creates a burden, he shouldn't do it. Likewise, if it actually enhances the general mood of role playing sessions and the DM doesn't mind the paperwork, he should feel free to keep the system.

The DM should be judicious in what the players do and do not know about Ravenloft. Even the lords do not know that the plane on which they are trapped is called Ravenloft. All they know is that they are prisoners in their own domains, in a land that is seemingly a reflection of their own evil desires though most deny this on a conscious level. The natives tend to be unaware of any sort of Ravenloft's evil. They are simply peasants in a harsh place. Few people in the demiplane, if any, have any clue that the domains are run by especially evil people. The land is the land, with all of its vagaries and strangeness.

And now, welcome to Ravenloft. As the Mists arise, the terror mounts. Struggling to avoid fate is of no avail, for the dark land has its unrelenting grip on the unfortunate and will not let go despite their entreaties. The screams of the ill-fated fall on deaf ears or even worse, draw the attention of unfriendly ears.



Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into the Abyss, the Abyss looks also into you.

Nietzsche

In all the world, there can be nothing more terrible than good gone astray. Whether it involves the seduction of innocence or the corruption of an upright, holy woman, such a loss can only be a great gain for evil.

The Lord

In a simpler time, the young paladin Elena Faith-hold thundered across the world, dealing death and destruction to the enemies of goodness everywhere. Her mighty sword-arm and her great beauty won her renown far and wide. She and her companions, who included the Lady Kateri Shadowborn (see the RAVENLOFT™ *Darklords* accessory), cut a swath through the evil and corruption in the world. When the time came for the parting of their ways, Elena did not falter from her path, but continued with her holy mission. Her power increased vastly and followers of her god flocked to her, knowing her to be the instrument of retribution for which they had searched so long.

Their praise and adulation filled Elena's ears and heart. Although she knew that she was merely the undeserving vessel of her god's power, and thus unworthy of the worship bestowed upon her, she still basked in the adoration of the masses and took their sacrifices for herself. After a time, she once again girded herself for battle, saddled her unicorn, and went forth to crush evil utterly. At her back rode thousands of fanatics, all of them intent on proving themselves to Elena and their god.

The forces of evil rose up to combat this crusade. Lawful, chaotic, and neutral all forgot their differences to assure their survival. In-

deed, in the spirit of survival, they neglected the spite and petty bickering and the machinations and plots that made them evil. The War of Evil lasted many months on the blood-soaked plains, each side sustaining huge casualties. In the end, the forces of good emerged victorious though vastly reduced. All that remained of the evil forces in Elena's lands were tiny strongholds, which proved to be easy hunting for various eager converts.

Elena rested on her laurels for a time, secure in the love of her people. She was confident that no further evil would trouble the peace she had established in her land. Naively, she underestimated the human penchant for self-destruction. This proved to be her downfall.

In the wake of her victory, many of her subjects came "to see the light," and they converted to the worship of Elena's god. No doubt some of these conversions were the result of pressure applied to nonbelievers by some of the extremists, but the majority were certainly sincere.

Some resisted these gentle, and occasionally not-so-gentle, urgings toward "the One True Religion." Angry at being repulsed, zealots approached Elena with venomous lies about the stubborn ones.

Elena, never one to reconsider a course of action once she deemed it correct, leapt into a new holy war against any who were not firmly allied with the side of good, ruthlessly crushing the unbelievers and the heathens. During this conflict and through the times of her pogroms against the "new evil," Elena's gifts as a paladin, along with her unicorn mount, deserted her. This did not worry Elena, for she knew that occasional tests of faith are important for the righteous. She never stopped to think that she might be angering her god.

In time, Elena's armies extinguished the neutrals. Not satisfied with simply eliminating those who opposed her religion, she decided to annihilate those who were not firm allies and those who were not human. As she waged her ruthlessly grim war against those who had once fought at her side, a nagging doubt spoke to

NIDALA



NIDALA

her. It suggested that perhaps her powers had deserted her because the course she was taking ran directly contrary to the wishes of her god.

Anguished, Elena left the strife in the command of one of the priests who had instigated the violence against these unfortunate souls, and went to pray to her god for guidance. Her god, appalled by her acts of slaughter in his name, refused to answer her supplication. In the void left by his absence, darker powers answered.

As she slept that night in the chapel profaned by her very presence, a mist arose from the stones of the church. She woke to find herself lying in a swirling fog, with no familiar landmarks in sight. Concluding that this and the loss of her powers were tests designed by her god, she strode grimly forth from the Mists and emerged in Ravenloft.

When she stepped from the turbulent clouds, she found herself without arms or armor, on a wooded hillside. Despite her apparent weakness, she was anything but defenseless. She proved this to a passing warrior who attempted to restrain her. His body lay steaming in the cold morning air when she finished her demonstration.

Now fully clad, armed, and armored, she proceeded with much more confidence. At last she stumbled upon a village of swarthy humans, where they greeted her with stony stares and cold silence. Elena suspected them of being gypsy-kin. Supposing gypsies to be liars, cheats, and thieves, Elena approached them with ill-concealed dislike. It was apparent to both sides that this would not be a pleasant confrontation. It was also obvious that Elena would not receive the courtesy due her as a paladin of her god. This became even more clear when the stones began flying from the hands of the villagers.

Elena, pushed far past the bounds of patience, felt a madness come upon her. She slew the entire population of adults and sent the children scampering into the wilderness. Then, stricken by the idea that she had failed the ten-

ets of her faith, prayed to her god for forgiveness for the better part of a week. Without her priest to advise her in the proper conduct, she felt slightly lost. However, she was also confident in her ability to interpret the signs her god sent her way. After finishing her prayers, she started out again only after she had set the village to the torch in order to create a pyre for the dead.

Overcome with remorse, she wandered the wildernesses of Ravenloft, observing around her all manner of evil things. Indeed, there was scarcely a time that she did not witness some variety of evil activity, whether it be from evil monsters or from inhumane people. Her repentance at the destruction of the village slowly altered its form, until it became a white-hot fury at the evil she witnessed about her. She assumed that all the villages of this strange land contained only evil folk, and she was determined to rid the world of them.

Resolved to cleanse this area of its vile inhabitants, she adopted a plan. She disguised herself and sat quietly in a public place, observing the populace. If she saw more evil than good, she would destroy the village.

To further this end, she set out to learn all she could regarding the nature of the place in which she had arrived. Quite through accident she discovered the random transporting powers of the Mists of Ravenloft, and she came to use these frequently to move from village to village. She did not think it odd that she could not control the location to which the Mists sent her, for she assumed that her god sent her where her services were most needed.

Many of those villages unfortunate enough to be visited by Elena met their dooms at her hands. Her observation sites were often the places of the most ill-repute in a town, where evil among the townsfolk was most likely to flourish. In her small-minded pettiness, Elena never stopped to consider that a sampling of people is not always representative of the whole, and many good people were slaughtered by the vengeful paladin.

NIDALA

Elena's potential for evil and her actualization of it attracted the notice of the Dark Powers of Ravenloft. After she had brutally massacred her tenth town, she stepped into the Mists to be transported to her next target. When she emerged again, she found herself before a huge castle. Preparing herself for battle, she strode forward and rapped the hilt of her sword against the huge front door. As it opened, a wizened old servant greeted her and ushered her into the reception hall. He welcomed her back to her castle.

Confused and shocked, she recognized the servant and the castle as her own. She was not sure of how to reconcile this with her experiences, but accepted it nonetheless. Thus came Elena Faith-hold to be the lord of the domain called Nidala.

Appearance

Although she is in her late forties, Elena Faith-hold is a beautiful woman. Her long raven hair and deep blue eyes have tempted many a man, although none have been so brave as to make their attentions known to her. She is not quite six feet tall and is obviously very well-muscled, although this does not interfere with her good looks. She carries an air of compelling leadership with her, and her mere presence is often enough to quiet a room full of the most vulgar soldiers.

She usually dresses in her field plate armor, which she has emblazoned with her holy symbol. Her broad sword is never far from her side, even when she dresses in civilian clothing.

She appears to be a highly dangerous woman, even from afar. Up close, she is even more frightening, for she never seems to smile, and her face knows no restful innocence. She has found the world devoid of goodness and charm. Instead, she perceives it as full of corruption and degradation. Her aura exudes the impression that she has seen almost everything, experienced almost all that life holds. Her eyes burn with a holy zeal, creating a curious contrast

with her cynical, world-weary demeanor. It is obvious to even a casual observer that she is a fanatic, one who would not hesitate to run a heathen through.

Current Sketch

Elena Faith-hold remains a dedicated opponent of what she perceives as evil. From her castle atop Mount Malcredo, she hatches plots and plans to extinguish the rampant evil throughout her country. She tries to deal with the peasants' recalcitrant natures by instigating rehabilitative programs. These programs usually involve imprisoning and torturing the disobedient individual until he recants his heretical ways. Unfortunately, these programs tend only to create even more unrest and hatred than they cure, causing Elena untold grief.

When she first became lord of Nidala, Elena rejoiced in her new-found power. Heady with surprise and joy that her god had seemingly returned her to grace, she dedicated herself forevermore to the outright destruction of all evil, no matter where it might be found. Riding from her new castle, she traveled into the countryside of her domain. As she rode through the villages, she found no trace of evil among the peasants. Pleased with her land and her subjects, she returned to her castle where she began issuing edicts that would ensure the continued goodness of her populace.

Her surprise was nearly complete when, the next time she rode out, she detected trace amounts of evil and could feel an undercurrent of resentment toward her. She attempted to remedy this by seizing those whom she perceived as radiating evil and taking them back to the castle to re-educate them.

When simply talking to the offenders did not suffice to restore them to the path of righteousness, Elena began to use less subtle methods of persuasion. With the glowing brazier and some red-hot irons close at hand, it did not take long for the heretics to recant their mistakes.

Her methods have not changed over time except, perhaps, to become subtler. These days, when her subjects cannot see the truth through simple reason, the thumb screw, the iron maiden, and the barbed needle speak whole volumes of verity to the prisoner. Likewise, most visitors to Nidala fall prey to Elena's persuasiveness, in one form or another. Her influence is most compelling.

As both perceived and actual ruler of Nidala, Elena Faith-hold likes to make sure that all functions as it should in her land. To this end, she rides out among her subjects once a week. To reach all the villages, she is usually out on inspection tours four days of the week. Elena's absence does not mean her castle is left unguarded, but rather that it is slightly underpowered. Many have attempted to free the unfortunates trapped within during her absence, yet only a few have succeeded.

When she is scheduled to reach a village, the mayor declares a Restday so that the peasants may present themselves to her as she inspects the village for any mounting evil. If she finds any who raise her ever-wary hackles, she has her retinue arrest that serf, to be detained and questioned by her inquisitors.

Despite her fierce actions, Elena does have a few admirers. Many peasant children believe that she is the paladin she claims to be, and they wish to emulate her. Some have grown up with the legend of Elena resounding in their minds, and these are among her most loyal enforcers, the Guardians of Morals in Nidala. Some, of course, display their affection and admiration for her too strongly, and she consigns them to the dungeons.

Once a week, Elena feels an irresistible compulsion to ride forth at midnight. On her frantic, feverish gallop, she tries to flee from the spirits of the innocents she has caused to be murdered. Her guilt and her conscience nip at her, stinging her with the knowledge that she has caused untold suffering. The voices in her head torment her, letting her know that despite her good intentions, she is doomed to contin-

ually fail. These voices haunt her until she collapses from her horse, shrieking with despair and exhaustion.

She sleeps where she falls, tears streaming from her eyes even in repose. When she awakens, she is firm with resolve to make Nidala a better place. Her pogroms against evil's hold grow fiercer and fiercer. Thus, she unwittingly feeds the cycle of doom she has created.

Although Elena sleeps deeply after her rides, she awakens at the slightest noises that may indicate danger. She is always fully aware of her surroundings.

The Land

On the western border of Nidala, a thick wood of titanic trees guards the entry to the land. Further inland, the forest gradually gives way to the towering peaks of the Theospine mountains, some of which are so high that the snow never melts from their tops. The range runs from the far northern reaches of Nidala to the southern frontier. Just to the east of the mountains lie the foothills. The wooded hills hide several small hamlets, as well as a few minor caves, ideal hideouts for beasts or those on the run from the law.

On the edge of the hills is the walled capital city of Touraine, a jewel of civilization in a land mostly without culture. The vitality of Touraine is somewhat subdued by the looming presence of Mount Malcredo on its western wall. Elena's glowering castle overlooks the city, its forbidding walls presenting a cold face to the land. The winds continually whip about the stone parapets and gray towers of the Faith Hold, churning the clouds that whirl incessantly over the fortress. The frenzied storm feeds a continuous stream of lightning into the uppermost tower of the citadel, powering the various engines Elena has had built in her hold.

A few miles to the south and west of Touraine a large, deep lake dominates the scenery. Its glacial waters are home to numerous aquatic creatures, some of which are dangerous. Lake

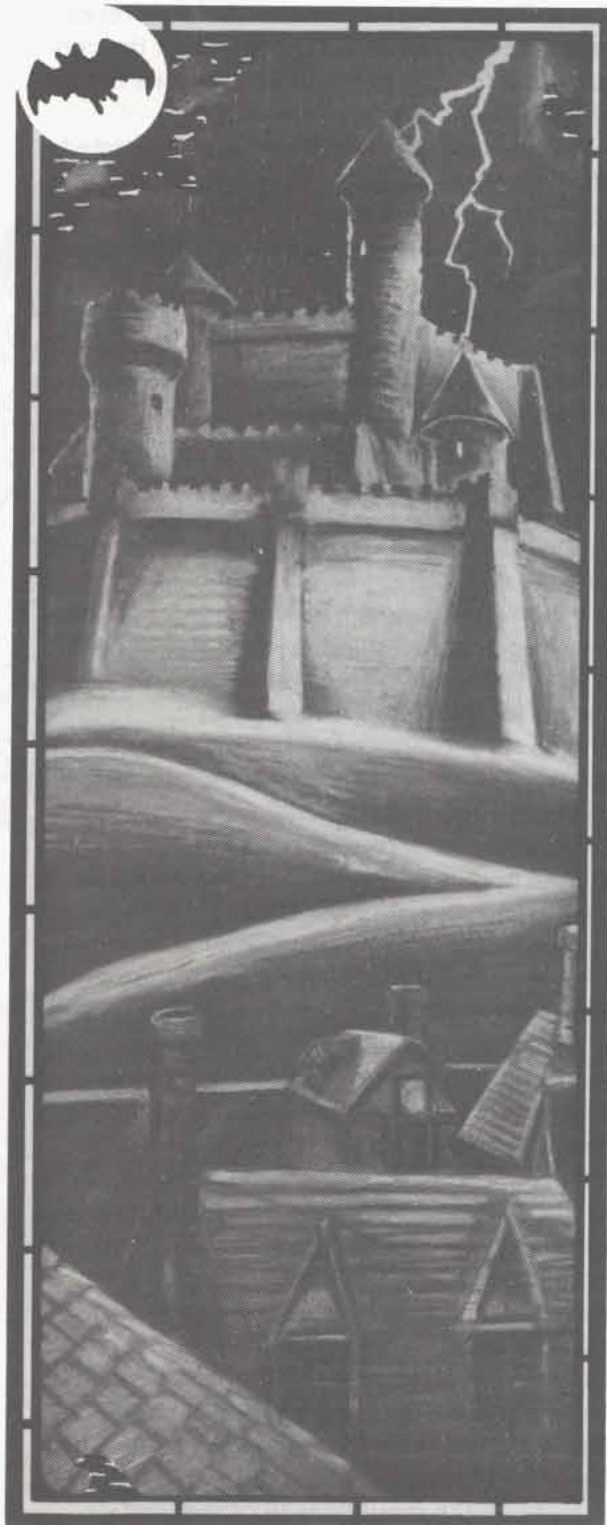
NIDALA

Amenta is a natural focal point for the beasts of Nidala, as it is one of the largest sources of fresh water in the land. Rumors of a portal leading to and from a magical golden realm hidden deep beneath the waters have enticed many seekers here since the creation of Nidala. These rumors have also led to the assumed deaths of many of these seekers, for no one who has ventured into the depths of the icy lake has ever returned.

To the east of Touraine and Lake Amenta, the terrain becomes a rolling grassland, covered with the farms and villages of the common peasants. This is the heartland of Nidala, for the peasants here ensure the survival of the other inhabitants of the land. The soil in the grasslands is very fertile, often allowing two harvests a year. The main crops are barley and corn, with the fields alternated as pasturage for cattle and other farm animals. Occasionally, a woodland predator will venture from the forest to seize an isolated animal, but this is unusual.

Finally, to the east of the farms, the traveler once again reaches a forest on the border. The trees here are not as large as they are in the west, but are still magnificent. Lumberjacks constantly travel in and out of the forests, carrying their loads of wood to safeguard the other citizens against winter's cold fury. They make their home in these woods all year long, through the tempestuous springs and gentle summers, through the wind-tossed autumn, and into the snarling maw of the bitter winter itself.

The citizens of Nidala acknowledge Elena Faith-hold as their ruler, but do not know that she is the true lord of the domain. Elena has created the myth of an evil dragon that destroys the land and justifies her harsh treatment of the peasants as protecting their best interests and keeping them free from evil. Although the people are sure that Elena is powerful enough to protect them, they are also sure that she is powerful enough to continue oppressing them if it suits her purpose. Little do they know that this is already the case. Those that visit her torture chambers do not usually live to tell of



NIDALA

them. Those who survive are often in a receptive state of mind, and eagerly accept the conversion offered by Elena. They become her most rabid enforcers.

Nidala itself is a beautiful land, its forested hills and gently sloping mountains hide small, icy lakes. An occasional river twists sinuously through the plains and hills, irrigating the land. Some of the larger western mountains sport complex networks of caverns, all of which are reputed to hold great treasure as well as great danger. The few baneful creatures in eastern Nidala are said to make their homes in these caves, although few have seen the creatures and lived to tell of it.

The huge oaks tower over those who wander in the forests of the east and the west. The forests are rife with animal life, but the natural predators are almost never dangerous to those in the eastern forest. If any creatures become hostile to humans, Elena knows about it shortly thereafter and goes forth to crush the creature and its ilk entirely. Normally, this would upset the fragile balance of the land's ecosystem, but Elena maintains the natural cycle through her lordly powers. Because of this pruning of the animal populace, there are no bears or large cats in Nidala east of the Theospine range.

West of the mountains, where Elena does not often venture, the story is entirely different. The western forest contains a surprising variety of creatures, not all of which are part of the natural order. The Nidalans consider travel in these parts dangerous to the extreme, and will not hazard their lives here willingly.

Part of their fear of the woodlands is because of the easy transformation of the stunningly beautiful forests. The woods become eerily ominous at night. The heavy branches of the trees creak with every stray wind and the leaves rustle even when no breeze is evident. One can see the red reflections of the eyes of feral beasts by torchlight, gleaming from behind heavy shrubs. Most of the populace keeps a healthy distance from the forest at night.

Even on the mountains in central Nidala,

where the trees grow more sparsely, one cannot avoid the sense of impending doom. Every boulder's shadow seems to hold more than just simple darkness and every sliding pebble appears to presage an imminent attack upon one's person. More often than not, this proves to be simple nervousness. Then again, there are always exceptions.

The Folk

Nidala has almost 30,000 people. Most of the citizens live in the city of Touraine (population 20,000) in relative harmony. The lack of crime is largely because Elena has instituted laws which, upon pain of torture, require the citizens to report witnessed crimes immediately. Any citizen who strikes another is subject to arrest and imprisonment. Thus, the people are civil to one another and do not instigate any sort of trouble.

The other 10,000 people live in various small villages scattered through the domain, most no more than ten miles from Touraine. These villages tend to be small farming communities whose produce goes mostly to feed the city-dwellers. Since they are farther from Elena's yoke, life in these towns is a bit easier than it would be in Touraine. However, Elena does keep informers in the outlying towns, so the citizenry trusts no newcomers more than absolutely necessary. Those wishing to gain the trust of a Nidalan must first perform some extraordinary acts in order to convince the Nidalan of their good intentions.

A council governs each of these villages. The council answers to the mayor, who is usually one of Elena's stooges and a former enforcer. The Lord Mayor controls the city of Touraine and heads the Council of Mayors which convenes once every season. He too is completely under Elena's control, although Elena gives him liberty to pretend otherwise in order to ensnare traitors.

The cities and villages of Nidala are fairly typical medieval towns, although the merri-

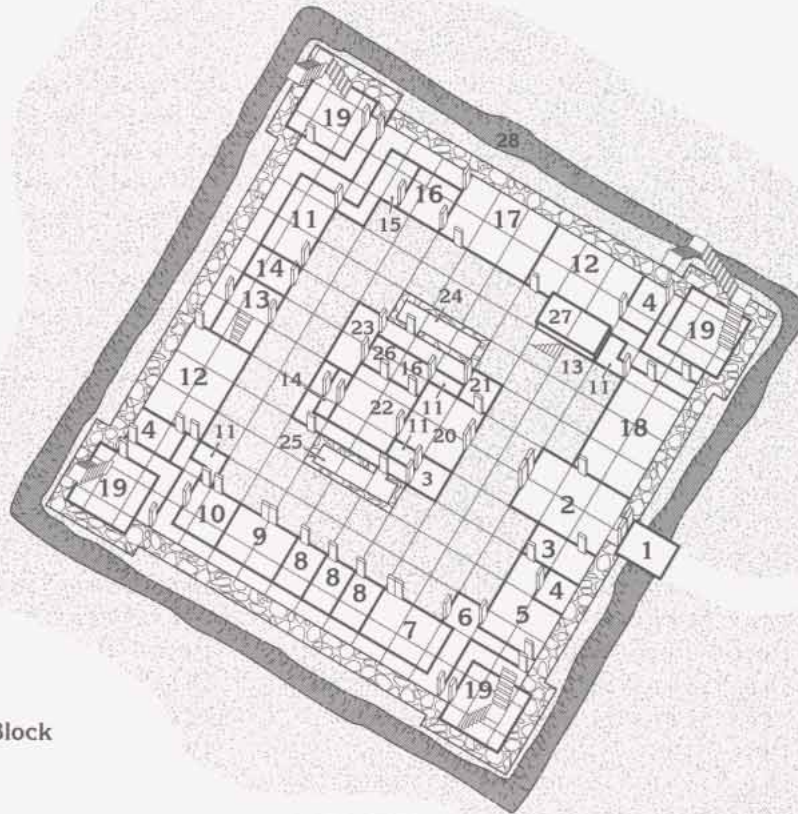
NIDALA

Faith Hold

One square = 10 feet

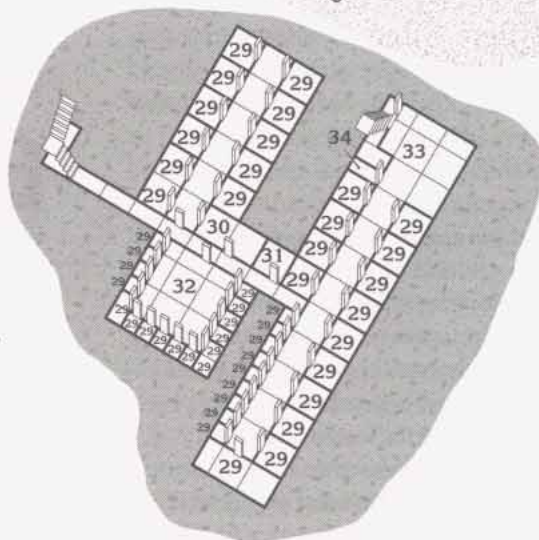
UPPER LEVEL:

1. Drawbridge
2. Gatehouse
3. Guard Room
4. Armory
5. Officers' Quarters
6. Soldiers' Dayroom
7. Wagoners
8. Workshop
9. Smithy
10. Meeting Room
11. Storage
12. Barracks
13. Entrance to Dungeons
14. Servants' Quarters
15. Pantry
16. Kitchen
17. Mess Hall
18. Stable
19. Guard Tower
20. Grand Hall
21. Sitting Room
22. Dining Hall
23. Master Bedroom
24. Chapel Tower
25. Lookout Tower
26. Study
27. Gallows and Executioner's Block
28. Ditch



LOWER LEVEL:

29. Cell
30. Guard Room
31. Interrogation Room
32. "Re-Education Center"
33. Confession Room
34. Storage



NIDALA

ment that can often characterize some of the latter is never to be found in Nidala. The citizens are brutally repressed in this land and are ripe for a revolt. Unfortunately, all previous attempts have failed, and the spirit of the people fades with each miscarried attempt. They can take little more before they become simple drones.

Elena makes sure that the populace continues to believe in her dragon. And in order to carry out this pretense she employs foul methods that ensure Ravenloft will never release her.

When she finds that a given village has grown more evil in its ways, usually after she has seized a few of its citizens, she and her enforcers surround the village. When all are in place, they swoop down on the village as a nightmarish horde. Swords gleaming in the light of the torches they carry, they slaughter all within the village, giving no quarter. The steel robs young and old alike of their lives as the village goes up in flames.

When the marauders have finally finished annihilating the village, they creep back to Mount Malcredo. From here Elena issues an apology for not arriving in time to prevent the dragon from destroying yet another village.

The Law

The populace of Nidala is overwhelmingly grim, for their lives are strictly regulated by Elena's weekly "Decrees of Faith." Her church enforcers (4th level fighters) ensure compliance with her decisions, arresting those who do not obey. Sample decrees include, "Church attendance shall be mandatory, Respect thy betters in all things," and "There shall be no levity on Restday." Elena considers any who attempt to circumvent the laws through loopholes to be common criminals. Instead of rewarding them for their intelligence, she has them executed as traitors to the state.

The enforcers take those unfortunate enough to be arrested to the overflowing dungeons of the Faith Hold where the small army of Elena's

inquisitors holds sway. They perform the subtle methods of persuasion on those insignificant enough that Elena need not be bothered with them. They have become most skilled at granting pain to those who have angered a person in power.

In Nidala, Elena has tailored the law so that the punishment fits the crime. A thief will have his hands lopped off, while a slanderer or a gossip will have his tongue cut from his head. Those who do not attend church or who speak against her church vanish into Elena's dungeons.

All manner of merry-making is forbidden, including dancing, singing, theater, and carousing. Bards are most definitely not welcome in Nidala, as they are said to disseminate seditious and treasonous sentiments. The enforcers force those caught practicing magic to join Elena's side or be put to death immediately. Elena does not consider it necessary to educate her subjects, as she is afraid that this will open them more readily to the wiles of evil.

When Elena and her enforcers are not present, the Nidalans often refer to her as "Elena Stranglehold," for they live in fear of her and her edicts. However, they have learned to control their emotions when she is present, for those who cannot are arrested and usually tortured to death.

Confronting Elena

Elena Faith-hold (10th-level fighter): AC -1; MV 12; HD 10; hp 90; Str 18/00; Dex 15; Con 15; Int 11; Wis 14; Cha 18; #AT 5/2; Dmg 2d4+10; SA +2 bastard sword, *conversion* attempt, *turn* lawful good opponents as level 10 cleric; SD +2 field plate armor, +2 to all saving throws; MR 30%; AL LE; THACO 5

The characters will likely first see Elena as a force for good in Ravenloft and might well side with her in her quest to destroy evil. Eventually, they may come to see that her methods are totally evil and work to destroy her. In that time however, it is very possible that Elena has

already divined their intent and worked to flank the PCs' maneuvers.

Although Elena is technically no longer a paladin, the dark powers of Ravenloft have granted her a twisted equivalent of those powers normally held by a paladin. She retains her +2 bonus to her saving throws, her immunity to disease, and her ability to cast priest spells. However, she can no longer *cure disease*, nor can she *heal wounds*. Instead, she can *cause light wounds* three times a day and can *cause disease* twice a week. She views this change as only fitting, for she no longer regards herself as a dispenser of soothing words and healing hands, but as an avenger of evil.

Her greatest aid in her quest to seek and destroy corruption is her ability to *detect evil*. Since no other paladin has had any success with this ability in Ravenloft, Elena ascribes their failure to lack of true communication with their gods. She holds that this demonstrates the unworthiness of all gods but hers.

In reality, her ability does not function as it should. What she really detects is strong emotion directed at her. This ability is both a gift and a curse, for while she can easily distinguish her enemies because of their hatred for her, she also perceives those who love her as unremittingly evil. Both groups are immediately crushed. Those who simply fear her are given good reason to do so, for strong fear also registers as evil to her. She does take steps to remedy that "evil."

Her detection ability is augmented by the power to detect life within 60 feet. By concentrating fiercely for one round, she can find any humanoid creature whose thoughts are unshielded. This power does not function against undead, nor in the case of infants or the insane. She has found it very useful though, to track down criminals and heretics. This power works at her will.

She can no longer *turn undead* though, nor can she command them. To her mind, this means that she must destroy the undead when she finds them, for she cannot influence them



in any other way. She regards undead as yet another evil to be eradicated and so any powers she might have regarding the undead would go unused anyway.

Finally, to replace her unicorn steed, Ravenloft has granted her a new mount, a *shape-changed* night mare. It resembles her unicorn in all respects, except that this steed is black. Not only does it have all its abilities as a night mare, it has learned those of the unicorn as well, making it an even more formidable opponent than it had ever been previously.

Elena despises other religions, especially those not on the side of law and goodness. While she can tolerate those that preach the doctrine of law, she will use every means in her grasp to convert the "unbelievers" to her faith. If she fails to do so after a reasonable period, she will destroy the heathen.

In combat, Elena Faith-hold fights with a +2 bastard sword named Caitlin. She prefers to fight two-handed, but can go one-handed equally well. She is also proficient in using all types

NIDALA

of bladed weapons and in employing all fighting styles, and is often eager to demonstrate this.

While fighting, she may try to *convert* characters to her side. They must make a successful save vs. spells with a +1 penalty or they will "see the light," and join Elena's cause with great rejoicing. The recipients of this spell act as though ensnared by a *charm* spell, but even offer their lives for Elena.

She tries to remain completely aloof from personal contact, for she feels as though she has been tainted with evil when her lovers betray her. When someone declares his love for her she has learned to detect evil in that individual. Invariably she finds that evil has taken hold of him and she must have him put to death. This saddens her greatly, and it would probably crush her spirit to know that these men did indeed love her.

Nonetheless, she remains a romantic, sure that someday she will meet the right one for her. Ironically, the only man who will ever be able to claim her love will be one who is totally uninterested in her, who is only using her for personal gain. As long as his feelings do not grow too strong, one way or another, he will be safe.

Closing the Borders

When Elena wills it, the air around the border of Nidala hazes over, obscuring vision with an inconstant waver. Those venturing into this murk find themselves wandering into insubstantial torture chambers. These illusions present the character as the main attraction, with teams of inquisitors working him over eagerly. The farther the character progresses, the less the illusion fluctuates, and the more it seems to become real. Soon, the wayfarer finds himself viewing the chamber through the victim's eyes and feels a twinge of the pain the illusion depicts. If the traveler is so foolish as to continue, it is likely he finds himself fully immersed in the illusion, except that it



is no longer an illusion. The escapee from the domain will have wandered from the border of the domain to its heart, the dungeons of Elena's castle.

Encounters

The eastern portion of Nidala is no longer very dangerous to the casual traveler. The chance for random encounters is nearly non-existent (20% once during the day, 25% twice at night), as Elena has effectively stamped out any creatures that might be dangerous to her subjects. One could expect to sleep the night in the forest and most likely wake unharmed. Of course, there are certain fell creatures who are intelligent enough to hide their handiwork, and no one should be so foolish as to assume their own complete safety in the wilds. Also, some beasts never make permanent homes and so are harder to find.

Some small packs of wolves prowl the eastern hills, hunting small game and the occasion-

NIDALA

al deer or moose. They do not attack travelers, nor even approach their camps unless provoked. Wolves are naturally cautious and shy animals, and therefore fight humanoids only in self-defense, or in defense of their lair or young.

The western lands are much more dangerous to the wayfarer, for Elena and her woodsmen do not patrol here. They assume anyone traveling west of the mountains is either a criminal or a fool, and therefore no loss to their culture. Aside from the danger presented by the natural and unnatural predators, a traveler must also look out constantly for bandits and outlaws seeking to overthrow Elena's tyranny. The chance for an encounter in the west is 25% every two hours during the day and 25% every hour at night.

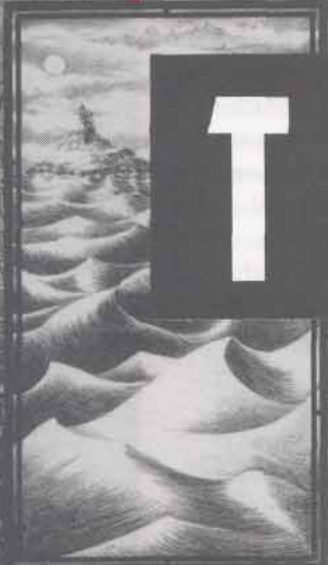
Any lycanthropes who wander into her land tend to avoid the human settlements, for if they make their presence known, their lives are at stake. Similarly, the intelligent undead try to steer clear of Nidala, as the fanaticism of its lord is becoming fairly well known throughout the Lands of the Core.

Quite a few creatures see Nidala as a proving ground for their strength. Therefore, they venture in to wreak as much havoc and terror as possible before retreating into the Misty Border. These schemes often backfire, as Elena closes the border to hunt and slay the offending creature. With her teams of woodsmen (6th level fighters), no monster can long escape detection. She must concentrate on maintaining the closure, so a creature skilled enough to evade the hunters for several hours may manage to make good its escape.

Likewise, criminals or those who have angered Elena or broken one of her many laws, often make their way into the western forest. From here they try to escape or, in some cases, establish a resistance against Elena. These rebels are a thorn in her side, for they are more mobile than her forces and are constantly one step ahead of her woodsmen. She suspects that a traitor among her men feeds the resistance information, but cannot prove anything yet.



THE WILDLANDS



*iger! Tiger! Burning bright!
In the forests of the night
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*
William Blake

Powerful are the hooves of the horse on the open plain, and strong are its flanks. Like the lion, its mane flows like wind as it runs, a banner borne over the rushing stream of its movement. Strong, majestic, and untamed, the horses once ruled the grass lands near the jungle.

But they are here no longer. The grass is still and does not hiss as it did when horses moved through the savanna. The horses are dead, long dead. The flies killed them. The dark swarming things cared not for power nor majesty, only blood. The pitiless stupid things carry death in their sting, the sleeping sickness. When one speaks of the law of the jungle, of the strong conquering the weak, they know nothing. Look at the fly. It is the weakest of the weak, yet it will survive after the lions are gone, after the last gazelle has left its bones in the sun, after the last gorilla has fallen, even after the last monkey has been eaten by the last wily crocodile. There is a strength that the mighty cannot understand. This is the Wildlands, where the strong devour the weak and the weak devour the strong, and death is as abundant as life. It is not a place for humans, unless they seek death that wears masks unseen in the human lands.

The Lord

Once there was a crocodile. He was the largest, most wicked crocodile that ever was. When he hatched from his accursed egg he devoured his parents and his brethren. So evil did this crocodile become that the jungle could not endure him. Monkeys died at the sight of him. The water turned poisonous as he

swam in it. The reeds broke and plants withered and died as he drew near them, and the bank on which he rested turned black and evil. He was a crocodile whom other crocodiles hated for his cruelty. He was much bigger than the others and his hide was much thicker and his teeth much sharper. He preyed on his own kind as cruelly as his own kinsfolk did upon the once playful monkeys.

Finally, so great was the evil of this crocodile that all of the animals of the jungle gathered together and debated how to destroy him. The jungle screamed with the noise of the arguing. Lions roared, elephants trumpeted, gorillas bellowed, and flies buzzed. They decided that only the legendary hairless apes had the cunning and might to defeat King Crocodile and they sent a parrot to go to their jungle and invite them to kill their nemesis.

The hairless apes came, but chose not to battle King Crocodile. Instead, they felled the trees and burned the jungle, turning it in places to ash and ruin. They hunted the animals for their meat and their hides and for the thrill of the hunt. And then the jungle became full of woe and the animals declared that the hairless apes were worse than King Crocodile. So they went to King Crocodile and begged him to eat the hairless apes and save them.

"Hairless apes are very powerful," King Crocodile said, hiding his smile. "If you give me all your powers, I shall eat these apes."

And the creatures of the jungle, one by one, came to King Crocodile and gave him their powers, and he grew in strength and swiftness and cunning. Only the wise python refused to give King Crocodile his powers. Of all the animals only the fly was refused when he came to King Crocodile, for the crocodile felt it was too undignified to take a gift from a fly.

Then King Crocodile came forth from his swamp, crowned in power and exalting in evil. He came down upon the hairless apes with the speed of a cheetah, with the ferocity of a rhino, and with the cunning of a monkey. He devoured the apes, every man, woman, and child. As he

THE WILDLANDS

felt their warm blood in his mouth, he laughed and cried aloud, and that cry was terrifying to hear. At last the hairless apes were dead.

The assembled creatures called out to King Crocodile to give back their powers, but King Crocodile laughed and hunted them. But even the voracious appetite of a creature like King Crocodile has its limits, and he sat in his swamp and digested his meal while the other animals hid. All except the python.

"I did not need your gift!" laughed the crocodile as it rested, looking up at the serpent.

"I shall give you your gift now," said the python. "A gift of prophecy. You shall die either by the hand of a hairless ape or you shall die from something you felt was beneath your dignity."

The crocodile was too sated to kill the python, but he laughed. The wise python then gathered his brethren and departed the jungle. As he looked back upon King Crocodile's swamp, he saw a great mist rise everywhere, enveloping grasslands, covering the great forest. The earth shook and the wise python, looking from beyond the mists, could see a great rift form, like a huge maw with crocodile teeth. Then the jungle was swallowed whole and the crocodile and all of the ones who had aided him had discovered themselves in a new land. But the land was evil and preserved the crocodile from time and increased his strength. The crocodile preyed on the creatures at will and their lives were filled with great terror even when he was asleep.

The Wildlands have been in this state for a long time. Humans may ask how long the Wildlands have been in the land of Mists, but the beasts do not concern themselves with time. There is fear and there is hunger and woe to humans who do not understand this when they trek across its domain.

Appearance

King Crocodile is a giant crocodile measuring forty feet from his long sharp snout to his great smashing tail. His hide is incredibly thick, gray and brown with age, with sharp scales. He has a yellow-white underbelly which is not as well protected as the rest of him as there are several large sores here, further agitated by fly bites. His teeth are yellow and his eyes have an unnatural red glow.

Current Sketch

The ruler of the Wildlands is Crocodile, who rules by right of might, fang, claw, and scale, and survival which, in the jungle, is a more clear indication of who is a king than any crown. He lives alone in a marsh at the northern edge of the jungle. Few other crocodiles or any other animals live there now, so Crocodile is always hungry.

Most of the beasts of the Wildlands pay tribute to Crocodile, offering shares of food, or even their own young, to feed his hunger and prevent Crocodile from eating them. He enjoys being worshipped, but does not let this get in the way of satisfying his hunger.

The Land

Flies and heat are everywhere. Those lucky few who have traveled in the Wildlands and have come out again alive rarely talk about anything else. The flies and heat are everywhere and there is no escape from them. No armor will protect the traveler from their sting.

Noise also pervades the jungle. There is no quiet in the Wildlands. Life is everywhere (except in King Crocodile's northern marshes), and life makes noises, from the squawks of frightened parrots to the scream of the gazelle when the panther catches it. The noise is particularly difficult to withstand for those few humans who travel in the Wildlands. The Wildlands is an animal place. No humans have ever dwelled

THE WILDLANDS

there. When man's footsteps break the grass of the savanna or crunch the overgrown leaves of the jungle floor, it often seems as though a great anger is kindled against them. The noise intensifies and grows hostile.

Except for the fly, all creatures in the Wildlands can speak the tongue of man, the hairless ape, but few do. The fly simply drones in its noisy, incomprehensible buzz. Because the fly cannot communicate, it is not treated with the respect it deserves. But the lowly fly has killed more humans than all of the jungle's creatures combined. Remembering the wise python's prophecy, King Crocodile has commanded that he be told if any hairless ape should enter the Wildlands. Few would willingly defy Crocodile. However, Crocodile has chosen not to concern himself with the rest of the python's prophecy.

Night in the jungle is dark indeed, but those who travel in the Wildlands will have the impression that they are being watched, that invisible eyes are staring at them at all times. Often a traveler will look into the darkness and find faint lights that disappear almost immediately, or the glow of cat's eyes reflecting moonlight, which vanish as soon as they are approached. These sights have driven many an unfortunate traveler mad shortly before his untimely demise.

The island of the Wildlands encompasses a thirty-mile diameter section of jungle, savanna, and marsh. It is small compared to the original jungle, but dense. The cycles of birth, life, and death have been accelerated by the powers of Ravenloft.

There are many creatures that live in the Wildlands. The elephants dwell in the south, farthest from Crocodile. They are not loved by the other creatures, who blame them for being the first to give their power to King Crocodile, but the elephants ignore them and live as they always have. By the shores of the Great Lake there is a graveyard of elephants. Here, the bones of elephants walk around, mindless of their surroundings. At night, the phantom ele-

phants gaze at the moon and lift their trunks in horror. Their trumpeting has become a sound of terror. The elephants ignore the graveyard, except in death, when they stagger toward it and greet their dead brethren. It is said that the bones of the dead turn to silver and their tusks turn to gold. More than one human has come to the graveyard to test this legend. Some have compared these humans to vultures, but the truth is that vultures are smarter than they, for vultures prosper from their scavenging and these humans do not.

In the east part of the Wildlands is the savanna, the rich hissing grass. Heat and wind are everywhere here. The lions claim this land as their own, hunting gazelle and antelope, and sunning themselves when they are not hunting. There are also tigers here. They were not native to the Wildlands in the time before the Mists, but they were here when the lions arrived, and jealously guard their territory. The tigers are fiercer than the lions, but there are fewer of them. Several times the tigers have waged wars against the lions, but the strength of the lionesses, who are more fierce and war-like than their lazy mates, and their strength in numbers have helped the lions survive their fearsome enemy. The tigers love the taste of humans, spicy and stringy and strong, and any scent of human flesh will send them on a hunting frenzy. The lions, on the other hand, will leave the humans alone unless they approach their dens too closely. Of late, the tigers have grown in number and so the war between the lions and tigers has started again. The vultures are happy these days, though there have been times when the lions and tigers have attacked the vultures instead of each other, as they defend the honor of their dead. But there is little honor in the Wildlands and death is quite plentiful.

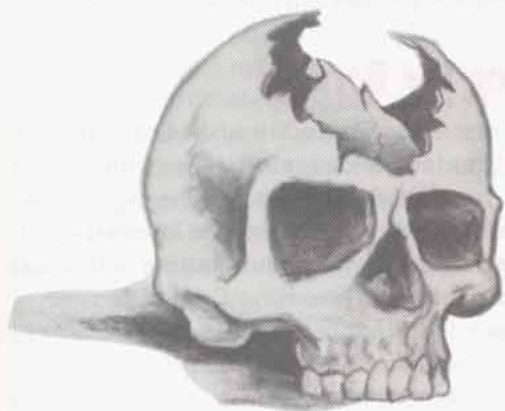
In the middle of the Wildlands is the great plateau. This plateau is the best place to avoid the crocodiles. It is ruled by the gorillas, the most fearless of all of the beasts of the Wildlands, save King Crocodile himself. The gorillas are gentle with their own kind but bru-

THE WILDLANDS

tal with all others. They are more intelligent than the apes outside of Ravenloft, but also more proud, and they enjoy fighting. They welcome humans only because there have been humans who have given them great combats. But the humans have also been cowardly, attacking with strange weapons and not with their hands and teeth, which is the only way a gorilla would fight. Their major enemy is the panther, which stalks all things in this land, catching them by surprise and wounding them. It is said that some panthers have made bargains with the crocodiles to kill the gorillas. Of course, King Crocodile does not make bargains with panthers or any other animals.

Also native to the plateau are the monkeys, most notably the chimpanzees. These creatures are renowned for their cleverness. They fear the gorillas, the panthers, and the crocodiles, but this does not stop them from playing jokes on them. There are many families of chimpanzees grouped together in loose communities. Unfortunately, Ravenloft has darkened the hearts of many of these apes and there is often war between tribes of chimpanzees—war and slavery and abominations that some sages had thought only humans were capable of. The gorillas have also tried to kill or enslave the monkeys with little success.

The monkeys fear humans less than other creatures. They love riddling discourse and games and enjoy confusing humans with acrobatics, practical jokes, and forced chases. To



the chimpanzees the chase game is the most fun and they often steal things that others hold dear in the hopes of starting a chase game. Monkeys also see humans as a race with the power to defeat King Crocodile.

The northern section of the Wildlands has many rivers which often flood the jungle. The flooded lands are swamps where the crocodiles roam. In the center of this swamp, in a large, marshy lake, lives King Crocodile. Here he feeds, either from hunting or from tributes given by other terrified creatures. At night the land is filled with phantom animals. These are the shades of creatures that were slain by King Crocodile. There are jackals giving frightful howls, fierce baboons yelping and screaming at each other, and ghastly vultures constantly encircling the dead things scattered about. They are enslaved to King Crocodile, the Death Bringer, and will attack on his command. (Treat them as animal skeletons for combat purposes.) If Crocodile is killed, they will run amok.

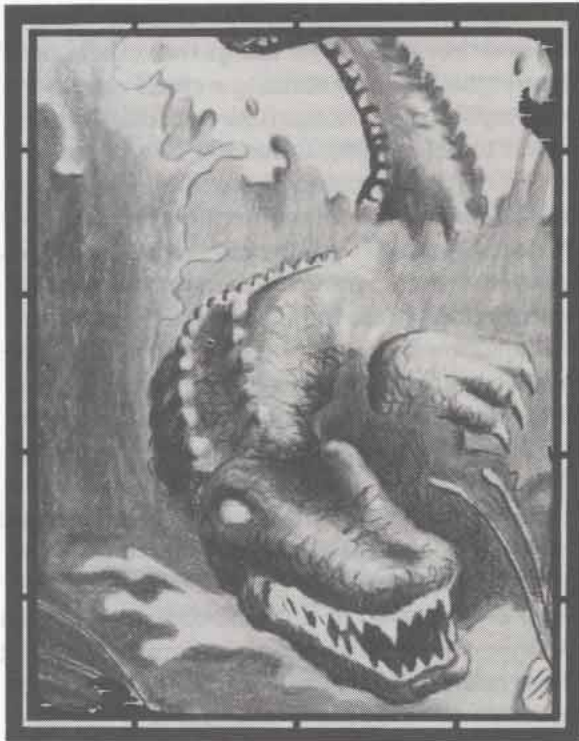
King Crocodile is not the only crocodile in the flooded swamps and rivers of the Wildlands. There are younger crocodiles who have grown great and terrible in their own right, feeding on the many birds and monkeys that live in the swamps. It is more than likely that when King Crocodile dies, one of these younger crocodiles will defeat the others and proclaim himself the new King Crocodile. It is part of the curse of this land that there will always be a King Crocodile.

It must also be noted that there is not one snake within the Wildlands. The snakes followed the wise python and left the Wildlands before the coming of the Mists. If any snakes existed in this part of Ravenloft before the Mists, they have not yet appeared.

The Folk

The folk of the Wildlands are all animals. They are all intelligent and have personalities approximating human expectations of

THE WILDLANDS



them. Lions are obsessed with regality, gorillas are obsessed with physical strength, monkeys are mischievous, and elephants are loyal and protective, for example. Only the bravest or most foolish creatures will trust humans.

Confronting King Crocodile

King Crocodile (12th-level fighter): AC -2 (5); MV 18 Sw 36; HD 12; hp 77; Str 21; Dex 17; Con 18; Int 17; Wis 14; Cha 13; #AT 2; Dmg 4-24 (+9 Str bonus)/3-30 (+9 Str bonus); SA Aura of evil (all non-evils lose 2 hp per round within 20' of King Crocodile, lasts 2-8 turns, usable once per day), teeth act like a *sword of sharpness*, severing a limb on an attack roll of 18-20; SD surprise (-4 penalty to opponent's surprise roll when in water); AL CE; THACO 6

The underbelly of King Crocodile is Armor Class 5, but it can only be struck if the crocodile is being fought in the water. Like all of the animals in the Wildlands, Crocodile can speak

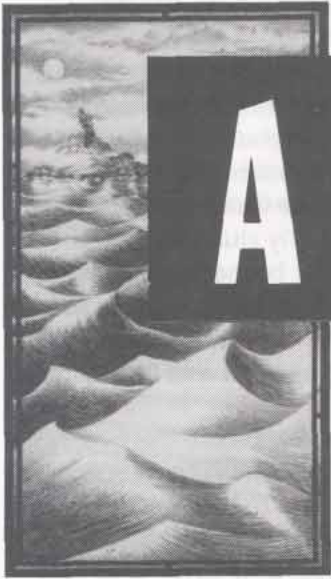
any human tongue that he wishes. Crocodile loves the subtlety of the human speech and he loves to twist the words to reflect his guile and cleverness. It is said that he no longer knows the speech of his kinsmen and that he would rather speak with human voice than lower himself to the roar of the animal.

Those few creatures who are willing to deal with humans peaceably tell horrifying tales about King Crocodile. They do their best to convince the humans that King Crocodile must be killed, particularly if the humans show a warrior's bravery. If the hairless apes should succeed in destroying King Crocodile however, the animals would immediately turn on their benefactors. The creatures will turn on the humans because they believe the hairless apes will destroy the jungle and them unless they are destroyed or removed. Gratitude is not a quality that is well known in the jungle.

King Crocodile has one secret which no one in the Wildlands has guessed. He is dying. During his long life he has been stung thousands of times by flies, but at last he has caught the sleeping sickness. It is a lingering illness that will slowly weaken him for centuries to come. King Crocodile has only recently realized this and is terrified by the prospect of dying. He will do anything or promise anything to prevent this from happening. But Crocodile is ruled above all else by an unceasing hunger. There is no force in all the jungles, in all the stone lands, and in all the ice lands, that can change this, and he will try to eat anyone who helps him.

Closing the Borders

When King Crocodile wishes to close his borders he can raise steam from the jungle that can obscure the sight of intruders. While in this steam, the intruders will see false openings in the jungle that will invariably lead them back to King Crocodile's domain.



All the world's a stage.
William
Shakespeare

The theater is often a lure to those who cannot see beyond the facade offered by its bright lights and glittering colors. It beckons to seekers of fame, enticing them with ephemeral promises and guarantees of power and prestige. It is said that one may only gain this

lasting fame by sacrificing one's life for the sake of the stage, yet many seem to be willing to take this step to ensure their immortality.

The Lord

As the leading actor and playwright of his time, Lemot Sedium Juste continually sought to improve his art. There was no extreme to which Juste would not go for the sake of the theater. The stage pulsed firmly through his veins and he pursued his obsession with little thought for anything else, stepping on those who obstructed his climb to glory.

Although he had achieved much fame as a dramatist and comedic actor, Juste was not satisfied. He wanted praise for being the consummate theater man, the actor who knew no bounds. Unfortunately, he could not capture the feel of tragedy and the subtle nuances so essential for a tragedy's success. For a time, he tried and tried to master the art. Wholeheartedly he threw himself into his efforts, but the finer details continued to elude him. His attempts at acting out tragic parts resulted only in melodrama or, even worse, unintentional comedy.

His directing efforts fared no better and, if one can believe it, were even more ill-fated. His

acting troupe could not perform his works without playing to the most comic trends of any piece. Juste began to feel himself cracking under the strain of seeing his actors sabotage his efforts.

Finally, Juste could stand no more. His players had pushed him beyond all reason. He devised a play in which all the characters died horribly, in exquisitely painful ways. He did not try to turn it into a tragedy, as the only thing that interested him was ridding himself of the bothersome actors. Yet as his troupe rehearsed the piece, they constantly remarked on the quality of the script as a tragedy. Juste refused to be lured from his bloody revenge by what he perceived as their empty flattery and allowed his grim scheme to continue.

Opening night for Juste's long-awaited new play finally arrived. Instead of engaging various theater patrons in conversation previous to the play's beginning, as was customary, Juste instead paid a visit to the prop room. He replaced the collapsible dagger with a genuine steel one and exchanged the false poison for a toxic substance.

He worked through the entire room in this fashion, substituting all nonlethal props with props that would prove fatal in the context of the play. His actors would soon perform their most convincing "death scenes" ever. Since none of the characters' bodies were to be removed from the stage until the play was over, Juste was sure that he could escape from the playhouse after savoring his revenge.

As the curtain lifted, Juste nearly lost his nerve and canceled the play. But when he remembered the laughter of the audience as his fellow actors destroyed his tragedies, his emotions again seized control of his reason.

On the stage a tale of intrigue, lust, and betrayal unfolded before the wide-eyed audience. The assembly gasped when the mayor's son went down under the knives of assassins, blood streaming across the stage. The poisoning scene was particularly effective, the baron's mistress' face turning convincingly black as she

choked on her tongue. And the torture scene went off without a hitch. Yet, when the play finally ended and Juste stood to take the applause, they booed him! The audience was expecting even better from a master playwright, though this was surely a commendable effort.

Juste, more than a little crazed with guilt and anger by this time, fled from the theater. Outside, he barred the doors and set the whole building alight. He crouched in a nearby alley and listened with great delight as the screams of burning people, dying in sheer agony, escaped over the roar of the inferno. As the constabulary gathered to quell the blaze and search for witnesses, Juste realized that he could not long stay hidden. He fled silently from the alley into the mist that had arisen.

He had not journeyed far when he came to a theater building owned by a friend of his. He sneaked in during a performance, failing to close the door behind him. The tendrils of mist flowed in after him, as though sentient, and then withdrew. Leaning back to enjoy the show, Juste watched until his recent exertions caught up with him, and he fell asleep. He woke to find the play had ended and the theater had emptied while he slept. Curious about his friend's theater, which felt strangely familiar to him, he began exploring.

Oddly enough, the theater seemed to consist of the seats, the stage, and a small writing nook. There was a small kitchen, bathing area, and bedroom behind the stage, but no dressing room was evident. There was a lobby in front of the playhouse, but no costume shop. Nor was there a shop to construct the scenery, nor a prop room, nor indeed, most of the amenities of a good, modern theater. Juste, shrugging to himself, decided to exit the theater.

He found that he could not venture beyond the front doors, for there was nothing there except a swirling gray mist. He could feel nothing physical preventing him from leaving, but when he even considered setting a foot in the fog, his mind filled with dread. Fears forgotten since childhood leapt up in his chest, nearly

overwhelming him with their strength. He bravely returned to the theater.

He cast about frantically for something to allay his fears of the dread mist, but found nothing suitable for his purposes. Finally, after what seemed days of ransacking the building, he slept. When he woke, he walked dejectedly about the theater and finally slumped into the writing nook. Out of sheer boredom and frustration, he began writing. After an hour or so of uninterrupted writing, he cast his gaze about. To his surprise, his environment was totally different.

He found himself in a dim forest, the overcast sky hanging low overhead. The stark blackness of the obsidian cliffs served to dim the emerald green of the forest. And off in the distance, the faint howling of wolves became evident as they moved closer to their prey. The dark clouds opened at last, spilling a rain of poisonous blood over the verdant woods. Juste screamed and ran, and then found himself standing on the stage of the theater. The scene flats surrounded him, closely resembling the forest from which he had just escaped. Juste did not recall this scene as the one set on stage previously. Indeed, it closely resembled the scene that he had recently been describing in his manuscript.

To test a theory, he returned to his writing desk and began a new scene. To his delight, the new props sprang into being around him. However, he no longer saw it as reality, instead seeing it for the scene it was. Taking a healthy supply of paper, a pen, and an inkwell, Juste began wandering through the fortress of his imagination, creating and destroying play-worlds with the stroke of a quill.

Heady with his newfound power, Juste devised a land of haunting beauty, chaperoned by a looming gray castle. Juste assigned the castle a terrible history, the ideal placement for a tragic ghost story. His work, when he finished it, was a masterpiece of setting. He would soon be able to turn it into a tragedy of epic proportion. But first, he needed actors, real people to por-

tray the characters in this grand new play. His paper creations were simply not real enough. As well, he needed an appreciative audience to enjoy the piece. He was fairly sure of where to get both of them, and he created a most intriguing title for his piece, which was brightly displayed on the theater's marquee.

Appearance

Lemot Sedium Juste is approximately six and a half feet tall. His weight is certainly not proportional with his height, for his frame appears nearly skeletal. His skin holds an unhealthy, sickly pallor, which easily flushes with hectic color when he excites himself.

While acting, he hides his long, thin, greasy, black hair under a wig or hat. His eyes are deep black pools, mesmerizing those who approach too closely. Usually, ink spatters his clothing, for his manic writing does not allow the extra time required for cleanliness.

While his personal appearance is somewhat unpleasant, he radiates a certain degree of magnetism. His personality, though moderately grating, is still attractive to those who speak to him for even a short while. His frantic devotion and his gaunt appearance actually add to his attractiveness as an actor, and he can be enormously pleasing to have around. Of course, his manner these days is often brusque and rude, for he does not really regard anybody in Scaena as real, and he cannot leave.

Current Sketch

Scaena floats randomly from place to place; it is truly a "traveling show." (See "The Land" for details.) Juste likes to ensure that each production will be good. He is the ultimate showman. It is precisely for this reason that he becomes so enraged when his actors—or an unreceptive audience—cause him to destroy a production.

If a production is destroyed, Juste will not let the audience leave the building alive. Since he

knows from bitter experience that he cannot escape Scaena by burning it down, he simply bars the doors and torches the place. Although he, like the patrons, feels the tremendous agony of blistering heat, he cannot die from the flaming timbers of Scaena. He never becomes inured to the pain, but he is willing to make any sacrifice for his art.

Likewise, if a production is a success, he will probably allow the audience to leave the building alive. But they may not return to the same land they left when they entered the theater. Most likely, they arrive somewhere else, in some unknown domain in Ravenloft.

Juste has a particular need for others to experience the theater so that he may share in the experience vicariously. The greatest despair of his existence is that he cannot believe in his plays. Ever since he first hurled himself from the bloody forest, all he ever sees is his theater, the props, and the various visitors to his domain. Even the minor characters he creates appear as no more than wooden cut-outs. For Juste, the magic of performance and disbelief has left the theater, leaving him only the bare bones of production. Compared to his former experience with the stage, this is a rather painful situation.

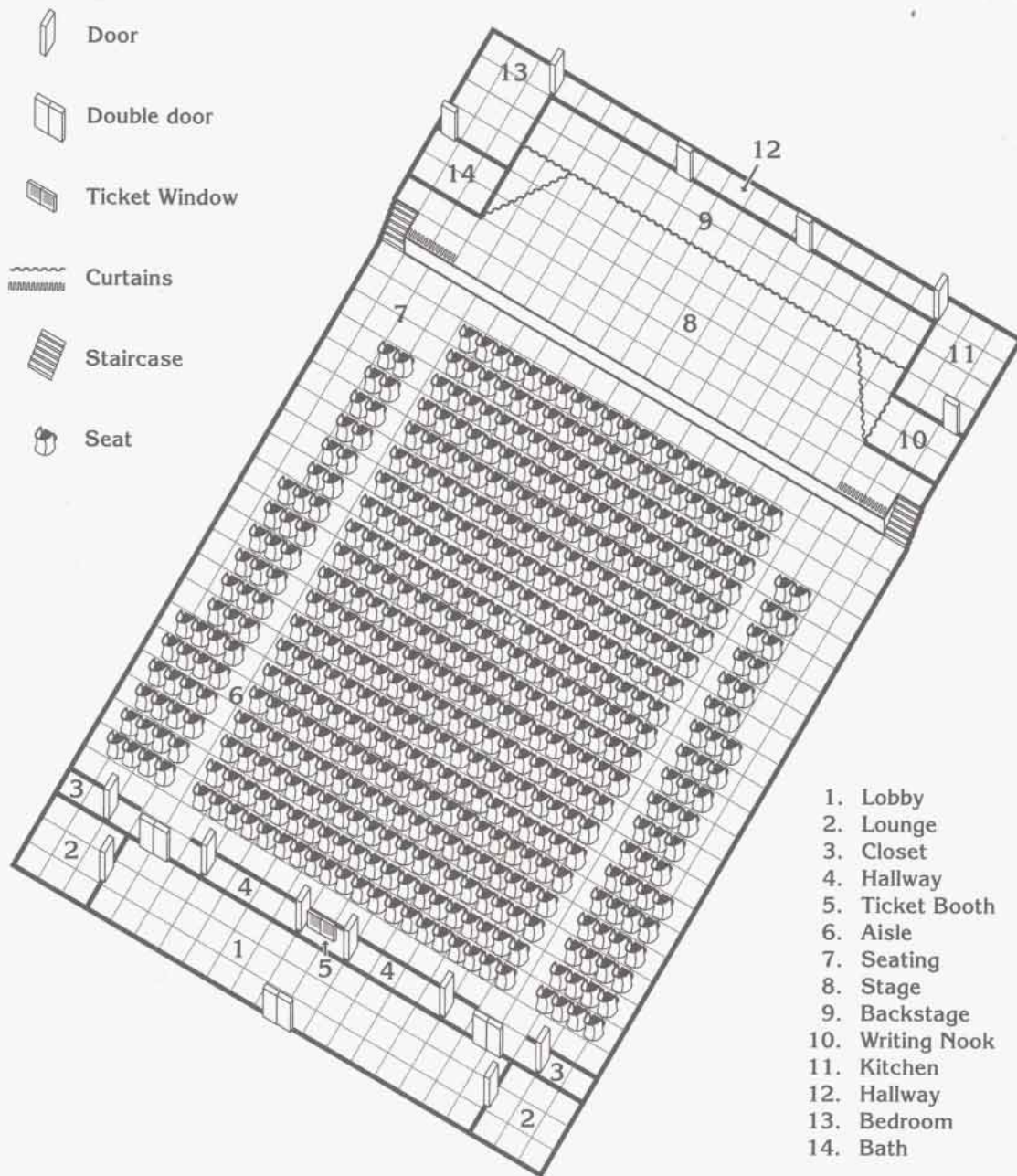
The Land

Although the land appears in accordance with anything Juste writes, it really consists only of the theater building and the space that immediately surrounds it. The exterior of the building can take on any appearance Juste desires. The interior includes a finely appointed lobby with adjoining rooms for theater patrons to freshen themselves before the performance. Then one comes to the actual theater itself, the house in which the plays are acted. There are seats for approximately 500 guests inside. While the theater is not opulent, neither is it colorless and drab. Its gold-stitched curtains and padded seats dispel any aura of dinginess.

SCAENA

Scaena

One square = 5 feet



SCAENA

However, there is something in the air of the theater that lends an ambience reminiscent of decay and rot. There is no one discernible factor that creates this atmosphere, but is rather the combination of many diverse influences responsible for the eerie feeling of decomposition that pervades the place, including the settings Juste creates.

To the right of the stage there is a small curtained nook which houses an ink-spattered writing desk littered with parchment and inkpots. On the desk are several broken quills. Behind the stage there is a small kitchen with doors leading to the bedroom and bath area. Cobwebs festoon both bedroom and bath, as if these areas have been unused for a long time.

But this is not all there is to the land, for as soon as someone sets foot on the stage, a whole new world begins. When any part of a PC (or NPC) touches the stage, the character must successfully save vs. spells with a -6 penalty or suffer entrapment in one of Juste's plays. His many plays are quite different, but since Juste enjoys working to perfect tragedy/horror pieces, his victim will likely not enjoy the short stay in Scaena.

There are no ill effects until the person actually touches the stage. Once this happens, the individual experiences a spinning vertigo, a complete disorientation of mind and body. When the nausea subsides, the person will find himself in whatever scene Juste has planned.

Scaena is unique because it is a traveling domain. Not only is it accessible to travelers wandering in the Mists of Ravenloft, Scaena occasionally appears outside the borders of Ravenloft. Here it lures the unwary to their doom, as they come to see a play and instead find themselves trapped in a madman's dream of reality and illusion.

The theater manifests itself in many different lands, often usurping the place of another theater for the time during which it exists in that land. Those who enter Juste's theater initially—while Juste is still preparing his next play—condemn themselves to a fate that few would

envy. If they touch the stage, they become (usually at his urging) the doomed heroes of a tragic piece. After that, most visitors become part of the audience.

The theater can even appear within another lord's domain. As long as the lords are not concentrating on keeping the borders closed, Scaena can move randomly through the various domains. The lords of the domains Scaena visits generally remain totally unaware of its presence.

None of the scenes Juste creates are real. While they appear to be, with every sense taking part in the deception, the reality is only a small distance from the surface. Anyone who ventures into his domain need only successfully save vs. spells with a -4 penalty to see through the facade woven by the storyteller. In this case, the disbeliever can see that the entire land is merely the trappings of a stage, with the manic Juste frantically scribbling new scenes.

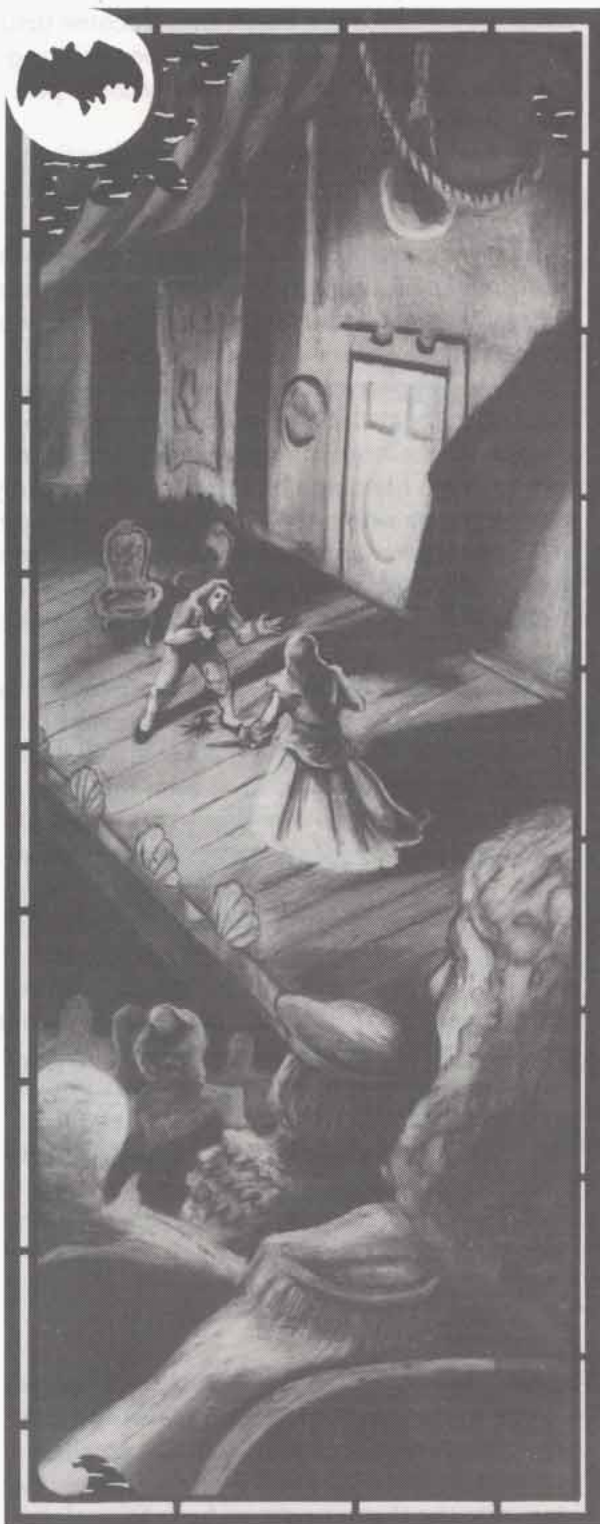
However, the unbeliever can still be fooled by succeeding illusions if he does not concentrate on maintaining his disbelief. Juste specializes in recapturing those who have seen through one set of illusions. Divination spells and devices such as *gems of seeing* have no effect on the mirages of Scaena.

Most of those who enter Scaena appear on stage, and are thus receptive to the illusions woven by Lemot Juste. The others are patrons of the theater from whatever land the domain is visiting. Although Juste seems unable to control the destination of Scaena, he can sometimes determine *when* it moves. By keeping it stationary, he may allow the patrons to return to their own land when the play ends. More likely however, the sadistic Juste will kill them or abandon them in some strange domain.

The Law

The only law in Scaena is Juste's. Whatever he decrees becomes reality on stage. His plays have become much more convincing, both to the actors and to the audience. No longer do the theater patrons have to work to

SCAENA



suspend their disbelief, for the scenes appear totally real unless a conscious effort is made to disbelieve. The patrons lose their senses of self for the duration of the play, attending only to the spectacle of the production.

The characters may resolve every plot in Scaena in roughly two hours, about the length of a theater production. Clues reveal themselves, waiting for the actors to pick them up. Drama and tragedy are common staples of everyday life in Scaena. Everything in Scaena is answered eventually by virtue of the script.

Although the "actors" are in great danger simply because they are on stage, it is not easy to be in the audience. Lemot Juste expects to receive nothing less than total critical acclaim with each production. If any members of the audience act displeased with the show, they risk Juste's wrath.

His wrath is nothing to scoff at. While Juste is weak physically, his mind and imagination are extraordinary, and he has devised many amusing tortures. Not all of these are physical. His favorite is to cause the unhappy victim to inadvertently touch the stage (perhaps by luring him with a glittering chest of gold). When this happens, Juste has the unfortunate being exactly where he wants him. Juste receives great pleasure in slowly driving his victims insane.

Time is subjective in Scaena. Since Juste knows how boring it is to watch people sleep, he often accelerates the personal flow of time for the stage. Thus, while his actors may feel as though the whole night has passed, perhaps only five minutes have elapsed since they closed their eyes. For this reason, natural healing is mostly ineffective in Scaena, except for damage caused by illusory creatures. Any who are hurt must rely on magic to regain their strength.

The Folk

The only person native to Scaena is Lemot Juste. Anyone else the players might encounter will be a patron, a bit character created by Juste, a leading role, or an adventurer.

er who wandered into Scaena unaware of the doom lying ahead.

Juste may create other folk to interact with those who make their way into his domain, but they possess no reality beyond that of Juste's imagination.

Lemot Juste regards the wanderers—even PCs—as more constructs of his imagination. Since they appear when he needs them, he assumes that they are his creations, figments invested with the personality needed to fulfill their major roles. As such, they are much more difficult to govern than his bit players.

Juste knows an uncanny amount of the history and personality of everyone who touches his stage including PCs. Whether this is an ability imparted by the land, or whether Juste is telling the truth—that *he* created everyone and everything in Scaena—is a matter for debate. To defend his claim, Juste deftly rattles off events in a PC's or NPC's life—events which none other would know. Such tactics have caused many weaker souls to step from the tenuous footbridge of rationality into the abyss of insanity, turning them into mindless puppets.

When Juste finishes with his "major characters," he occasionally abandons them in the Mists, leaving them to wander until they find a haven. More often, he drops the bodies in a location carefully chosen to frighten a large number of middle-class citizens, whom he refers to as "the herd." Even as he despises them and mocks them, he is all too eager to take their money. Exactly what he needs it for is unknown, yet he continues to collect it.

Occasionally Juste himself will take part in the spectacle unfolding on the stage. He usually does this only when the scene is unlikely to change in the next hour or so, such as a banquet hall, a chamber in a castle, or something of the sort. When he does so, he may appear as any sort of humanoid between five and seven feet tall, male or female, young or old.

When he does choose to appear, Juste always carries a sheaf of papers on which he has written various scenes.

Confronting Juste

Lemot Sedium Juste (3rd-level illusionist): AC 9; MV 12; HD 3; hp 8; Str 7; Dex 15; Con 8; Int 20; Wis 15; Cha 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (long sword); SA See following; SD See following; MR 10%; AL CE; THAC0 20

Juste may well be one of the most dangerous folk that PCs ever encounter, for his ability to stretch the limits of others' sanity knows no equal. His powers over his domain give him an edge far beyond his apparent ability.

One can harm Juste only by penetrating the myriad illusions which surround him. While he is not an experienced spell-caster, he knows enough about the ways of illusion and misdirection to avoid most harm that comes his way. More than one layer of mirage surrounds Juste, and it is difficult to catch him.

Even if someone manages to reach him, Juste can move through the very fabric of his theater. If he has initiative, he can meld with the wood of the theater to reappear someplace else. He is most likely to materialize on the stage, where he can influence his attackers more directly or turn them against each other.

As a last resort, he can will the building to burn around him. To save himself, he is willing to endure tremendous suffering. If Juste is ever slain, his body melts into the wood of the theater and he arises again in one day. It is during this time that he is most vulnerable. If anyone burns the theater while he is regenerating, he is permanently slain.

When the theater burns, the doors close and bar themselves. It takes a combined Strength of 30 to open these doors and only two can get at them at a time. Otherwise, the heroes probably will suffer the same blazing death so many others have met in Scaena.

Juste entitles each scene he has written and can call up that scene by speaking its name aloud. He can maintain only three scenes on the stage at once, so if any party splits in more than three ways, the illusion is shattered unless Juste is willing to sacrifice some credibility. Since

Juste rarely enjoys doing so, the chance that he will sacrifice the whole production is much greater. This never fails to exasperate Juste, and he will exact his revenge in a fitting manner.

His favorite ploy is to dissolve the scenery around the heroes, leaving only a stage and the surrounding theater. The props and backdrops will all be in place, showing the participants that they were in a play. It is essential for his plan that the party accepts this as the truth, for if they question it, they might very well destroy the whole illusion.

The theater the characters see is *not* the real theater. While it resembles the real thing in nearly every particular, it too is a sham. Just when the players have become comfortable with that reality, something horrible will happen to the theater. If the heroes disbelieve, Juste creates the illusion of another theater as fast as he can. He creates an endless cycle, if possible, each one returning the actors to another stage of the mirage, putting them deeper into the mockery.

After what may seem like days of this, Juste will contact the heroes through an image of himself, explaining their non-reality. He argues that since he can change their environments by simply willing it, control others around them, and create entire worlds, they are obviously just more creations. Granted, they may be free willed, but that was a side effect of their creation as strong characters. If they remain unconvinced, he will recite to them their recent history, demonstrating knowledge he could not possibly possess otherwise.

Juste is a persuasive man, especially so because of his charismatic personality. If the heroes fail to save vs. spells during this argument, they will find themselves agreeing with Juste and are under his influence, as per a *charm* spell of one week's duration. After a week, they may attempt to save again. If they fail, they begin to lose 1 point of Intelligence per day and their personality begins to suffer. Each victim becomes more and more bland as time progresses, exhibiting one facet of his personality

more strongly than any other until that facet totally dominates the hero's character.

Victims may attempt to save vs. spells each day to break his influence, with a penalty proportionate to their Intelligence loss. Thus, someone who has lost 2 points of Intelligence would save with a -2 penalty, while someone who has lost 5 points would save with a -5 penalty. If the victims break the spell, they may recover their Intelligence at the rate of one point per week. Their respective personalities return with their Intelligence.

If a victim reaches 0 Intelligence, he becomes a minor character completely under Juste's control, and his existence is entirely dependent on Juste's will. If Juste wills the character to disappear, that character's existence is completely obliterated until Juste wills him to return. Even then, the character will be only a pale shadow of what he used to be, for his personality is only a memory for Juste. Unless the victim's compatriots can somehow rescue him, he is doomed to an eternity of serving as a bit player in Juste's masterpieces.

Victims of 0 Intelligence may be rescued in various ways, including removing them from the theater, destroying the theater, and killing Juste. (See "Current Sketch" for details.)

It is possible for Juste to "dictate" the shape of his land, speaking aloud the words that create the illusions of reality. Since this is not nearly as effective as his transcription, it is much easier to see through the fakery. A successful save vs. spells with a -1 penalty will allow the character see through it.

Tentative Scripts

Juste is given to producing tragedies and dramas of darkly satirical nature. He eagerly tries out his new creations on those who fall under his sway. Although he is a fine writer, he often cannot judge the effects of a particular scene without some sort of critical response. He feels the need to try each scene he creates on the visitors to his realm, allowing hints of terror and surreal-

ism to seep in around the edges. Examples of his work include the following scripts.

1. A play set in an orphanage. The PCs, stripped of their ages and powers, play orphans. Other orphans, tired of their mistreatment at the hands of the master of the place, begin to plot revenge. In the dreary and dark sub-basements of the building, the orphans make pacts with dark powers and gradually lose their humanity. If the PCs take the side of the orphans, they must make a Ravenloft Powers Check and risk being drawn further into the clutches of Ravenloft. If they remain neutral or side with the master, they must watch the transformation of their fellows into dread beasts and risk being torn apart. The little monsters finally turn into real monsters.

2. A tragedy of a prince in a northern country. The political climate is chancy and the PCs are viewed as interlopers. Ghosts of murdered kings appear, warning the characters of surprises the land holds. Suicidal maidens and an indecisive, vengeful prince complicate matters more, forcing the players to act quickly or lose everything. Poison and duels are the rule of this land, and subtle, horrific changes confound the PCs at every turn.

3. A venture into comedy. Nothing goes quite right for the characters who are involved in a deadly serious murder mystery. Their swords stick in their scabbards, their spells misfire, and so forth. With each mishap the players must successfully save vs. spells or temporarily lose 1 point from their prime ability, making their exploits ever more hilarious to the audience. Only by solving the mystery can the PCs regain their power. With their decreasing abilities, the frustration mounts for the PCs. The humor also mounts, but not for the PCs.

Closing the Borders

When Juste wishes for his borders to close, he merely scribes the illusion he desires the escapees to face on his parchment. Those who try to pass beyond the borders of the

theater find themselves confronting the illusion Juste has created for them. Most often he creates a simple misdirection, so that characters who wander beyond the doors of the theater find themselves twisted and turned about so that they end up back in the theater. No saving throw is allowed against this illusion.

Occasionally, Juste will instead create a monster (or group of monsters) that is clearly beyond the abilities of those fleeing his domain. The creature will not kill the characters, but will pursue them back into the boundaries of Scaena.

Juste can construct a *wall of fear* around his domain. Any who venture into the Mists at this point begin to feel a slight unease. The fear and terror mount the farther into the Mists they go, building into a fever pitch. Their worst nightmares rise from the Mists to challenge them. Their hearts skip rapidly and irregularly, painfully sounding the notes of the escapee's life. If they can somehow continue moving away from Scaena, they must successfully save vs. death magic or die of pure terror, beginning at 100 feet from the building. Every 10 feet beyond that point, they must successfully save again at a cumulative -1 penalty each round. For example, at 130 feet they save with a -3 penalty. This experience inevitably kills the victims if they are foolish enough to continue.

If they try to return to the building, they find that it is only 5 feet away from them, as if it had been awaiting their return.

Encounters

Damage caused by monsters Juste has created is only illusory and is healed as soon as the character leaves the domain. The adventurers may heal this imaginary damage by resting, much like natural healing in the real world, or heal it by magic.

If Juste desires actual, physical harm to come to someone, he must use one of the outsiders in his land or do the deed himself.

*think that I shall never see,
A poem lovely as a tree. . . .*

Joyce Kilmer

The Lord

In the script of the civilized lands, the character for "four" is the same as the character for "death." Four winds batter the shore, bringing storms, heat, ice, and dust. Four curses are written on the scrolls of the gods: pestilence, despair, malice, and ill fortune. To those knowledgeable in the secrets of life and death, the number four fills them with fear. Yet for some, an object of fear is also an object of

fascination. This is the tale of one such person, a lady of great majesty and evil.

Tsien Chiang was the beautiful daughter of a prince of I'Cath. As such, she was high spirited and proud, and she feared nothing. But her father thought little of the worth of women, other than to bear children, and he trivialized her ambitions. Quickly her indignation festered into a great dislike of her father and then into a seething hatred of all men.

Tsien's father forbade her to know the arts of war, but she disobeyed his prohibition and quietly learned the secrets of battle from masters of death. He forbade her to know the ways of sorcery, but she secretly studied under the greatest wu jen masters of necromancy. Also she learned the making of deadly poisons. In the end, Tsien's father died in agony from four deadly poisons that she gleefully combined and administered to him.

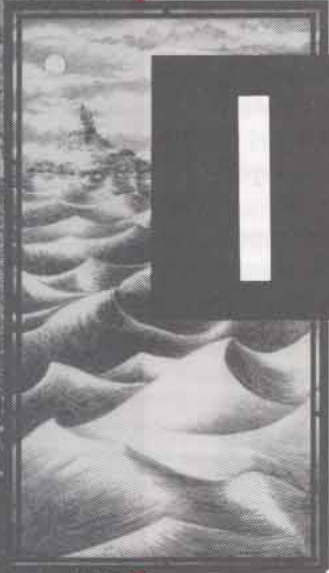
Once her father was dead, Tsien cast an enchantment on her mother and three brothers, turning them into pitiful idiots. Rather than dishonor the clan by having an imbecile govern their ancestral home, the elders turned the rule of the province over to Tsien. She assumed that position as a tyrant, ruling the land so tightly that an iron fist would sooner break.

Despite her growing evil, Tsien's beauty and power made her very desirable as a bride. She welcomed suitors, but would only accept samurai of the highest rank. When she accrued four suitors, she would insist that they battle to the death in a great arena. If one survived (which was rare), she would take him as her husband, use him as she pleased, and then destroy him through cunning, magic, battle, or poison. Four husbands she slew and then she declared that she would have no more. She bore of each husband one female child, to serve as her handmaidens. Each daughter but one became a creature of great evil and little wit, controlled by their mother. The fourth was a disappointment, but she was used by Tsien to greater evil than the others, as will be told. The three evil daughters were called Scream, Hate, and Spite. The fourth was called Nightingale, named so for her lovely voice.

As Tsien aged, she lost her youthful beauty. Her features and expressions became sharp and dour, a reflection of her indomitable will and desire to master all things. As her appeal to men failed, so her hatred and disdain for them intensified.

Always most important to her was her desire to learn the power of the number four. It haunted her days. Death had supreme power over life, darkness had supreme power over light, and numbers held the key to a thinking mind. Four, she believed, was the most powerful of all numbers. She summoned the greatest philosophers of her day to court and held countless hours of discourse on the mysteries of the number four. Those thinkers who did not satisfy her keen mind, she put to death by slow torture. One of them suggested that the trees knew the secret, for they witnessed the passing of the four seasons many times, and this idea intrigued Tsien, but it did not save the philosopher's life; she chopped him up and burned him in a fireplace. Indeed, few theorists were able to satisfy her keen mind long enough to survive and fewer survivors wished to visit her court again.

Tsien Chiang soon became the most hated



I'CATH



person in the East. She was despised, distrusted, and feared even by the emperor to whom she was forced, with great reluctance, to uphold the clan's oath of loyalty. A few princes united in an effort to conquer her province, but they failed miserably, for Tsien was both a military genius and a sorceress of the highest caliber. Tsien quickly defeated her challengers and added their lands to her own, laughing at the incompetence of men. She had become the most powerful person in the East, and the emperor and the rulers of other lands were forced to pay homage to her. Many of these rulers she killed, but her own emperor's life she spared, for she was bound to him by an oath so strong that even she dared not to break it.

Many gifts were given to Tsien by the princes and kings around I'Cath, hoping to win her favor. From the kings of the South, fruit trees were sent to her. Tsien killed all but four of these trees and then wove mists of enchantment about them. These trees became full of malevolence; they stank of death and cursed all

who came near them.

From the emperor, she demanded the four largest bells in the empire, all holy relics from ancient shrines. Tsien's request enraged the realm, but so fearful had the emperor become that he took these things from the churches, despite the curses of the priests, and gave them to Tsien. She corrupted their scared essence by transpossessing and enslaving the spirits of her four daughters within. Their bodies became empty shells, suppliant to their mother's will. A part of herself she also placed into the bells, to hold her daughters' souls captive.

The bells became most unholy things, *The Bells of Evil and Lament*. Four times each year she rang them, hoping that the secret of the number four would be revealed in their peals. Because their spirits were ensconced in bells that were forged for divine powers, Tsien no longer aged, nor did her daughters' bodies.

Tsien spent her time in darkest witchcraft or watching her daughter's suitors slay one another. If any survived, she arranged for his death. This pleased the three evil daughters, but Nightingale was filled with despair over the deaths of great men. Tsien dismissed the deaths saying, "All men are eunuchs at heart, and quite useless." When Nightingale questioned her mother, her body was beaten.

Meanwhile the gods, who loved Nightingale's song, grew angry and they began to send ominous storms whenever Nightingale was beaten. So proud was Tsien, however, that she did not hold the gods in high regard. She felt that they knew the secret of the number four and she hated them for not sharing it with her.

As years and many suitors passed, Tsien Chiang made a terrible palace from the bones of her daughters' suitors. The floors cried with madness and agony any time a visitor stepped on them. She made carpets from their hair, clothing from their flesh, and she painted her walls with their blood. This delighted the three evil sisters, but Nightingale was stricken with horror. Four times she questioned her mother and four times she was beaten, first each of her

three sisters and then finally by her mother, with the intent to destroy her body completely. As Nightingale screamed for mercy, for aid, a great fog surrounded the palace of bones. Tsien suddenly became sure that the gods were trying to send her to the Nine Hells. She laughed, saying, "Never shall you see her again or hear her voice until the secret of the number four is revealed to me! She is bound to me and she shall follow me to eternal destruction itself!" The emperor, himself, attempted to stay her blasphemy, and she slew him with a laugh, shattering her sacred oath of loyalty.

So it was that I'Cath was ripped from the lands of Kara-Tur and transported to Ravenloft. Tsien did not know what Ravenloft was, but she was more than willing to try to conquer it.

Current Sketch

I'Cath is now a small island of terror on the edge of the demiplane. Tsien Chiang does not know exactly where she is, she has convinced herself that she holds the gods at bay with her powers. Each day she renews her spells of warding, to protect herself from their vengeance.

Tsien has always been a sorceress of dreadful power, but her power has grown in the years since she entered Ravenloft. She has become one with the land and can transform herself into a treant of great power and evil. She has surrounded herself with evil tree spirits who act as her household servants and handmaidens to her daughters.

Her three evil daughters have become spirits of great malice, con-tinh (see the *Monstrous Compendium*, Kara-tur appendix), with double the Hit Dice of normal such creatures. Their life force remains linked to one of the four bells (see "The Four Bells"). (If you do not have the Kara-tur appendix, use hags who cannot be killed unless their bell is destroyed.)

Nightingale's body is locked at the summit of a high tower made of a weblike substance that Tsien wove. She claims that she made the tow-

er from the broken promises of men, "the one substance that the world has in limitless abundance." Nightingale's song forever emanates from the tower, casting an enchantment of delight and sorrow on all who hear it, evoking an image of a damsel who can take the form of a bird—lovely, vulnerable, and profoundly sad. Nightingale's body has become a bisan (or a nymph if you do not have the Kara-Tur appendix of the *Monstrous Compendium*), but one of lawful good alignment. She can project herself, through force of will, to become a living song and in a shimmering ethereal form she wanders I'Cath, unwittingly luring men into her mother's torturous clutches.

The Land

I'Cath is a land of shadowy woods. Day is exceedingly dim and cloudy and night is especially dark. The trees, with their twisted branches and fierce jutting roots, seem to delight in making men stumble as they travel under them. Tsien can use any tree in I'Cath as eyes to scour her land for intruders, for she insists that no man set foot in her domain unless he swears an undying oath to her.

There are four manifestations of Tsien's power within the confines of I'Cath: the Shrines of the Four Bells, the Four Groves, the Tower of Broken Promises, and the Palace of Bones.

The Shrines of the Four Bells

Surrounding the palace of bones are four shrines, each containing one of the unholy bells. They are called *the Bell of Doom*, *the Bell of Discord*, *the Bell of Treachery*, and *the Bell of Lament*. If Tsien and her daughters are to be killed, these bells must be destroyed first. Only a *disintegrate* spell, *limited wish*, or *wish* will destroy them. When all four bells are destroyed, then Tsien becomes mortal and may be slain in combat. They will begin to peal if anyone but Tsien or her daughters approach within 90 feet, but a *silence* spell will prevent the ring of any

bell from manifesting its defensive powers. All of the *bells* save as 16 Hit Dice Monsters.

The Bell of Doom: This *bell* rings once per round when its 90-foot defensive perimeter is violated. For each round that it peals, one common oni appears (see the *Monstrous Compendium*, Kara-tur appendix; otherwise, use trolls). The *bell's* ring must be audible for the oni to appear. If this *bell* is destroyed, then the body of Scream may be slain.

The Bell of Discord: This *bell* rings with a clashing cacophony of mismatched tones. Anyone within the 90-foot radius of effect becomes filled with hatred and must successfully save vs. spells with a -2 penalty or go berserk and attack the nearest living creature, including a close friend. The saving throw must be made each round that the *bell* peals. If this *bell* is destroyed, then the body of Hate may be slain.

The Bell of Treachery: This *bell* clangs with a cold, hard knell. It is guarded by four gaki—one jiki-ketsu-gaki, one jiki-niku-gaki, one shikki-gaki, and one shinen-gaki (see the *Monstrous Compendium*, Kara-tur appendix; otherwise, use 8-HD Ravenloft elementals—that magically appear when the *bell* begins to ring. At the beginning of each round that the *bell* peals, the gaki regain ten points of any sustained damage while all enemies within 90 feet of the *bell* sustain three points of damage. If this *bell* is destroyed, then the body of Spite may be slain.

The Bell of Lament: This *bell* contains the trapped soul of Nightingale. If any creature that is not good in alignment, aside from Tsien Chiang or any of her daughters, comes within 90 feet of this *bell*, it will ring. Its peal inflicts 3-18 points of damage per round and is doubled against undead and creatures from the lower planes. This will only affect neutral or evil aligned characters, not those of good alignment. If this *bell* is destroyed, Nightingale's body becomes mortal and may be slain.

The Four Groves

Tsien Chiang placed the four fruit trees that she corrupted into special groves, to create suffering and so she could laugh at the weakness of men. The victims of the grove are the only people living in I'Cath, aside from Tsien and her daughters. Each grove is tended by four evil treants (see the *Monstrous Compendium*, RAVENLOFT™ appendix or use normal treants with evil alignments), and is a place of suffering and misery for those unfortunate enough to become ensnared within.

The Tree of the Ravenous: This appears to be a cherry tree. There are a dozen warriors who fight eternally under this tree, for anyone who eats the fruit of this tree becomes so enamored of its taste that they want nothing but to eat it, and they will fight to the death with anyone who tries to stop them. Those who attempt to take and eat a cherry are not prevented. However, anyone who tastes the fruit must successfully save vs. poison or join the battle. The tree will resurrect anyone slain in this battle who has fallen, so it is an endless war. Over the course of the years, the warrior's weapons and armor have become broken and useless, so now this battle has degenerated from honorable combat to the pure savagery of naked barbarians punching, wrestling, and gouging each other like animals. Cherry blossoms continually fall upon their fighting forms. The sight is so disgusting as to require a horror check when it is first seen.

The Tree of Unending Lamentation: This is a willow tree. There are several dozen people here weeping pitifully. They are so overwhelmed with grief that they cannot move. They stay alive, without aging, by eating the leaves of this tree. Those who come within 90 feet of it must successfully save vs. paralyzation or fall prey to the lamentation. If the tree is destroyed or the people are pulled away, they will return to normal.

I'CATH

I'Cath

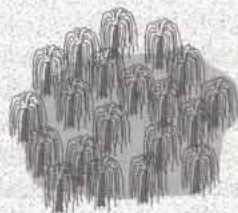
One square = 20 feet



Tower of Broken Promises



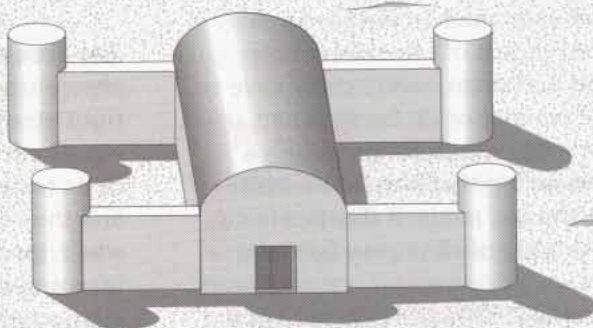
Grove of the Tree of the Ravenous



Grove of the Tree of Unending Lamentation



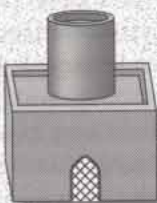
Shrine of the Bell of Doom



Palace of Bones

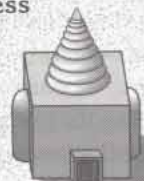


Shrine of the Bell of Discord



Shrine of the Bell of Treachery

Shrine of the Bell of Loveliness



Grove of the Tree of Malice

Grove of the Tree of Venom



The Tree of Venom: This grove is filled with the scent of oranges so sweet that it is overbearing. However, the fruit of this tree is highly poisonous. Any who eat of the fruit must successfully save vs. poison with a -6 penalty or die immediately, and even those who successfully save will *permanently* lose 1d6 hit points. The many skeletons under the tree are the corpses of those who have eaten the fruit over the centuries.

The Tree of Malice: This is a mulberry tree. Anyone who eats the fruit of this tree becomes filled with evil thoughts. Those who eat the fruit must successfully save vs. spell or become chaotic evil for four days. A save vs. spells should be made immediately, and then again for each truly evil act the character commits while under the influence of the new alignment. If a character fails the throw, he becomes chaotic evil permanently. The fruit is considered delightful by chaotic evils, but does not otherwise affect them.

The Tower of Broken Promises

This tower is the place where the body of Nightingale is held prisoner. The stairs are endless, for they are woven from "the broken promises of men, and therefore are without number." The only way to climb this tower is to meet Nightingale wandering in her song form, persuade her to change into the form of a giant bird, and then ride her to the top of the tower.

The Palace of Bones

This palace has a magnificent court, fit for a prince, and decorated with treasures worthy of a great emperor. The court is inhabited by evil spirits of all kinds (choose appropriate evils from the *Monstrous Compendium*, Kara-tur appendix). There are four adjoining towers in which Tsien and her three evil daughters live. The palace is as described earlier, except that Tsien would like some human blood to repaint and some human bones to repair damaged walls.

Outside of the palace is a huge backgammon court. Giant dice are made from human fingernails and the markers are human skulls, painted in marble fashion by Tsien's court painters long ago.

The Folk

No one lives in l'Cath except for Tsien Chiang, her four daughters, and anyone unfortunate enough to be trapped in the grove.

Confronting Tsien Chiang

Tsien Chiang can take two forms:

Tsien Chiang (20th-level wizard): AC 7; Str 11; MV 12; Dex 17; HD 20; Con 15; hp 45; Int 20; Wis 18; #AT 1; Cha 15; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SA Offensive spells; AL NE; THAC0 14

She can also transform into an evil treant with the following statistics.

Tsien Chiang (evil treant): AC -3; Str 20; MV 12; Dex 18; HD 12; Con 16; hp 96; Int 20; Wis 18; #AT 2; Cha 15; Dmg 4-24 (+8 Str bonus)/4-24 (+8 Str bonus); SA Constricting vines (can attack four opponents at once: each vine requires an attack roll, those caught can do nothing but try to escape, each vine requires 16 hp to break); Sap spray (causes 10d10 acid dmg against a single target, save vs. poison with a -2 penalty to reduce damage to half); SD +2 or better weapon needed to hit; AL NE; THAC0 6

Unless all four bells are destroyed, Tsien reforms in three rounds after she is "killed," with full hit points and all spells memorized.

Tsien Chiang does not like visitors. Those who pay homage to her, bringing her great gifts, may survive to leave l'Cath. Otherwise, she will probably try to kill them. Only in very unlikely circumstances will Tsien make a bargain with any outsiders, especially if they are male.

SARAGOSS

t looked as if a night of dark intent was coming, and not only a night, an age. Someone had better be prepared for rage. There would be more than ocean-water broken. . . .

Frost

The Lord

The lord of Saragoss is Draga Salt-Biter, formerly a pirate of ill fame on the Sea of Stars. He disappeared under mysterious circumstances years ago, and the merchants of the Sword Coast breathed a collective sigh of relief.

Draga Salt-Biter, a child of two sailors, had an innate love for the sea even at a very early age. Brought up to relish the stinging slap of the wind-whipped sea on his face, he could have known no other vocation but one involving his beloved sea. He shipped out from home at an early age, trying to escape his abusive parents, only to fall into an even worse situation.

Pirates attacked his ship far from port, taking no prisoners. They hacked apart the crew and passengers, leaving the pieces for the sharks. When they retrieved the cargo from the hold, they discovered the young Draga hiding amid bales of cotton.

Laughing, they drove a hook through his calf, attached a rope to the hook, and threw Draga into the midst of the sharks' feeding frenzy. They dragged him to safety whenever a shark came too close to him, but allowed some to strike him. One of these was a were-shark.

Draga became infected with the curse of the lycanthrope. When the pirates pulled the bleeding boy aboard ship, they decided to spare his life. Little did they realize what a mistake this was.

They brought him up in the ways of pirates, training him in all manner of things. Eventually, the ship's chaplain instructed Draga in the teachings of Umberlee, the Sailors' Bane and

evil goddess of the seas. When he had learned all he could from the old man, Draga made sure that the position of priest became available and then dispensed with the chaplain.

He journeyed with these men and women for several years, nursing the bright flame of hatred deep within his heart. When he had gained the trust of all the men, he began his revenge. One by one, he slew the pirates. Those who had treated him kindly died quickly. Those who had been more brusque or heavy with their hands had slow, painful deaths. And for those who were instrumental in his torture with the sharks, he reserved a special torment.

Draga had long before learned how to control his change into the shark form. When he began his revenge, he had weakened the timbers of the hull and, as he leapt overboard, he destroyed them entirely. As his erstwhile comrades thrashed about in the choppy night waters, he ripped at them with his powerful teeth. He let them bleed painfully in the salty water and then came again, tearing them apart with the sharks of the lukewarm sea.

Draga continued as a buccaneer aboard the ship *Vengeance*. He revelled in the brutality of this way of life and made his name known up and down the Sword Coast. His ruthlessness and cunning made him the bane of the travelers in those seas.

Often he appeared when least expected, demanding sacrifice in the name of Umberlee. When he collected his sacrifice, he sailed away for a short time, only to return hours later. He then fell upon the other ship, tearing the life from its inhabitants. He always left two alive, however. He allowed one to escape and spread the name of Draga Salt-Biter, and kept one for sport. His pleasure lay in shark-baiting, the same sport that caused him so much personal misery. Unlike his former colleagues, he never made the mistake of saving his victims.

After a particularly vicious decade of piracy, Draga celebrated his twenty-fifth birthday. Few of the pirates under his command had ever questioned his supremacy. Those who did often

SARAGOSS

did not live to see the next day. While he was a harsh taskmaster, Draga knew that he had to treat his men kindly. He was well aware that he could not eliminate his entire crew without some trouble, so he tolerated a small amount of foolishness. His men almost never failed to be loyal, and he repaid them in kind.

On his birthday, Draga utterly destroyed three ships, and he and his evil men relished each death they caused. The torments they inflicted that day made his earlier tortures pale by comparison, and the sharks fed well that day. Later that night, as the revels were reaching their height, a fog rolled across the ocean. The sailors thought nothing of this, as it was a natural enough occurrence. Only Draga felt a sense of foreboding, but he dismissed it as drunken absurdity.

When he and his crew awoke the next morning, they found themselves beached on a huge bed of seaweed. Only algae stretching out on every side of them greeted their sight. Draga felt a curious sense of power fill him, but his heart lay heavy in his chest.

Appearance

Draga Salt-Biter is a brutally attractive man, his weathered face hardened and chiseled by the elements. His body is tall, lean, and muscular. His watchful, eyes are gray, the color of a storm brewing over the sea. He usually wears his black hair cropped close to his head to avoid allowing his opponents an extra handhold on his body.

His clothing is now somewhat shredded and worn, but it is still recognizable as the body stocking favored by priests of Umberlee. He exudes an aura of power entirely consistent with his appearance. He seems totally in command of the area surrounding him, cruelly crushing any resistance that may arise.

Current Sketch

When he first arrived in Saragoss, Salt-Biter sent some of his men from the ship to investigate this new land. It seemed strangely familiar. He waited anxiously for their return, and as night fell, he found himself pacing the deck nervously. He waited until complete dark before he decided to have his errant scouts flayed alive and lowered into the briny deep. This was a vengeance he would never be allowed to savor.

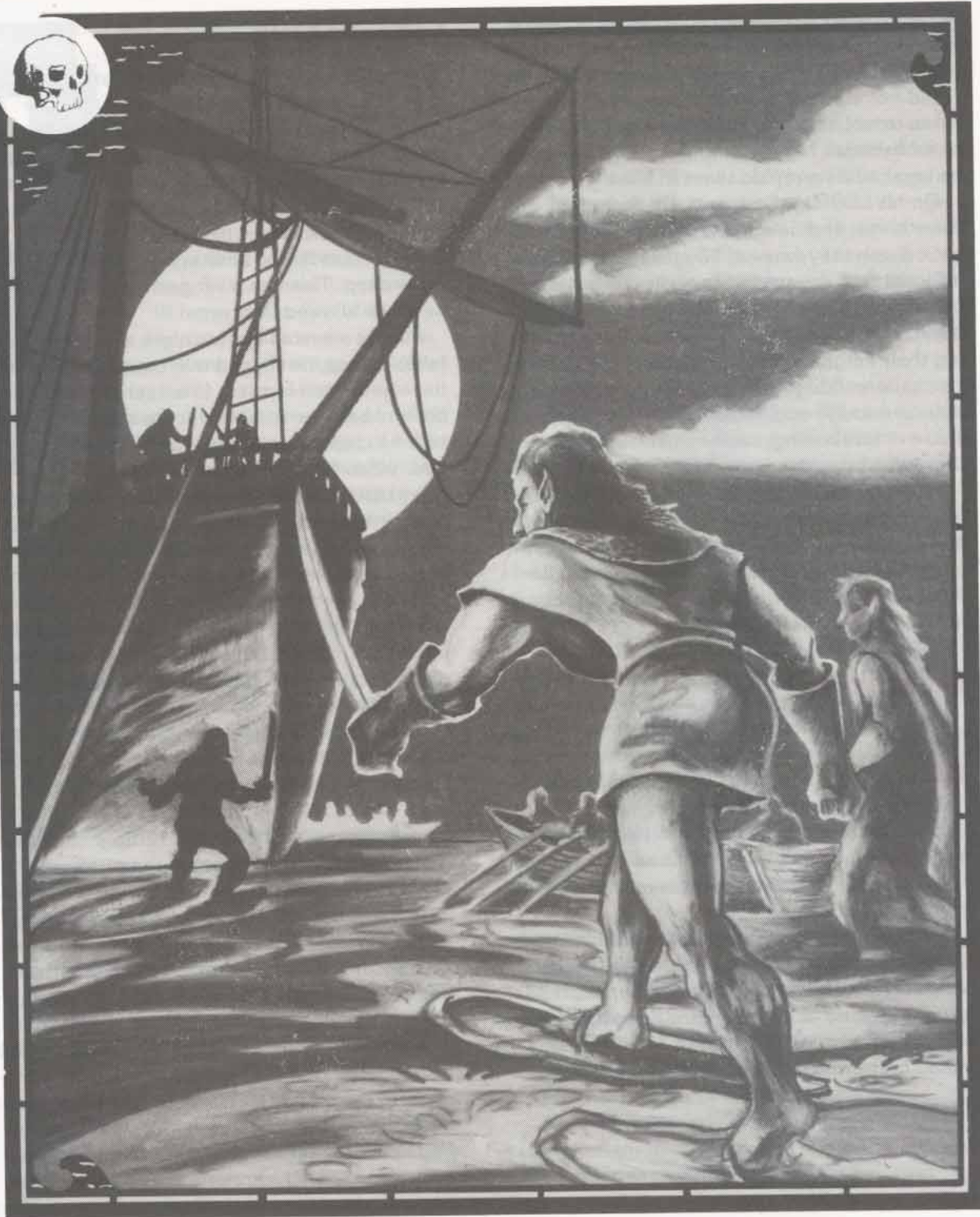
Finally, when all but his night watch had fallen asleep, he slipped overboard and began the exploration himself. Unafraid of the sea's horrors because of his ability to transform himself, he crept across the surface of the algae bed. When he fell into one of the many punctures in its surface, his first instinct was to change his form into that of the great white shark. Immediately, he smelled freshly spilled blood, and swam to investigate.

He discovered the bodies of several of his men, rent and torn by the teeth of sharks and other things. He followed the thin trail of blood down into the depths, and found a pack of sahuagin dragging their bloody prey to their lair.

Having seen enough, Salt-Biter returned to the surface. When he attempted to return to his human form however, he found himself drowning in the air. His human form worked well enough beneath water, but he simply could not go above the water for longer than five minutes. Enraged that he seemed doomed to spend his time beneath the water with the fish, he ruthlessly began to destroy all the creatures that lay in his path. He ignored all entreaties and pleas for mercy, devouring anything in his way.

When at last he came to his senses, he found he had left a trail of corpses behind him, many of them the men from his ship. The *Vengeance* itself sank even as he watched, and all that he had held dear sank with it. His heart hardened even more, if that were possible, both against himself and others. He has sworn vengeance on

SARAGOSS



SARAGOSS

those responsible for his predicament and will exact it on everyone within his reach.

Although he can reason with intruders in his realm, he prefers either to ignore them or slay them outright. He is a moody and melancholy individual and prefers his own company to that of others. Other beings approach him only at their own risk.

Despite his curse, he still fears and despises sharks and cannot swim among them easily. Although he delights in the power of his other forms, he cannot take them without some revulsion at the form he must adopt. He regards sharks as giant trash fish and does not wish to be associated with them.

If anything, Draga's fear of sharks has intensified with his entry into Ravenloft. Unfortunately, he becomes more and more sharklike with each passing day. He is sure he will eventually forget his humanity and will cruise the deeps for eternity as a shark. This terrifies him beyond all belief and he will try nearly anything to rid himself of his lycanthropic doom. Still, the curse is inextricably intertwined with his very being and nothing can save him. Deep inside he is aware of this, and it makes him all the fiercer. Unless he is in mortal danger, he will not alter his shape from anything but human, despite the clear disadvantage this gives him in the water.

Although he cannot usually breathe above water, he can travel in the air with the aid of a specially manufactured *ring of air breathing*. This item works for only two hours a day, but he uses it whenever possible, because without it he would surely become irrevocably insane. During his time above water, he travels about his domain, attempting to socialize with those inhabiting it.

However, since Draga made his living from contention and strife, the Dark Powers of Ravenloft decided that contention would be his lot forevermore. His domain would never be free of dissension and he would rule a realm of conflict. Above and below, the fighting never ceases.

This means that Draga is welcomed only with

curse and arrows, a reception hardly fit for the ruler of the realm. This serves only to irritate him and he curses the fates that brought him to Saragoss.

Draga can indirectly command most of the living creatures of the undersea. He rules through threats, direct or implied. Using his natural bargaining capability, as well as his power as lord of the domain, he can usually control the lives of the aquatic beasts. Unfortunately, he cannot make them set aside their petty differences, and they continue to squabble whether he approves or not.

Nonetheless, Salt-Biter can keep an uneasy peace when he really puts his mind to it. He has his many sharks and undead to stand behind him when he wishes to make a decree. When he is absolutely firm on a given subject, one would have to be a fool to oppose him.

His influence extends into the upper domains as well, for he has forced his way into power there as well. Since he did not want to rely on the denizens of the deep, he extorted promises of cooperation from some of the inhabitants in the vessels on the weed bed in exchange for immunity from attacks from the underwater beasts. He has even managed to convince a vampire (see *Encounters*) to join his side. Of course, because Draga is evil, most of his promises do not mean a thing, but now Draga has his hunters both above and below.

The Land

Even the seas can hold unbridled terror. The inky surface of the chill waters hides nearly everything under its purview. Many creatures swarm beneath the surface, all of them potentially friendly. Or potentially dangerous.

Here in Saragoss, the beasts that swim beneath the ocean are hardly friendly, and the seaweed that caresses the legs of swimmers has a purpose far beyond simple procreation. In this water, all the swimmers' old fears of the water come streaming back, bursting through the floodgates of memory.

SARAGOSS

The first glimpse anyone is likely to get of Saragoss is the apparition of a ship sailing along the fog-enshrouded seas. It glides past the ship on which they currently sail. The vessel's glimmering running lights burn weakly through the mist that seemed to presage its coming. The craft does not answer to any hails, nor does it change its course or slow its speed. If pursued, the ship will maintain a constant distance between itself and its pursuers, no matter how fast or by whatever means they follow.

After the ghostly craft passes, the low, thin fog that traveled with it remains. Little do the crew and passengers of the sighting ship realize that the eerie vessel has sealed their doom, and that they have set their course for Ravenloft. They are physically and magically unable to turn back now.

Soon night falls. Even if the sun had risen for the ship just before the fog, twilight draws near as it peeks from the mist. The stars begin to twinkle from the dome of the sky and a cool breeze carries the clean smell of salt water to the nostrils of the seafarers. A few small clouds slide by the moon, accentuating the beauty of a nearly cloudless night. The wind entangles itself in the hair of all above decks, sighing somewhat mournfully past the portholes of those who are not.

Throughout the night, the winds continue to mount and begin to tear at the sails of the craft, flinging cloaks about like angry ghosts. The cords on the mast snap against the taut canvas, cracking like whips. Clouds slide across the sky, obscuring the moon and the stars. The once-beautiful night rapidly deteriorates into chaos, and all aboard the ship are in danger of losing their lives. Changing the direction the ship travels becomes impossible, as if an unseen force guides the vessel.

Suddenly the whole craft shivers, throwing those aboard to the hard wooden deck. The wind dies immediately as the ship grinds to a halt. The first fingers of dawn spread over the horizon, shedding light across the ocean.

It swiftly becomes apparent that the ship is not on any charted isle, nor near any charted land. As far as the eye can see, there is a shimmering expanse of muck and vegetation spreading across the ocean. Dozens of ships litter the stretch of filthy seaweed—some intact, some broken, and some rotting.

From tip to tip, this circular domain measures about five miles across. This realm is composed entirely of the accumulated flotsam and jetsam of the ocean. Wood from shipwrecks, huge chunks of sargasso seaweed, corpses, and anything else that the currents have ever swept out to sea are all integral parts of Saragoss.

The surface of the realm is notoriously unsafe. In some places, the seaweed and junk are thick and spongy, nearly dry, while in other places it is soupy and thin. Most of the time, it is exceedingly difficult to tell the two conditions apart. Occasionally, small pools of water accumulate over the thin patches, but more often than not, the two conditions appear almost identical under anything less than intense scrutiny. It is impossible to keep track of these spots, for they change almost daily as the algae floats from one point to another.

The seaweed is home to a myriad of beasts. Some are relatively small and harmless, like the insects which buzz happily over its surface. The majority are not. It is often better to find some sort of dinghy or other means of propulsion to navigate the treacherous slime. Some of the more mechanically inclined natives have created small skiffs they call "slime shoes," which operate on the same principle as snowshoes. They may also use systems of ropes to connect one ship to another.

The weather in Saragoss is of three distinct varieties. The first and most common is simply searing hot and cloudless by day, and freezing by night. The second weather type is days of low clouds and high fog, where the dismal sun shines through only weakly, imparting no heat. These days are cold and wretched, with dew and mists that cling to clothing, quickly soak-

SARAGOSS

ing them. These nights are even colder, the mist sinking into the wood of the vessels and warping it, making it rot faster than it would ordinarily.

Finally, there are the stormy times. When black clouds gather on the horizon, all the intelligent creatures of Saragoss batten down their hatches and prepare for the worst. These times are by far the worst for the inhabitants, for the tempests have destroyed many a ship that could not stand the strain of the gales rocking the realm to and fro. When the wood weakens, no one can tell how it will react to the forces of nature.

The storms are by far the fiercest storms any sea has ever witnessed. Waves tower high above the ships and smash down upon them, and the squalling winds nearly capsize the boats. The lightning and rain crash down with equal intensity, each seeming to compete with the other. The weather eventually becomes nearly freezing and the rain turns to sleet. It brutally drives across the exposed surfaces of the ships and creates a slick slush on their decks.

When at last it passes, several ships across the land often have been utterly smashed, leaving behind remnants of themselves. The holes in the "seaweed ground" have widened, leaving little hint of their presence—pitfalls for the unwary or overconfident. Eventually, as the storm lessens its fury, the creatures of Saragoss emerge from their hiding places. They immediately begin their old habits of raiding, bickering, and hunting.

The underside of Saragoss is nearly as varied as the upper. The water here is somewhat shallow, approximately 100 feet deep at the deepest point, immediately under the center of the floating mass. Here lie sunken ships of all descriptions, rotting under the ocean waters. They all seem to have some sort of hole punched through their sides, or they are missing vital planks in the underside. Kelp and other plant life drape across the masts and extremities of the ships, carpeting the decks in soft green growths.

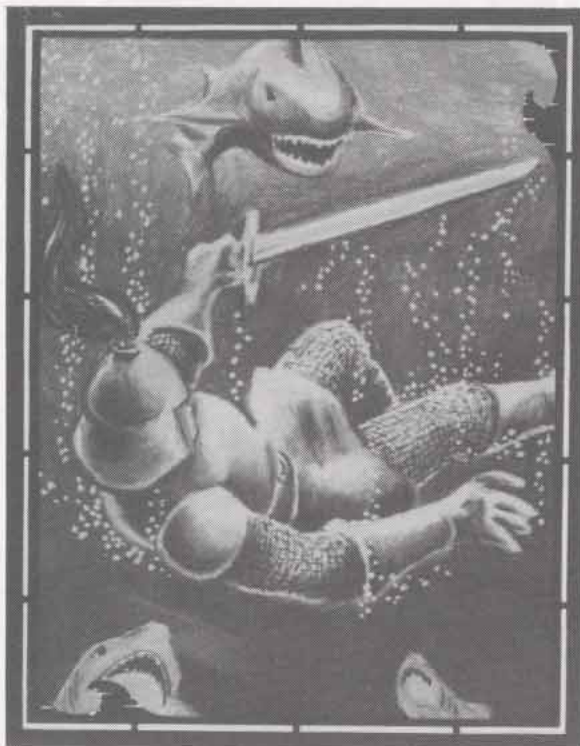


SARAGOSS

Caves litter the ocean floor where ships do not cover it. Seaweed and algae enshroud the majority of the seabed, waving gently in the ever-present current. The plant life provides an ideal cover for creatures that dart in and out of shelter to hide from invaders in their realm. Often the plants hide the caves from view, allowing the inhabitants of the undersea to surprise their foes easily.

The realm below is a place of darkness, where the sun rarely shines. Most of the illumination comes from holes in the sludge overhead, with light streaming down in waves. The water is remarkably dirty because the weeds above are constantly shedding to pieces. The dirt stirred by activity on the ocean floor swirls about, settling only after a long time. The murk impairs vision, reducing it by more than three-fourths.

It is most difficult to see an approaching foe through the obscurity created by the filth in the water, making the possibility for surprise that much greater. The beginnings of fear lurk in the depths. None know what frights the shifting



shadows hold, but each is likely to be more deadly than the last.

The Folk

There are numerous ships scattered on the domain, each the home of some creature. Ships of all kinds lie about; galleons, caravels, scows, and nearly every other kind of ocean-going vessel devised by man. The ships constantly change position on the kelp bed, being dragged by the currents, underwater creatures, or their crews to new areas. Some ships manage to escape the domain while others enter it, so it becomes difficult to chart their positions on maps. All are in various stages of decay and disrepair. Though some are still stout and seaworthy, others are so rotten that they crumble at a touch.

Yet all these ships have one thing the other ships need, and that is wood. If the crews are ever to escape this accursed ocean of scum, they must have wood to repair their ships, and to warm them when the weather is bad. None of the other ships is willing to give up its wood, and none of them will consider cooperating. In the past, unscrupulous folk have taken the wood with promises to retrieve the owners before setting sail. Of course, they reneged on their promise, leaving under the cover of night. Thus, no one living in Saragoss trusts any folk from the other crafts. Life here has become a constant struggle for the wood and supplies of the other ships.

The social tension of Saragoss is almost palpable, for each group is extraordinarily paranoid. Ever since the raids began, the anxiety grows ever worse. The various crews present false exteriors of heartiness, but all know that this is simply a facade. They pretend to care about the fortunes of the others, but this is a thin veil for their real interest, which is whether or not the other ship can defend itself.

Of course, the older residents of Saragoss take advantage of new arrivals. They offer them space on their ships in exchange for the wood

SARAGOSS

and water of the newer ship and, once they have it, they betray their comrades. (Since it happened to them, they have decided that it is all right if they do it to someone else.)

Every staple here is in great demand since there are no markets. Inhabitants must even ration water carefully until the next storm, when water is most abundant. They must scrounge for everything from food to oil for the lamps. Some things they can find by simply combing through the mire, but this is not always successful. When they fall upon hard times, they often sacrifice other races for their own needs.

Life on Saragoss has, of necessity, become an exercise in raiding. It is every ship for itself, every crew against every other. They use the methods they have devised for ship to ship travel almost exclusively for plundering the other vessels on Saragoss. Some have established alliances with other crafts, but these are typically short-lived associations, for no one trusts anyone from other vessels more than necessary. Humans will ally with other humans for raids on minotaur boats, elves will join forces for assaults on the gnomes, and so forth.

Occasionally, scouts from the various ships will travel about the domain during the day, looking for the ships that appear to be the weakest. All the other ships are aware of the purpose of the scouts and attempt to present a fierce and strong exterior, hoping to discourage the scouts. Scouts have taken to disguising themselves as gatherers or hunters so that they may scout more effectively. Of course, everyone is suspect in Saragoss, so these thin masquerades seldom work more than once. Once the scouts have found a likely target, they notify their leaders and the crew prepares itself for a raid.

If the raid is successful, the raiders return to their ship laden with the wood and supplies from the other. Frequently, they return only to find their own ship destroyed while they were gone, their guards slain and mutilated, their useless items scattered about the surface of the

algae. When they are the victims of a raid, they must find a new home for themselves, a place defensible against the creatures of the night.

Nearly every seafaring race from every world is represented on Saragoss. Remarkably, it is only evil races that collaborate effectively. Only the minotaurs have successfully cooperated. They know that their survival depends on it. Their code of honor demands that they help other minotaurs. Although they may be deadly enemies back home, they set aside their differences here.

Since ship sizes vary so widely, inhabitants of the smaller boats and pleasure crafts usually end up bartering their boats for protection on a larger vessel. Sometimes the inhabitants of the larger boats even keep their end of the deal. Unless the ship is full, they can always use extra hands for raids and defense.

Most races tend to stay with their own kind in Saragoss. When new ships arrive, the older ships that need to restock their crews send emissaries to the newcomers. The purpose is to examine the possible defenses of the ship and to seduce any of their race back to their ship.

Since it generally takes a while before all are aware of the arrival of newcomers, those new to the port usually have time to prepare their defenses against raiders. Often however, they are not aware of the state of things in Saragoss and easily fall prey to the more experienced invaders.

The ship battles are always extraordinarily fierce, for everyone understands that their survival is at stake. Every battle is a struggle for life. The winners, even when they do not intentionally do so, effectively exterminate the losing side. More often than not, they intend to destroy their foe, for that means one less midnight assault to worry about.

The atmosphere here is always tense. Everyone on every ship is always on a knife's edge of anxiety. They know that a raid on their vessel could come at any time, so only one third of a ship's crew sleeps at any given time. One third is always on watch while the rest tend to the

SARAGOSS

maintenance of the boat. What they most dread is being unaware of a coming attack—when the attackers come so stealthily under cover of darkness or fog that half the ship is dead before the alarm is raised.

Whenever a mage enters the realm of Saragoss, all seek to enlist him or her to their side. Failing that, they attempt to exterminate the wizard. Magic-users are invaluable in a raid, for their offensive capabilities here are many. *Invisibility*, *light*, and even *cantrip* can all be used to good effect when boarding a hostile ship. Many other spells can have a profound effect on the tides of battle that rage back and forth between the ships.

Most inhabitants worry less about the constant state of warfare in Saragoss than about the creatures crawling the land. The raiders are something one can see and understand. The creatures on the other hand, are a creeping horror. They appear from nowhere and overwhelm neighboring ships with little problem.

Some of these creatures are living humanoids, while others crawl, undead, from the vestiges of the crafts that have become too rotten even to salvage. Some creatures resemble humans, but no longer have the essential connection with humanity. All are equally frightening to the night watch, for the noise of the sea masks their approach.

Often one can see them silhouetted against the night sky and flames of the burning ships, gibbering and capering madly. Their unholy shrieks of glee and obscene celebration carry across the entire domain, since sound carries well over water. When the night things prowl, everyone knows it.

The most frightening thing about the night prowlers is that, if they cannot board a ship successfully to murder its crew, they may choose to sink the ship instead. Many a seafarer has been awakened by the sound of shattering boards, knowing that it spelled his certain doom. There is no defense against this method of attack except to post magical wards around the ship. Even this is not a permanent measure,

for the undersea beasts seem to have access to magic that can negate these wards.

Even escaping from the ship at the time of the attacks is useless, unless the escapee has some means of flight. The creatures post look-outs around the ships they attack specifically for this reason. Those leaping overboard will likely jump straight into the arms of the waiting beasts. Understandably, many choose to take their lives rather than attempt to escape, thus becoming ready food for the savage brutes. Others remain below decks as the water fills the ship, preferring to drown. The blackness closes over their heads, leaving only bobbing corpses.

Those coming under attack from the sea monsters can expect no help from the neighboring vessels. Too many others have pretended they needed help against the beasts, only to turn and victimize their would-be rescuers. Now, the others simply tuck themselves away a little more securely, content in their own safety for the moment. The guilt pangs they may suffer are negligible compared to what they may have encountered.

In Saragoss, the attitude is “every being for itself.” Everyone views others only as tools to be used or discarded as need arises. If people can help others to escape from the dreaded domain, they are useful. If not, they are shark fodder. But no matter how great the need for cooperation may be, the evidence of treachery lies everywhere. Therefore, no person trusts another and this is their downfall.

The Law

There are few temporal laws in Saragoss. Those that do exist tend to last only so long as the ones who decreed them hold power. The words of the captains continue to be law on their own ships, but do not apply past the boundaries of the ship. All the real laws of Saragoss are unspoken, but observed by those within the domain. Most of the laws are simply common sense, based on the nature of Saragoss. Lack of observance often results in death.

SARAGOSS

The most enduring law is, "trusting any beyond one's shipmates is a bad idea." Others have their own agenda and will not hesitate to sacrifice anyone for its completion. Even one's own shipmates are suspect. One should keep an eye on them at all times as well, though not as intensely as one would an outsider.

The second major law is, "one should always be prepared to exploit the weakness of another." If a ship is in bad shape from a raid the night before, those who know it will descend on the crippled vessel. To ensure survival, everyone struggles to keep a veneer of strength and invulnerability whenever possible, even if this is not so. Most often, it is not.

One of the few laws mandated by the lord of the realm is, "whenever someone manages to escape, another must enter." The entrance to the domain illustrates this point clearly. The ship spotted in the Mists was a lure to the domain. It sails whenever someone has fled the domain. The Mists adhere to the ship until another ship approaches it. At this point, Saragoss welcomes the newcomers to their watery ruin.

Of course, most escaping ships do not leave the demiplane. One cannot escape the clutches of Ravenloft very easily. Most of the escapees seem to end up in the Sea of Sorrows. More rarely, they simply appear in a lake in the middle of another domain. In some cases, it would almost surely have been preferable to remain in Saragoss.

Confronting Draga Salt-Biter

Draga Salt-Biter (10th-level priest): AC 0; MV 12, Sw 18; HD 10; hp 62; Str 20; Dex 15; Con 16; Int 13; Wis 19; Cha 17; #AT 1; Dmg 5-20; SA Command and create undead; SD Silver or enchanted weapon needed to hit; MR 25%; AL NE; THAC0 14

Draga Salt-Biter is a deadly opponent in combat. Since he has gained control over his lycanthropy, he can choose to alter his form throughout the combat. Draga is unique among

shapechangers because his transformation is nearly instantaneous (-2 bonus on initiative when he wants to change). He chooses to employ this option more than most other lycanthropes.

The Dark Powers duplicate all the powers that were granted to Draga by his original deity.

Because of his long tenure as an adventuring cleric, Draga is familiar with the best possible uses for every spell to which he has access. He faithfully memorizes his spells almost every time he expends one of them. He will, therefore, always have a nearly complete package of spells awaiting those who face him.

Because he is aware of every ship that enters his domain, Draga makes it his duty to check on the new arrivals, to make sure that they do not threaten him too much. He will have a decent idea of what any challengers are capable of and will prepare a defense. These defenses often involve luring the intruders into an underwater trap.

Draga Salt-Biter has complete command over all the undead from his domain. However, this power does not extend to those undead, such as liches and vampires, who came into his domain after their creation. Once per day, Draga can *animate dead* whether he has memorized that spell or not. When he uses this ability, all those slain in Saragoss in the last 24 hours rise to do his bidding. If there is no obvious enemy, the undead so created begin to fight one another.

The sharks in the domain are under his control as well. If he so desires, he can summon 1-6 to his side within three rounds, with 1-4 more arriving every two rounds. These are typically ordinary sharks, although occasionally a megalodon will appear as well (10% chance).

With both his sharks and his undead at his easy disposal, Draga Salt-Biter is clearly a dangerous opponent. He can manipulate the weather as well, bringing on storms immediately after a sunny day if he so desires.

Like most lycanthropes, Draga can only be hit by silver or enchanted weapons. All others,

SARAGOSS



while they may seem to inflict damage, do not actually harm him. A favorite tactic of his is to pretend that these harmless weapons cause him great pain. When those bold enough to attack him approach to administer the killing stroke, he tears into them with great effect.

If Draga is killed, his essence divides and projects itself into all the sharks of his domain. The sharks then enter a frenzy, attacking and killing all other sharks they encounter. Every time one shark kills another, the victor gains possession of the loser's part of Salt-Biter's life force. This continues until all of Draga's substance exists only in one shark, whereupon he returns to full awareness. This process usually takes a week to accomplish. When finished, Draga may then change his form as he was able to do before.

If someone kills Draga immediately after he has regained his personality and when there are no more sharks in the domain, Draga will be permanently dead. So, when he first regains possession of his personality, he keeps to his

shark form until more sharks enter his domain. This restocking usually does not take too long, for blood is constantly being spilled into the waters of Saragoss, and sharks enter his domain regularly.

Closing the Borders

When Salt-Biter wishes to seal his domain from intruders and deserters, a ring of jagged rock springs suddenly from the sea. It completely encircles the domain and is resistant to all magic. One cannot tunnel underneath it, nor go over it. Savage winds batter at all who approach its summit, pushing the eager back in the direction from which they came. This prevents both climbing and flying over the peaks. Going through the rock is an absurdity, for the sharp stones would quickly grind a ship to pieces. The rock itself is immune to and resists the passage of extra-planar magic and beings.

Various water-dwelling beasts dwell around the edges of the domain, impeding the progress of ships that pass their area. Of course, impeding consists of more than just restraining the ship. Many escaping vessels have been found drifting aimlessly, and only spatters of blood mark the fact that it once was inhabited.

Encounters

During the daylight hours, Saragoss appears much like any other haven for old ships. Although it is not exactly a typical port, the creatures that frequent most shipyards and seafronts patronize the island of Saragoss as well. Albatross, sea gulls, and pelicans fly about above water while fish of all descriptions swim below.

The birds roost on the ships that litter the algae, making their nests in the upper rigging where few molest them. By day the birds wheel madly about the sky, occasionally descending to feed upon some luckless fish. The noise of their squabbling fills the air, often driving the

SARAGOSS

residents of the boats nearly to distraction. Their competition fills the daylight hours, livening the air of the domain.

As twilight draws near, the birds begin to return to their nests and perches, leaving only the most hungry to continue their restless flight. Soon all but one or two have nested down for the night. Those that remain circle about in the lonely evening, their haunting cries echoing throughout the forlorn sky. As night falls entirely, even the most determined gulls must return to their nests.

Some ships they avoid, however. At least one of these ships is home to a tribe of seawolves who will tear any intruder to pieces. Another, half-sunken, contains a rope ladder that reaches to the very floor of the ocean. It is by this ladder that the many sea zombies ascend. Other ships contain even more horrors. It is rumored that one even holds a vampire too weak from lack of food to rise and hunt. Should any come near him, he will surely muster the strength necessary to overwhelm the intruder. None know from whence he came, but they whisper that he is a refugee from a great and powerful being in another land. Since a vampire is such a terrifying being, they dread the time when his pursuer finally finds him here.

Not all the denizens of Saragoss live aboard the beached vessels. Swarms of the ocean's creatures live on or under the slime of Saragoss, emerging to feed on those unfortunate enough to have been trapped in the domain.

Some creatures are forced to remain in the sea because of their nature. These creatures tend to lurk in the thin places in the mire, awaiting the passage of the unwary.

The safest time in Saragoss is during hot sunny days, for the occupants of the undersea tend not to venture out during those times. Since the sun dries their skins and makes them vulnerable, they lurk below and await the coming of night, fog, or storm.

Thus, the best time to raid another ship is also the most dangerous time for the raiders. They may very well encounter a raiding party

much more fearsome than their own when they near their prospective target. Many assault groups, successful at first, fail to ever make it home; their shrieks of terror and dismay ring across the deserted quagmire when they discover their undoing.

Most of the creatures that haunt Saragoss make their homes under the waves, in the shadow of the great disk of kelp. The beasts make their lairs anywhere they can find the space. The underwater portion of Saragoss is nearly in danger of being overpopulated. Besides the various ordinary fish that swim about the underside, the variety of beasts under the upper domain is truly astonishing.

In addition to the small fish that make the undersea their home are the larger predators, the sharks and the barracuda. These brutal hunters are especially numerous in Saragoss, and they all have developed a special hunger for human flesh. The ravenous fish are inclined to circle about the areas where the seaweed gives way to simple muck, hoping for some creature to fall within range of their cruel teeth. Occasionally, they feed on the underwater inhabitants which periodically journey to the surface, either mistaking them for living humans or forgetting which creature is deadlier. Invariably, they are reminded that they are some of the weakest hunters of the undersea.

Although the sharks are under the direct mental command of Draga Salt-Biter, he usually lets them do what they will. He loathes the mental contact necessary to communicate with these creatures, for it simply reinforces the hatred he feels for them.

There are few ships underwater which some repellent beast does not inhabit. In the outer edges of the underwater domain, scraggs battle for the meat that comes their way, and they guard the routes into and out of the domain. Closer to the center, the sea zombies make their homes, crossing to the ladder to prey on the living.

Nearby, lacedons (aquatic ghouls) swarm about the shipwrecks and occasionally a pack

SARAGOSS

of them will descend upon a lone sea zombie. Lacedons prize the salted and pickled meat of such a specimen and will often go to great lengths to procure one. Naturally, this leads to friction and pitched undersea battles between the two groups, and often the two will ignore the living to confront each other. Since the two find it difficult to kill one another, Draga Salt-Biter has forced them to live in separate parts of his domain.

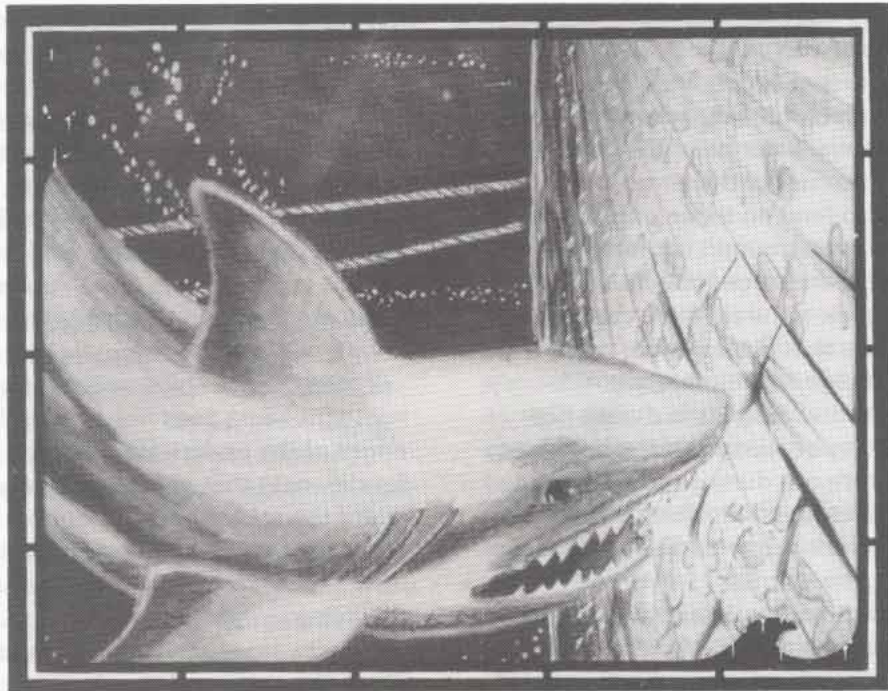
No lair is free from contention in Saragoss. Reavers (see the *Monstrous Compendium*, RAVENLOFT™ Appendix) and sahuagin compete fiercely for the caves that dot the realm. Although the two races are very similar (or perhaps because they are so similar), they hate each other with a passion so hot that it seems that the water boils when the two clash. While the reavers can outfight the sahuagin, the sahuagin outnumber the reavers significantly, and they press their advantage whenever possible.

The algae and the beds of seaweed hide yet another menace. Kelpies inhabit the thicker clumps, hiding themselves until an expedient

moment arrives. When travelers are rash enough to journey beneath the sea's surface, they are fair game for the kelpies. The kelpies frequent the areas near the holes in the sargasso, awaiting the passage of an air-breathing creature. When one approaches, the kelpie simulates a victim drowning in the pools of muck. While this often proves effective in weeding out the foolish of Saragoss, most of the population is suspicious enough to let the kelpie wail on until she pretends her death.

The honeycombed passageways of the underwater caves are home to many other creatures, very few of which are benign. Nearly every kind of evil aquatic creature lairs in Saragoss, constantly struggling with another for food, home, or just plain survival.

It is apparent that travel through Saragoss is fraught with peril. Peering into the inky water may yield one's reflection, or it may provide something much, much worse. The murky depths hide terror beyond imagining, and can spell the end of one's life or, even worse, the beginning of a new one.



evil is easy, and has infinite forms.

Pascal

One of the worst kinds of fear has its source in the things one sees in dreams on storm-tossed nights. And the worst kind of evil is that which borrows the face of one's deepest fear and kills with it. Timor is a land where such things are common, where childhood

horrors return to haunt their owners.

It is a land that seems normal enough on the surface, but underneath, tunnels and sewers criss-cross and branch every which way. It is in these catacombs that the terror lurks, venturing forth to prey on the solitary.

The Lord

The lord of the land is the Hive Queen of the marikith who dwells deep within the sewers beneath Timor. She keeps her lordship secret from all, afraid that her power will be stolen from her as she stole power from her predecessor.

The Hive Queen's mother was, in fact, human before the times of desperation. In her quest to build a city more magnificent than any other, she bankrupted her country until her citizens went hungry and wore rags and even her own coffers were empty. Disappointed with her weakling population, the queen made a pact with an evil wizard who cast a wicked spell for her. Through illusion her citizens feared her. They redoubled their efforts through fear and they accepted oppressive taxation because of fear. With her own chests of silver collecting again quite nicely, the human queen scarcely

noticed when the mists carried her city away.

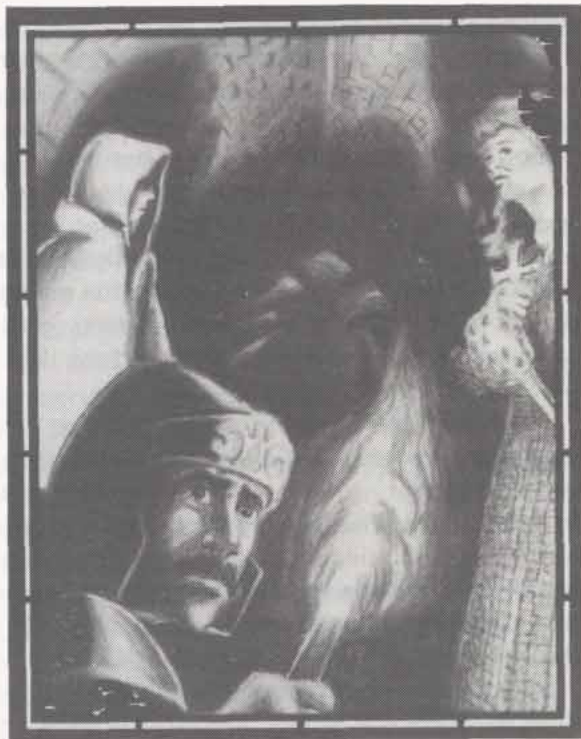
Neither did she notice her daughter, a woman of considerable ambition in her own right. Not satisfied to simply watch her mother rule Timor, the daughter plotted evil of her own. She studied the arcane lore and sought a form so hideous that she might instill true fear, not just an illusion of fear. At a masquerade ball the daughter unveiled her new body, and the queen died of fright on the spot. The evil wizard's spell was broken, but something far worse took its place.

The Hive Queen is the second lord of the land, having schemed and plotted so that when her predecessor grew weak, she would be there to seize power. When at last her moment came to strike, she gloried in the fear she spawned in her mother. Not wishing to make the same mistake the original queen made, she destroys all the queen eggs she lays.

In doing so, she sacrifices the good of her kind. However, she is only interested in her own survival, not the survival of her species. She knows of the inherently treacherous nature of the other queens and does not wish to follow in the footsteps of her forerunner.

Appearance

Roughly 11 feet tall, the Hive Queen is a swollen, spiderish nightmare of a being. Her hide is a glistening jet-black, mottled with venomous red and orange splotches. Her mostly humanoid torso extends from the abhorrent arachnid abdomen supported by four legs. Four arms project from her ribcage. Her head is a travesty of humanity. Thin, muddy hair hangs about her head in an oily corona, long fangs protrude from her too-wide mouth, dripping venom continually. Her eyes emanate red light, glowing like macabre jack-o'-lanterns. A poisonous stinger juts from the rear of her drooping abdomen. The stinger is made ever more poisonous with each egg she lays as the poison from the eggs releases bits of its toxic substance as it passes by.



The Land

The city of Timor covers the entirety of the domain. The names are interchangeable, for the domain and the city are the same. Outwardly, Timor is a paradise of beauty and efficiency, blending the graceful natural curves of the sculpted stone with nature itself. The city is an architect's dream and a dream for those who pass through.

The land is roughly three miles on a side. The many buildings in Timor thrust themselves up toward the azure sky. Their graceful, arching sides slope up as if toward a destiny yet to be realized. The buildings congregate around the various parks and inner-city farms like hens watching over their chicks.

The scents of flowers drift from the gardens and greens to the pedestrians. The tantalizing sight of the lush foliage calls to those who pass by their environs. It is a veritable paradise here, yet the parks remain strangely unpopulated and unused.

The broad avenues wend their way through the municipality, the cobbled streets remaining almost impossibly clean. There is none of the filth and rot one normally associates with big cities, for all the filth seems to funnel into the sewers. There is no evidence of rats or other vermin.

The architectural style of Timor is uniformly flowing and sweeping, as though it had been designed purely for decorative value. Each building merges perfectly with the next amid the myriad trees shading the city. There are few windows on the tall buildings, keeping what is outside out, and what is inside in.

Yet if Timor is a dream for many, then for those who stay here, the place is a nightmare. The atmosphere of the land is curiously oppressive, almost as if it were fear made palpable. Despite the grace and beauty of the city, there is something cold and dead in its aura, something that lends to and feeds from the fear it generates. The emotions that radiate through the town give it the feeling of an armed camp rather than the peaceful city it appears to be.

At night this feeling only intensifies. The magically burning lights on every other street corner do not banish the darkness, but instead seem to intensify it. The night seems almost sentient, the shadows that pool at the bases of the building and in the alleys writhing as if they were tentacles of some dark creature. The gloom concentrates most around the openings to the sewers. To those with keen eyesight, it even appears as if creatures pour from the drains.

Although the shadows themselves are not dangerous, the creatures that inhabit them are. The creatures arise by night from the conduits that cross the city's underside to prey upon those still on the streets.

The Folk

Although Timor is a rather large city, its streets are strangely quiet. The marketplaces are without the bustling masses that typify cities of Timor's magnitude. A few

TIMOR

people, always traveling in groups no smaller than three, scurry about, intent on their errands. They do not answer the questions put to them by passing strangers and flee when approached.

The citizens of Timor would be more friendly were it not for the dangers of dealing with anyone in the open streets. The citizens often find the remains of those who are so incautious as to travel alone by day or by night. The wanderers are usually discovered torn to shreds, a horrible expression of fear frozen upon the face of each. Worse, sometimes citizens find only a scrap or two of blood-stained clothing and a small trail of reddish droplets leading to the nearest sewer drains.

Once a city of nearly 30,000 people, the population has dwindled to a mere 5,000. The citizens began to vanish quietly and at first no one noticed. The general assumption was simply that they had left. But when those remaining began to discover the bodies, ripples of unease snaked through the city. The City Council heightened militia patrols, but they could find nothing. The number of missing persons continued to rise. Fear mounted into outright terror as the militia found torn and mutilated corpses everywhere.

Even the insides of people's homes were not sacred. Tracks led from the bathrooms, from holes found underneath the beds, and from the attics. It seemed as though the advanced water and plumbing technology, seen initially as a blessing, had instead become a curse of serious proportions.

As if this were not bad enough, the parks too became danger zones. People were observed visiting friends in the parks, when suddenly their "friends" changed into horrifying creatures best not thought of, and brutally devoured them. When this news spread, the fear grew. The citizens began to mistrust even their closest friends, suspecting them of being some shapechanging beast. Bodies continue to appear in the parks, but they have begun to be scattered all over the town, almost as if the

malevolent beasts in the parks were multiplying and spreading out over the city. It seems that nowhere in the formerly lovely city of Timor is there safety.

There is little in the way of friendliness in the airs of Timor. The people regard every stranger and outlander with suspicion, if not with downright hostility. Only the relative newcomers to Timor greet the arrivals with anything approaching benevolence, and even they act guarded.

There are some vendors selling in the bazaars, but they are curt and unfriendly. They do not beckon to those making their way through the city, preferring to let their customers come to them. If the impoliteness of the merchants offends anyone, there is little recourse. The merchants have armed themselves heavily and they bristle with swords, bludgeoning weapons, and other implements of destruction. Despite the unfriendly atmosphere created by these men and women, the natives continue to buy from these street vendors. The good citizens understand the fear that drives the merchants to be so tactless.

Despite the lack of people in Timor, the indoor shops are also fairly well-frequented. Nearly any non-magical item can be found in the bazaars and the shops. There seems a mysterious shortage of all things magical. Components, items, and spellcasters for hire are not available in Timor.

All sorts of food are available in Timor. The parks and farms somehow manage to produce an astonishing variety of meats, fruits, grains, and vegetables. Several guards protect the farmers who gather and tend the farms, keeping those who pass by well away from the toiling farmers.

No children play outside, for their parents strictly monitor their activities. The parents wish to keep their children free from the creeping shadows that begin to fill the lanes at twilight. As night nears, the militia moves through the town clearing everyone from the streets. Taverns and inns are few and far between, but run a thriving business for those who have no-

here else to go when the light begins to fail.

None of the citizens venture out after dark, instead preferring to sit behind the barred doors and windows of their homes, keeping guard against the horrors of the night. They often take shifts staying up. If one guard falls asleep, it may spell doom for all in the household. Indeed, many homes have been found ravaged in the morning, the furnishings slashed and broken and the inhabitants missing. Only spatters of blood stain the walls, marking the demise of those within. Adventurers entering Timor hoping for rest will be sorely disappointed.

Since the citizens prefer that their own number not be depleted any further, they have taken to "offering" foreigners to the shadows from the drains. The militia does not push foreigners off the streets as urgently as the other citizens and doors close against them. If they can reach a tavern or inn before the bolts go on the doors and the shutters close over the windows, they may be safe. But often it is only by taking refuge in one of the many abandoned buildings that foreigners can secure themselves against the night. But they may find cause to wonder why these buildings have been abandoned. Did the old inhabitants flee? Or were they taken within these walls? And if that is the case, doesn't that mean the house is not secure?

Of course, the number of outsiders is not always constant, and when the stock runs low the rampage in the homes begins again. At this point citizens may sacrifice their own, appeasing the hunters by means of a lottery system. Or they may choose to guard their homes, gathering their family together into one room for common protection.

Since few people in the city know others well enough to trust them entirely, they do not join the families together which would ensure greater protection. With shape-shifters on the loose, who can trust anyone? Only the members of one's own family are not suspect. And sometimes even they act a little strange.

The people of Timor are surly, unfriendly, and more than a little xenophobic. One cannot easi-

ly befriend them, for they repel any attempts at cordiality. Some of them bully others, seeming to derive a great satisfaction from their fear. These bullies tend to disappear, their homes looking as if something broke out, not in. It is only speculation what happens to these fellows, but all agree and hope that it was something vile.

The Law

The City Council ostensibly runs the city of Timor. They are a democratically appointed group that oversees the maintenance and safety of the citizens. However, the current bunch has voted themselves absolute power for the duration of the crisis, which shows no signs of lessening. Thus, their homes are better guarded than the rest of the citizens' and their lives are much easier. The crisis does not seem to adversely affect them in any way. Of course, the Councilmen have had it proven to them that they are just as vulnerable as their constituents, no matter what they might wish to believe. Several Councilmen have had their homes invaded although they have lost no family members.

The Council controls the militia and suggests its best course of action. For a time, it seemed as though the citizens might actually succeed in pushing back the darkness that has now overwhelmed the city. When they thought they stood a chance of crushing the night, the Council sent the militia into the sewers to pursue the night's shadows. The townsfolk clustered about the sewer openings, hoping to hear the victory of the militia. Understandably, they became dismayed when they heard the screams of the men who went down. The actual terror did not strike until later that night.

That night, the populace of the town was decimated. Those who did not receive a visit from the night stalkers found their plumbing had erupted in sprays of blood and gore. Even worse, various pieces of the ill-fated militia lay about the bath areas. It was then that the surviving members of the city decreed that no one

TIMOR



would ever enter the sewers again. Those who do will find an angry mob awaiting them should they ever arise from the depths and someone observes them.

It was the Council who decided the city would be best served if they offered the foreigners to the denizens of Timor. Not only would it preserve the people of Timor, it also would eliminate the people most likely to provoke the sewer-dwellers and the shape-shifters into attacks against the citizens.

One of those responsible for the draconian measures the Council has taken is Councilman Hemlest. Hemlest is not human, and is in fact dead. A doppelganger has taken his place on the Council and is very interested in making sure his clan, who lives in the sewers, feeds well. It was he who suggested that the militia sojourn into the drains and he who suggested that foreigners be sacrificed. The frightening thing is not how evil his suggestions are, but how readily the human Council accepted them to save themselves.

Despite the Council's best intentions, the only real law in Timor is that of the Hive Queen. The lord has decreed that those who delight in the fear of others shall be condemned to feed from it for the rest of their lives.

The bullies and tormentors of Timor must successfully save vs. spells every time they intentionally cause terror in another. Otherwise, as night falls, the ruffian will begin a gradual transformation into either a doppelganger or marikith, depending upon his intellect. The intelligent, subtle persecutor becomes a doppelganger, while the brutish one begins the transformation into a marikith. The changing individual dashes through the streets to whichever of the two groups he now will call kin.

Meanwhile, the other group, somehow sensing the transformation of this individual, hunts him through the streets, seeking his destruction before he can swell the ranks of the enemy. The streets become a deadly maze for the former bully as he seeks to avoid the fate awaiting him should he slip up. The marikith will boil up

from the manhole covers and the doppelgangers will vacate the parks, buildings, or farms where they have hidden themselves.

The two forces avoid direct confrontation, for they know that outright conflict can only result in disaster for both sides. Both hope to continue with their guerrilla warfare until one side or another achieves superiority. When that time arrives, the streets of Timor will run red with the blood of monsters.

When the issue is decided, one way or another, the creatures retreat to their dwellings. If they have managed to retrieve their newest member, they begin the induction of that being into their clan. The doppelgangers perform a simple blood-sharing ritual that works nowhere but Timor. The ritual binds the newest recruit to them more firmly than any magic could. The marikith bear their prize back to their queen, who ingests the unfortunate one. When a week has passed, she looses the creature from her abdomen. The thing instinctively knows its place and function when it is reborn this way, and immediately scurries to fulfill its purpose.

Confronting the Queen

The Hive Queen (13 HD monster): AC -3; MV 15; HD 13; hp 93; Str 18; Dex 8; Con 20; Int 20; Wis 11; Cha 3; #AT 6; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-8/1-10/1-10; SA See following; SD See following; MR 20%; AL CE; THAC0 7

To find the Queen, one must descend into the drains of the city of Timor. The drone of the city's machinery echoes all around, leaving intruders with a vague, formless sense of unease. The incessant noise causes headaches for those who do not belong here. Everyone must successfully save vs. paralyzation with a -1 penalty or have a -1 penalty for all attack, damage, and surprise rolls because of the pain of the headache.

Just entering the sewers does not mean that the foolish explorers will encounter the Queen. They must first flounder about in the darkness, trying to figure a way though the maze of tun-

nels that comprise the underworld of Timor. Even the brightest of lights shines no farther than 15 feet down here and a haze from the decomposing matter blurs any vision. Occasionally, a light will extinguish itself for no apparent reason. Even magical light is subject to this law. It is almost as if the dark resents the light intruding in its space.

It is dangerous to carry an open flame down here, for there are pockets of gas from the decaying substances found in the sewers. These can explode with little warning, causing 2d6 points of damage to all within a 10-foot radius.

The pockets of gas, the darkness, and the ease of losing one's way are the least of anyone's worries. One danger presents itself much more clearly and more immediately than all the others—the marikith.

The marikith attack the intruders in waves of ever-increasing numbers. At first, only two rush the party. Their splashing in the waters of the sewer gives the group plenty of time to prepare itself. If the company defeats these two, two more attack the party. The next two do not splash through the waters, however. Instead, they glide silently through the water.

If the band defeats the second attackers as readily as the first, the marikith begin to move in earnest. With each attack there is one more marikith until each attack consists of 10 marikith. They attack the party in any direction possible, often clinging to the dripping overhead pipes, creeping along until they are above their prey. No one is sure how many marikith live beneath the streets of Timor, but there are probably no more than 175. And when outsiders threaten their Queen, they never stop coming.

Should any of the band survive the encounters with all the Queen's marikith, they must finally find and defeat the hoary old thing. When they first lay eyes on the revolting personage of the Hive Queen, they must make a horror check or flee screaming for two rounds.

If they should manage to close with her, the Hive Queen first attempts to retreat to one of the many holes in which she dwells. If she can-

TIMOR

not, she will stand and fight. In combat she may use weapons with all four of her human hands, also attacking with two of her four legs. Alternatively, she may choose to grapple with her attackers and bite them. If she scores attacks with two of her hands, the DM may roll to determine if she manages to bite her attackers. Those bitten by her must successfully save vs. poison with a -3 penalty or die.

Finally, if she is in dire straits, she may present her abdomen to her attackers and attempt to sting them. If she hits, they must successfully save vs. poison with a -4 penalty or they will fall into a catatonic trance for one week. After this time, they rise again as marikith. If the Queen is dead, they become free-willed and may wander the sewers under their own power. Only a *neutralize poison* followed by a *remove curse* spell can correct this condition and restore them to their original condition. Otherwise, the only recourse is a *wish*.

In most domains, the land fades into the Mists when the lord falls. Timor does not fade quietly.

Should the Hive Queen fall with no marikith queen to take her place, Timor will begin to crumble as well. Since the only thing holding the city together is the force of the Queen's will, it falls when she does.

First to go are the sewers. Even as the party gathers itself together from crushing the Hive Queen, counts its wounds, and prepares to leave, the roofs of the sewers begin their inevitable collapse. The band must scramble to escape, perhaps sacrificing some of its members to make good its escape. If the party cannot move faster than 9 feet per round, the collapse of the city will condemn them to a crushing doom.

Each 10-foot section of wall causes 2d6 points of damage to all underneath it, falling in a pattern radiating from the center of the web of tunnels. If the group manages to escape from the labyrinth of shafts, they will still have to face the army of irate citizens who are distraught at the destruction of their city. Only the most cunning use of stealth and evasion tactics

will allow the party to escape intact.

The buildings crumble and teeter as the disintegration of the tunnels undercuts their foundations. The rivers flowing through the city burst through their thin retaining walls and overflow onto the streets, eroding the buildings even further. People run screaming throughout the city. The doppelgangers and the marikith are so busy finding ways to flee themselves that they have no time to feed on the concentrated terror of the people.

Each round, every member of the band must make a Dexterity check with a $+2$ penalty or be hit by falling masonry. This causes 1d6 to 3d6 points of damage, depending on the size of the falling item and the whim of the DM.

After 20 rounds the players may find themselves at the edge of the city, the mists lying directly ahead. If they turn to look at the city before fleeing into the mists, they see jagged rifts in the earth racing directly toward them, widening even as they approach. They spout a dusty haze into the air, choking and blinding those near the chasms. The rocks inside crumble together, grinding and gnashing like a giant's teeth. Finally, just before the party steps into the mists, the city of Timor collapses into the huge crater the land has become. Then it fades away into the mists.

If the group watches carefully, they may see shapes and forms fleeing from the holocaust that Timor has become. If they approach these figures, they may very well see that not all of these are typical citizens of Timor. Some of the escapees are doppelgangers and many are fleeing marikith. Some carry strange bundles of almost humanoid proportions, except for the spiderish abdomen. It is possible that the marikith flee to establish themselves elsewhere.

Closing the Borders

When the Hive Queen wishes it, the mists of Ravenloft rise up around the borders of Timor. Those who wander into the mists must concentrate on staying within the

mists. When their concentration lapses, they will find themselves ejected from the mists into the dark drains of the city's sewers, and must find their way to the surface world. If they manage to avoid the marikith and other crawly things in the sewers, they must then try to escape detection as they arise from the underworld. If they fail to do so, they may find themselves the center of an angry and frightened mob, intent on appeasing the angry slitherers of the dark through sacrifice. In these mobs, the doppelgangers and the marikith feed well, for here the hysteria is fresh and ripe.

Encounters

The realm of Timor is neatly divided between two powerful monster factions. The marikith control the underworld and all within this area. The sewers, the catacombs, and the various tunnels all belong to the marikith. Any caught trespassing within become the sole property of the dwellers in the dark.

Above ground the doppelgangers rule. They control both the night and the day, for they may move freely among the citizens without much fear. They wreak their havoc and move on in a different form. The townsfolk fear them nearly as much as they fear the creeping horrors of the marikith. The doppelgangers have destroyed the friendship and benevolence that formerly permeated the town.

Finally, the undead are well represented in Timor. The spirits of those slain by the doppelgangers and the marikith often find their ways back to their former dwellings and spend their time bewailing their unfortunate fate. They are very unhappy with their present state and resent those who live while they are dead.

The doppelgangers and the marikith do not cooperate, for they must compete for their prey. Although the marikith are stronger in terms of numbers, the doppelgangers are much more cunning and sly and can mount attacks on the marikith in the guise of marikith.

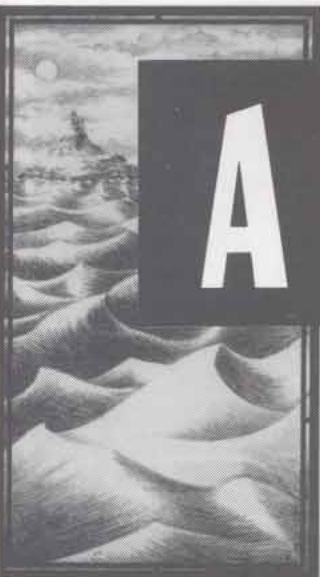
Timor has modified all its nonhuman crea-

tures so that their primary diet does not consist of raw meat or pumping blood or even the life force of their victims. Rather, they feed on the raw terror they inspire in their victims. They tear their victims to shreds to help create more terror among those who are still alive, and so create more food for themselves.

This reliance on the psychic energy of their victims has made the inhabitants of Timor develop more terrifying hunting techniques. For the doppelgangers it is easy. They simply use their innate ESP power to find their victims' deepest fears and manifest themselves as that fear. The marikith, on the other hand, must learn to create eerie effects such as shadow play, strange sounds, and weird occurrences to strike the spark of fear in their victims' hearts.

Every creature native to Timor is able to sense fear in another being. When they find it, they will do all in their power to intensify it, so that their nourishment will be that much greater. Indeed, when they stalk their victims, the terror often becomes exquisite.





beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain.

Matthew Arnold

The mists do not lie in wait to trap the unwary. Rather, they bide their time, allowing their passengers to tangle themselves in webs of their own devising. The dark lands beckon not only the proudly evil, who create suffering for

the sheer joy of it, but also those misguided folk who, through mere delusion, create despair and chaos for their fellows.

This is the tale of the warlord Diamabel and his follies. His visions proved to be nightmares for those around him; his delights terrors for his victims. In his eyes, the world appeared filthy. He sought to clean it and, in doing so, sullied his land beyond repair.

The Lord

Diamabel was born to power. The son of a wealthy desert sheikh, he knew he was destined to rule. Even as a youth, he plotted to gather more power to himself than ever any sheikh ever had. Although the tribesmen knew their future leader sought domination, they did not know his purpose in doing so.

When Diamabel was 16 years old, his father fortuitously passed away. Those who accused Diamabel of foul play vanished into the desert. Those who remained said that the sands had swallowed them, and all public talk of patricide ceased.

Diamabel proved himself an able, if erratic, leader. His people learned to trust him implicitly. After several stunning victories over other

nomads, they saw that Diamabel planned to conquer far more than just the dunes.

One night under the stars, he shared his vision with his people: to exterminate those who do not believe in his god and his creed, thus earning the acclaim of the heavens. For this deed, he promised, he and his people would be transformed into beings of light. He and those loyal to him put the sword to the tribesmen who disagreed with this policy of genocide.

For the next several years, Diamabel and his forces became the terror of the desert. Sweeping over the dunes, mounted on their swift camels, they laid waste to the caravans of wealthy merchants and the troops sent to destroy the mutinous nomads.

And still the dream to become one of the heaven's chosen burned within Diamabel's breast. He put the infidels to the sword, giving no quarter even to the young and the infirm. At night, his dreams taunted him, transforming him into a pale-skinned, feathery-winged beauty. Every morning he arose with a greater fervor than before. His obsession led him to disregard all safety for himself, and he began attacking the cities that housed the heathens.

Finally, as he butchered a northern, mist-bound town, he met his doom. An arrow fired by a hidden sniper found a home in his stomach, and he passed from consciousness. As he faded into darkness, he lamented the fact that he would never see the light of the heavens alive, and he called forth a terrible curse.

When he awoke, he was greatly surprised. He had not expected to survive the wound. An even greater shock was his appearance. He had at long last achieved the angelic appearance that had been his goal ever since he was a small child. Little did he know that this glorious transformation came at a dear price.

Appearance

Prior to his metamorphosis, Diamabel was a short, swarthy, dark-haired and -bearded desert nomad. Upon his entry to the dark

PHARAZIA

lands, however, he became completely different. Indeed, he became the very embodiment of that to which he so long aspired. But as with so many darklords, his new appearance and power came with a consequence.

During the day, he is now a 7' tall, pale-skinned being with glorious wings sprouting from his shoulderblades. His face is clean shaven and radiates a kind of transcendent beauty, although it is marred by lines of fear and frustration. His face seems as if it should be serene, instead it reflects an underlying hatred and quick temper.

His hair is silvery white, reflecting the morning and evening light in a rainbow of colors. His eyes are an intense blue, ranging in shade from sky blue to glacial ice as his mood dictates. His limbs are clean and powerful, muscles rippling when he makes the slightest move. All in all, he is an awesome figure to behold . . . during the day.

When the sun sinks below the horizon, an immediate transformation takes place in Diamabel's body. Though this change is awe-inspiring, it is also intensely horrifying. Where a powerful seraphic being once stood appears the living embodiment of death.

Diamabel's wings decay instantly, revealing only a framework of bones, corrupted feathers dangling uselessly from the hollow shafts. His handsome features slough away, leaving the hideous face of a zombie. His sleek skin and powerful muscles mutate into decaying ropes of rotting flesh. His fine silken clothes become black woolen tatters, flapping in any breeze no matter how small.

Current Sketch

Diamabel is a being who considers himself betrayed by the world at large. Now that he has finally achieved the dream most dear to him, he has found that it is not everything he had imagined. The transformation he undergoes every night tortures him more than he cares to admit.



Not only does he have the pain of the mutation to contend with every night, he also must accept that he has been totally cut off from his deity. He had thought that his evolution into a higher state would grant him a closer rapport with his god, but he has found that the opposite is the case. Instead of enjoying the confidences of his lord, he finds himself trying all the harder to reach him.

He is convinced that he need only eliminate all infidels in his land to break down the wall between himself and his god. He pursues this dream at night. During the day, he makes the most of his beautiful form, and lazes the hours away heedlessly. At night, he is forcibly reminded of his situation, and does his best to rectify it.

Diamabel may be best described as a creature driven by hatred for all things that are different from him. He does not admire imagination in anything, nor does he reward enthusiasm except in matters of faith. There is only one law, and that law is Diamabel's. He will

PHARAZIA

in the rigors of the desert. In the heat of the day, a traveler must drink one quart of water per hour or dehydrate. There do not seem to be any seasonal variations in Pharazia, although the occasional thunderburst cools the air slightly before turning it into a humid oven.

The Law

As previously mentioned, only Diamabel's law holds any weight in Pharazia. The people are required to pray for two hours per day, or four times a day, subject to lashings or death, depending on how lenient Diamabel should feel. The people are required to report infractions of the law of prayer.

Confession is a way of life, and those who have committed sins are cleansed of their impurities by white-robed men wielding scourges. These men, known as "law-givers," roam the streets of Phiraz, watching for crimes against Diamabel. They have free rein in deciding what constitutes crime, and are liberal with their floggings. Naturally, the most brutal of Pharazia's citizens find their calling as part of Diamabel's law-givers.

The Folk

The majority of people live in Phiraz under Diamabel's direct supervision. The walled city offers protection from the dangers of the desert, and ensures that the people cooperate with Diamabel's edicts. He has made sure that they have no idea how to survive in the desert.

Pharazia's people are a superstitious, gods-fearing lot. In the many years since Pharazia first appeared, the people have learned to fear the shadows of the law-givers and, most especially, those of winged creatures.

In other respects, they seem to be a good people, although their fears and anxieties tend to make them irritating conversation partners. They are constantly guarding their words, fearful of saying something that will earn them a

whipping. They are also eager to turn in those whose mouths are not so closely guarded, for this diverts the wrathful eyes of their oppressors from themselves.

They dress in light robes, wearing headdresses to protect their heads from the searing heat of the sun. Even in the relative coolness of the city, the sun still scorches those who are not prepared for its heat. The woman also wear veils as part of their daily clothing.

The folk draw freely from the spring at the southern edge of the city. They do not fear poisoning, for the water flows from the city into the desert. Any impurities will then be the problem of those in the desert. Fortunately, the riverbeds leach out any nastiness before it can seriously affect the desert's inhabitants.

The city-dwellers are not the only inhabitants of Pharazia. There are nomads in the desert, the remnants of Diamabel's tribe. They have seen how his dream has destroyed him, and are intent on ridding the world of his corruption. These nomads are far from ideal persons themselves, however. They wish to kill Diamabel at any cost. They do not disdain the aid of others, but they are a shifty, treacherous bunch. While their main goal is in ridding the land of Diamabel and surviving in the desert, they will not hesitate to kill those who disagree with them and their methods.

The nomads are mounted on camels: no other creature can match their speed in the desert. They never camp in the same place twice, and take care to conceal their presence. They know that if Diamabel spots them on his nightly flights, he will surely destroy them because of their regicidal plots. They claim to know a sure method to bring about his destruction, but will not share it with outsiders.

Closing the Borders

When he wishes to close the borders of Pharazia, Diamabel creates a cloud of stinging dust that swirls around the edges of the domain. The sand whirls at such speed

PHARAZIA

that it flays the flesh of any creature passing into it. Only the most foolhardy creatures dare the sandstorm, and none of them ever return from their venture into the sandy whirlwind.

If the PCs venture into the sandstorm, they will take 10 points of damage every round they remain in it. There is seemingly no limit to the extent of the storm when Diamabel wishes to close Pharazia's borders. Even magic items and spells do not render a person immune to the effects of the sandstorm; these become inert and useless until taken from the storm.

When Diamabel allows the borders of Pharazia to re-open, the edges revert to the misty border typical of the various other islands in the mists. The blue sky arcs overhead, although the vertical planes of the borders still resemble nothing more than a swirling gray wall.

Encounters

Despite its unforgiving appearance, the desert is home to many types of creatures. Although it does not hold the diversity of animals that many other lands do, Pharazia is far from empty. Its creatures are much better concealed, and more able to survive in this harsh environment than creatures in other climes.

Since there are few trees and oases in Pharazia, the animals and unnatural creatures generally must thrive in the harsh wastes. This makes them even tougher and more rugged than their typical kin. Each of them usually has 1 HD more than the ordinary variety.

Scorpions and jackals are frequently found in Pharazia, as is the sand-running camel. Less common are sidewinder snakes and mummies. One might expect to encounter snakes, a common desert animal. The mummies are not to be dismissed so lightly, though, for there is no evidence of the pyramids that usually accompany this breed of monster. Instead, these horrors roam the desert wastelands by night, preying on the travelers or refugees found under the moon's light. Even worse, the mummies are not

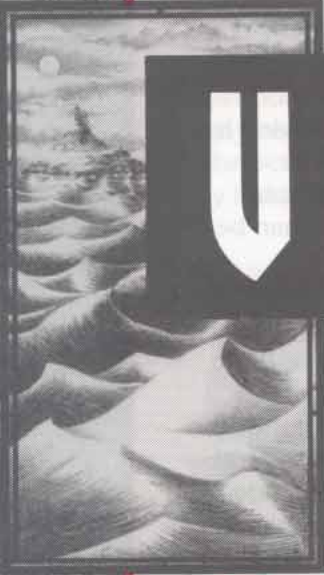
often found alone. In Pharazia, they have learned to hunt in packs.

Even more rare, unless they want to be found, are the nomads who make their living by preying on those who swear allegiance to Diamabel. The nomads are expert at concealment, and will fight to the death rather than be captured by Diamabel's loyalists.

Along the riverbeds, one is likely to encounter the great crocodiles common to terrain such as this. Anyone passing along or near the river's banks may see veritable herds of these ferocious reptiles sunning themselves in the mud along the banks. Any noise or movement near them sends them sliding into the muddy waters of the river, where they either attack their prey in the water or wait until the threat has passed by on the land.



STAUNTON BLUFFS



*ex not his ghost: O! let him pass;
he hates him that would upon the
rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.*

Shakespeare

Stories of treachery litter the history books, providing the perfect villains for small children. The traitors always met their horrible, deserved deaths, always came to a terrible demise. The story of Sir Torrence Bleysmith in the land of Staunton is little different.

The Lord

Torrence was the youngest of the five children of Count Rupert Bleysmith, the lord of the county of Staunton in the kingdom of Mourette. The Bleysmith children led pampered lives, in which their needs never suffered neglect. They received the finest education available in Mourette, being tutored in all things ranging from history to etiquette to warfare. They wanted nothing but their father's approval.

Rupert Bleysmith was a driven man, always knowing what he wanted in life and how to get it. He passed this drive and ambition to his offspring. They were fiercely competitive children, the girls as much as the boys, and they constantly sought to improve themselves beyond the reach of the others. They forever vied for their father's attention, and the only way they knew to receive his praise was to prove themselves better than their siblings.

Rupert rarely paid attention to his children. He was more enmeshed in the intrigues and politics of the court. The children had to resort to ever more flamboyant measures to attract his notice. Eventually, the two sisters and the middle brother wearied of the constant rivalry for their father's attentions. Two brothers, however, did not end their bid for his attention.

Torrence, the youngest, and August, the eld-

est, allowed their frantic race to continue unabated. Five years separated the two, but they could have been twins, so perfectly were they matched in all things physical. Their features were nearly identical. The only difference was the color of their eyes and hair. August's tresses were dark and his eyes somewhat moody. Torrence was fair, his blond mane complementing his blue eyes.

In physical pursuits they proved equal as well. Neither could out-fence the other, nor out-ride the other. In archery they both split the target neatly down the middle. If one began to learn a new diversion, the other began training at that twice as hard.

Neither could gain a clear advantage, but both succeeded admirably in drawing Rupert's regard. He finally began to take heed of the antics of the two lads and was vastly impressed by their prowess. He started taking the two young competitors with him nearly everywhere he went. All his compatriots admired the boys greatly and were awed by their abilities and their potential.

Once they had attained their goal of gaining their father's notice, one would expect that they would have ended their foolish posturing. This was not the case. If anything, they increased their contest to prove who was superior. Since the competition had raged so long, neither could give up the contest until it was finished.

Their exploits began to draw the notice of the entire kingdom. Old King Grinne himself bestowed the title of knight on both young men. Their deeds continued apace and the common folk began to gossip about them. This tide of rumor, not all of it friendly, grew to a magnificent proportion. Finally their humiliated father sent them home. Their hearts festered against their father and each other and both plotted ways to better themselves at the expense of the other.

Their pride, swollen as it was, could not accept anything but to prove that one of them was better than the other. Their hearts were full of this dangerous arrogance, their eyes blind to

PHARAZIA

do his best to enforce this law, making all people conform to his grand scheme.

Confronting Diamabel

Human Fighter, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	1	Str	21
Movement	Fl 24 (C)	Dex	18
Level/Hit Dice	12	Con	17
Hit Points	77	Int	15
THACO	5	Wis	13
No. of Attacks	2	Cha	19 (3)

Damage/Attack: 1d10 + 12/1d10

Special Attacks: two-handed +3 *flame tongue*, *fear*, wing buffet

Special Defenses: regenerate 2 hp/round, only hit by +2 or better weapons

Magic Resistance: 30%

When Diamabel is enraged enough to attack (not an infrequent occurrence), he becomes a truly awesome figure to behold. In either form, his full power is suddenly evident, and any who face him become painfully aware of this fact. His opponents must save vs. spells at -2 or flee in terror.

If any manage to close with him, he strikes out with Spiritburner, his mighty *flame blade*. Even if he should not score a hit with Spiritburner, his wings can deliver a thunderous buffet to a foe, leaving his enemy stunned for one round and unable to attack.

Diamabel is a fearsome opponent, not only because of his appearance and ability, but also because he is nearly indestructible. He has learned to profit from his association with the land and can draw strength from it if need be. Not only does he regenerate 2 points per round, he can completely *heal* himself once per day.

If defeated, his body immolates itself with all his possessions. His ashes migrate to the far corners of his domain, no matter how they may be scattered or contained. In one month's time, he reconstitutes completely, Spiritburner in hand. If his foes remain in Pharazia, they will

find that vengeance is Diamabel's, for he will relentlessly hunt them until they are destroyed.

The Land

Pharazia is a desert domain, its sweeping dunes covering a vast expanse of land.

Viewed from a great height, it resembles a two-headed celestial being. Its "wings" appear somehow warped, as does the rest of the island's perimeter. Perhaps this is a reflection of Diamabel's dual appearance, or perhaps it is simply coincidence.

Most of Pharazia consists of rolling dunes, with rock outcroppings breaking the monotony of the plain sand. These outcroppings provide shelter to the travelers and the beasts of the sands. A traveler would be well-advised to check the area thoroughly before taking it as a shelter.

The desert is also dotted with the occasional oasis. Palm trees and dates are common in these oases, but the oases themselves are few and far between. There are three major water holes in Pharazia, the greatest of which is that of Phiraz, the capital city.

The rivers of Pharazia are fed from this spring, flowing outward from the heart of the domain. Two of the rivers terminate in watering holes in the lower extremities of the island. Although the water in these is fairly pure, still it tastes brackish from its travels through the land.

The trees of Pharazia are entirely found along the riverbeds or at the water holes. The shade these trees provide is fiercely competed for among the animals of the desert; the human inhabitants of Pharazia know better than to try to use the shade these trees proffer, for the creatures there are more dangerous than the sun.

The sun itself is a formidable foe in this dry land. During the day, temperatures can rise as high as 120 degrees, while they plummet at night to near-freezing. Only the wisest or most experienced of wanderers can survive for long

STAUNTON BLUFFS

anything but their own glory. In the spring of the following year, they had the chance to prove their worth.

Count Rupert Bleysmith declared war on the neighboring duchy of Avergne, a land of infidels and heathens. He called upon his children and his retainers to gather together the army. He traveled the country searching for support among the other nobles. He left Sir August in charge of affairs while he was away.

Torrence, enraged at this perceived slight to himself, cast about wrathfully for some means of exacting revenge on his father and his elder brother. At last, he settled on a plan that would allow him to soothe his wounded pride. He began to sell the secrets of Staunton Bluffs to Commander Pierre Willis of the Avergnites in the hope that they would slay August during a raid.

August, however, was as adept at evading the traps as Torrence was, and it soon became clear to Torrence that he would have to personally oversee the murder of August. Even when he passed along the castle plans for the Avergnite assassins, they blundered and failed miserably.

Meanwhile, Torrence hid his feelings about August's superiority remarkably well and acted as August's chief advisor. August came to trust his brother in all things, seeing that Torrence had matured far more fully than he believed possible.

Eventually, Torrence arranged for the Avergnites to raid along the Staunton border, knowing that August had no choice but to personally repel the marauders. He suggested the best battle plans to his older brother, who agreed to follow them faithfully. That night, Torrence sent a dispatch to Willis telling him of his brother's location and how the Avergnites could best remove him from this position.

That next morning, August and some of Staunton's finest men rode straight into the Avergnite ambush. They hardly had a chance to draw their swords before they went down under a hail of arrows. Their blood spilled into the earth, turning it into a pasty, red mud. The

Avergnites were heady with their victory over the hated Sir August Bleysmith. They rode even farther into Staunton, burning and pillaging everything in sight, contrary to the agreement with Torrence.

Torrence, aghast at their duplicity, attempted to turn back the tide of invaders, but it was too late. The Avergnites overran all the Stauntonian positions, slaughtering all the citizens they came upon. Willis and his men eventually arrived at the Bleysmith Estate and laid siege to Castle Stonecrest. Since Torrence had stupidly provided the maps of the castle, it fell easily to the invaders. So did the Bleysmith family, nearly alone in their estate, abandoned by most of their retainers.

Only Torrence escaped, hiding in the privy until the besiegers had gone. When he emerged, smeared with filth, he discovered the looted house in ruins around him. The defiled bodies of his family lay strewn about the estate like broken dolls. At the sight of his ancestral home violated like some commoner's house, Torrence broke down in a fit of grief, rage, and guilt. Had August survived the attack, the Avergnites would never have been able to advance this far. Torrence knew he would have to live with the knowledge that he had caused the downfall of Staunton Bluffs and the death of his family.

He retreated to the forests of Staunton to plot his revenge and vent his grief. He hoped to atone for his mistake by avenging the destruction of his family. Since he had studied some magic when he was younger, he was familiar with certain blasphemous rituals that would enable him to channel his anger. In his pride and wrath, he did not pause to consider the implications of his intended course.

At midnight of the fall equinox, the last Bleysmith began his sacrilege. With great workings of magic and dark promises, Torrence laid a massive spell on the surviving inhabitants of Staunton.

When the citizens arose the next misty morning, they felt compelled to take up whatever weapons they had available. En masse, they

STAUNTON BLUFFS

marched on the army of Avergne. Bleysmith, full of vanity, watched his makeshift army surprise the force of Avergnites. Torrence had been sure that his people could crush the army, since there were so many more of them and they had the advantage of surprise.

However, the Avergnites recovered from their initial shock much more quickly than anyone could have suspected. They slaughtered the subservient Stauntonians. The earth ran with the blood of guiltless citizens, the cries of the innocents echoing weirdly through the fog.

By now, half-crazed with shame and remorse, Sir Torrence Bleysmith hanged himself in the burnt shell of Castle Stonecrest. His dying thoughts were of revenge, hatred, and guilt. As his life faded from existence, so did the surrounding area.

Appearance

Sir Torrence Bleysmith's ghost appears as a tall, long-haired man. He is dressed in a noble's finery. He wears a long, brocaded coat over a ruffled shirt, black leather breeches, and tall leather boots with spurs. Of course, all of this finery is dulled and faded because of its supernatural character.

His finely-shaped features have grief and rage etched into them, reflecting the anger and anguish of his former life and his present undeath. His deep eye sockets are entirely empty, although they glow with an eerie, spectral fire when his temper is aroused. His physique was impressive in life and the form given him in the afterlife is no less so.

The most immediately noticeable thing about him is the noose hanging from his broken neck. The end of the short rope is frayed and worn as if it took some time for it to snap. The hemp noose has torn and abraded the already deformed neck of Bleysmith, apparently ready to saw completely through his neck.

His left arm is twisted, looking as if some force had smashed it with a large, blunt object. It hangs uselessly at his side, floating in the

ethereal currents. It only adds to the aura of wrath that surrounds Bleysmith, lending him an air of helpless fury.

Current Sketch

The restfulness of natural death did not claim Torrence Bleysmith, however, for Ravenloft had other plans for him. His past, tainted as it was with pride, treachery, and disregard for human life, earned him a place in the demiplane.

Weeks after he hanged himself, flashes of reality and memory interrupted the utter blackness of oblivion in which Torrence dwelt. These glimmers grew longer and longer until at last they melded completely into a gray-washed, horrifying reality. His worst nightmares became his reality.

Sir Torrence Bleysmith had become a ghost, doomed to wander the halls of his castle and the woodlands of his domain. His rage and treachery combined with other darker forces to bring him back to a terrible unlife. He would see all that he once held sacred torn away and destroyed.

While Bleysmith was taking his incorporeal shape, the Mists removed the county of Staunton from its world. Those from Avergne who had moved to Staunton were captured as well. Before Bleysmith fully came into his power as lord of Staunton Bluffs, he watched the Avergnites establish themselves in the western half of his domain. He witnessed them constructing lives from the land purchased with the blood of his serfs and peasants.

This only served to stoke the flames of his burning rage. He felt that the wheels of justice had again given him an unfair turn, as they always had. In his selfishness and pride, he never stopped to consider how easy life had always been for him. He fancied himself a tortured soul, though he had yet to learn the true meaning of spiritual torture.

While Torrence plotted the demise of the Avergnites in the lands that had traditionally

STAUNTON BLUFFS

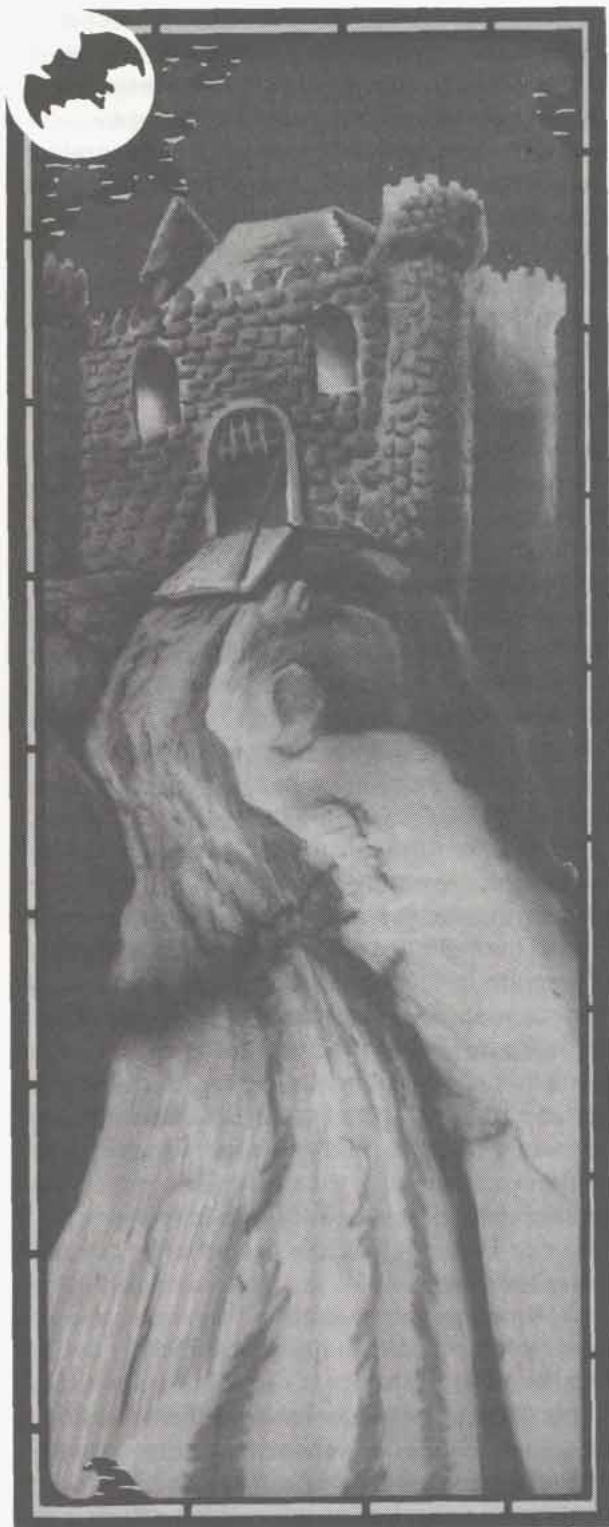
belonged to the Bleysmiths, his education began. Since he could not return to his body, nor affect it in any way, he let it hang in the rafters where he had died. One evening, as he floated eerily about his abandoned castle, a bone-jarring quake jolted his entire being. Although he was incorporeal, this mysterious pain shook him badly.

Torrence traveled about his estate, seeking the source of his ailment. Eventually, he thought to check on his former fleshy casing. When he investigated the tower room, he found his body lying on the floor underneath the rafters. The hemp rope with which he had hanged himself had finally rotted through and his body had fallen to the floor. He resumed his plotting and his plans of treachery.

A few days later, Torrence began to feel sharp, gnawing pains racking him thoroughly. He fled upstairs to his body, guessing that his troubles emanated from there. When he arrived, moving insubstantially through the floor, he found rats chewing at his corpse. He found himself unable to scare them away and he was forced to endure the horrible pain until they had stripped his bones clean. He was certain that no further harm could come to him now that his flesh was gone. He was wrong.

Late one storm-tossed night, lightning struck the tower where his bones lay. A crushing, splintering sensation ran through his insubstantial arm. With dread, he returned to the tower room, clutching at his "wounded" limb. When he arrived at his skeleton, he saw that a charred block of stone had fallen from the ceiling, crushing the extremity to splinters.

Desperately frightened that his existence was contingent on the reliability of an ancient stone tower, Bleysmith began to look for some way to move his body. By sheer chance, an adventurer stopped by the estate the next day. The man was a looter, plundering the goods of the rapidly deteriorating estate. Bleysmith could do nothing during the day, waiting until dark to reveal himself.



STAUNTON BLUFFS

When night finally fell, he muted his supernatural powers, appearing as a forlorn, harmless spirit to the looter. He cajoled the man into moving his bones to the cellar where they would be safe, promising the man the secret of the wealth of the Bleysmiths. Once his skeleton lay safely in the cellar, hidden securely among a pile of bones on a moth-eaten carpet, Bleysmith led the poor fool to the jail cells, saying the money was hidden within. When the man entered the cell, Bleysmith gathered his undead powers, shut the door and locked it. For the next few weeks, he found great delight in listening to the prayers of the dying man.

Finally, the man expired, cursing Torrence with his last breath. Torrence hovered about the castle, cackling, revelling in his betrayal of such a base specimen of humanity. His maniacal laughter ceased when the corpse of this man sat up and began pacing his cell again, banging his fists against the doors. Although the man no longer shouted, as he had done before, his steady pacing was somehow worse. There was no respite, no pause in his devotion to his task.

More adventurers came to Castle Stonecrest, seeking the remaining treasure to be found by plundering the abandoned ruin. Torrence betrayed them all. He promised them unimaginable wealth in exchange for their performance of various manual tasks which he could not perform. He never followed through on his promises and the living ones perished. All of them revived as some sort of undead beasts with physical attributes, such as ghouls, ghosts, and skeletons. Generally, those that Torrence killed before becoming a lord are now incorporeal undead. Those he has killed since are now corporeal undead.

While these beings horrify him, they have never harmed him. They simply burden his castle and his presence. They remind Torrence of his treachery and underhandedness, a cycle he seems doomed to repeat. However, since he does gain a small measure of satisfaction in destroying trust, he considers this a rather

small price to pay.

The biggest bane of his existence continues to be the Avergnites in his domain. He has found that he cannot harm anyone of Avergnite stock, nor can any of his undead. However, the peasants are able to harm him, and so he keeps himself from their way, forbidding his bodiless undead from interfering with them. While he can still frighten the Avergnites badly, his attacks and aging power do not have any effect on them. To foster their fear, he occasionally ventures into the lowlands to keep their superstition and dread high and to keep them frightened of his castle.

His biggest anxiety is that an Avergnite will come to his castle to harm or destroy him. He is very secure about all others who visit, but spends much of his time preoccupied with what he perceives as the ever-present Avergnite danger. Because of his efforts, he does not need to worry about it excessively. However, he continues to obsess about it.

Currently, he wanders the halls of Castle Stonecrest, absorbed in anger and self-pity. His restless spirit devotes itself to ways of protecting his miserable existence. Bleysmith is a bitter, lonely ghost, desperately clinging to his last shreds of life. He searches frantically for anything that will preserve these shreds, but will not hesitate to sacrifice some of them for a particularly vicious betrayal. And so his humanity slips away even as he attempts to perpetuate it.

The Land

Staunton Bluffs is a small domain, about 4½ miles on a side. A huge line of sandstone cliffs running north and south divides the realm into two roughly equal parts. To the west, the land is flat and green, nearly ideal farmland. Patches of forest dot the plain, but the land mostly consists of prairie. The land is not extraordinarily fertile, but with a lot of care, the citizens eke out a decent existence.

The land along the Willis river, which flows through the southern half of Staunton Bluffs on

STAUNTON BLUFFS

a westerly course, tends to be significantly more fertile than elsewhere in the domain. The residents of Staunton Bluffs farm this land much more heavily than anywhere else and use the river to irrigate their farms.

The thick patches of trees that dot western Staunton Bluffs are not nearly large enough to call forests. However, they are home to most of the sparse wildlife the western portion supports, and are thus preserved against destruction. The dense undergrowth is thick enough to impede movement significantly. The trees had traditionally been the main source of firewood for the occupants, but the citizenry began to realize that the trees were not growing back quickly enough to justify their continued use as a fuel.

The citizens agreed to begin using peat from the bogs to heat their homes. The woods are beginning to grow again, but are not likely to dominate the land any time soon. The citizens need too much of the land just to survive.

The land to the east of the bluffs is much less civilized than the western lands. The only evidence of civilization in the highlands is Castle Stonecrest, perched at the highest point on the sandstone cliffs overlooking the domain. The remnants of two small villages litter the area, although the weather has worked such a toll on them that they are hardly recognizable as human dwellings.

A trade road cuts across Staunton Bluffs, passing directly through the town of Willisford. It also heads through a pass in the cliffs, entering the eastern realm. Shortly after it enters the highlands and passes near the waterfall, a rutted wagon trail heads north toward the ruined Castle Stonecrest.

Hilly terrain and small shrubs make up the eastern terrain. Small streams cut through the heath, watering the bushes and coniferous trees of the highlands. Some of the land gives way to marshy patches. This part of the land is beautiful despite the excessive dampness. The sunsets and sunrises are stunningly beautiful as the sunlight reflects from the sandstone cliffs. The highlands are a rich green, the soil more fertile than

in the lowlands. During the day the whole highland radiates a sense of goodness and comfort.

At night, the atmosphere changes entirely. When the sunlight dwindles in the west, the feeling of contentment slowly mutates into one of menace. The fog rising from the damp earth ceases to be picturesque, instead assuming an aura of peril. The innocent chirping of the birds becomes the hunting scream of the nighthawk. The mood shifts from peaceful to ominous in a matter of minutes.

The streams spew forth vaporous haze and the marshes around it exhale bright points of glowing swamp gas. The lights move with more than random purpose as they seem almost alive. The vapors that fill the eastern realm at night seem to hold more than the shifting shapes suggested by the faint breeze. They eddy even when there is no wind, hinting at terrors beyond the natural.

The weather in Staunton Bluffs is generally cold and wet. When night falls, the haze that seems to constantly envelop the upper lands intensifies and spills over the cliffs. The whole domain eventually fills with fog, making even those who have lived here their entire lives unsure of their bearings. This fog thickens throughout the night, lessening only as the morning draws near.

The wind also falls from the cliffs, sweeping down from the highlands. It intensifies as it blows from the east, reaching its peak as it whips around the promontory of Castle Stonecrest. It howls in the night, biting with a cruel chill at those foolish enough to try to brave it on the upper plateau.

As daylight approaches, the fog changes to a fine rain or drizzle. This does not usually last long, dispersing by noon. The sun awakens, burning through the misty morning with its glory. The rest of the day, although chilly, generally remains clear.

The chill of the weather is year-long. The climate persists without a change of season, seeming to forever remain in a state of spring or fall.

STAUNTON BLUFFS

The Folk

Life in Staunton Bluffs is not as hard as it is in many other domains. The lord does not take a personal interest in the lives of the inhabitants of this domain, nor does he prey on them for sustenance. While life is not easy for them, at least they do not have the added complication of having to worry about their safety every time the wind whistles through the trees.

Most of the 1,000 or so people of Staunton Bluffs live in modest white cottages scattered around the western part of the realm. Farmlands, filled with grain fields or farm animals, surround their homes. A few folk live in the tiny village of Willisford on the banks of the Willis River. Its population is about 200. While the population of Willisford is not large, several taverns and inns fill the town, more than one would expect from a town so small. The rest of the town is surprisingly modern with a standard of living far above the average in other domains.

The homes in the heartland are small, two-story dwellings. The exteriors are whitewashed brick and the roofs are made of thick shingles. The interiors are wooden and comfortable, the rustic furniture complementing the timber of the cottages. Many homes do not have barns in their yards. Instead, farmers lodge their animals directly in the house. Not only does this preserve the animals from predators, since the farmer can immediately dispel any dangers, it also provides more heat to those sleeping on the second floor. Amazingly, this arrangement does not smell as bad as one might expect. The smell is obscured by the burning of the peat stove, an additional heat source.

Since Staunton Bluffs is all that most of these people have seen of the world, they have difficulty imagining the world as much larger. Their views are narrow-minded and provincial, with very little room for anything new. They are a very insular community, not often dealing with outsiders. The peasants of Staunton Bluffs are unable to rely on trade from the other lands.

The people of Staunton Bluffs are not unfriendly. They are perhaps a little dour, but this is to be expected. After all, they must work very hard to survive. Their lives are not lives of luxury, but neither are they of privation. They do not have to battle the elements continually, nor must they contend with the fierce beasts so prevalent in other domains. All they need do is work the land to bring home enough food to feed themselves. During their week, they labor and work hard, tending to be rather taciturn.

At the end of the week, however, they allow themselves two rest days. At this time they become much more friendly and talkative. Their heavy week overcomes them and they spend their rest days drinking, sleeping, and relaxing. They converge on Willisford, filling the streets with their carousing and merriment. Since many of them are fine cooks, they permit themselves the luxury of excellent meals on the rest days, often having cooking competitions judged by those who have come to Willisford.

The folk of Staunton Bluffs are generally fair-skinned people with dark hair and eyes. Although they work long hours in the fields or with animals, they are usually clean. They believe in frequent bathing and cleansing of their clothes. Their clothing is not drab, but neither is it colorful or exciting. It matches the prevalent personality of Staunton Bluffs.

The citizens avoid the eastern land fastidiously, almost superstitiously. They remain remarkably close-lipped as to their reason for this, saying only that none have ever returned who ventured there toward dusk. Even during the day they avoid looking toward the bluffs, fearing that they will bring some great doom upon their heads.

The general populace abstains from contact with those who live closer to the bluff. They do not do this from animosity or hatred; rather, they are afraid that proximity to the cursed lands may have somehow altered their neighbors. They have occasionally witnessed weird lights playing about the ruined spires of Castle Stonecrest; this does nothing to diminish their

STAUNTON BLUFFS

superstitions in any way. And so those growing up near the bluffs are generally regarded with a bit of veiled fear. Those who move away are praised for their good common sense and welcomed again into the community.

The people will attempt to dissuade any adventurers who plan to travel to the eastern lands, warning them of great danger and peril to their lives. They will not restrict those so foolish as to go, but do not willingly permit anyone to visit Castle Stonecrest. The people fear the retaliation of the lord and do all they can to refrain from provoking him.

The Law

The citizens do not have any sort of ruling body. Their population is small enough that direct democracy works better than it would anywhere else. They hold their meetings once monthly, choosing a new person to chair the meeting each time. It makes no difference whether the chair is male or female, for there is no discrimination in Staunton Bluffs. Every member of the community is an integral, valuable part without whom the others would find it more difficult to survive.

There is an informal militia in Staunton Bluffs, based solely on who is closest to the scene of trouble at the time. The people of Staunton Bluffs are competent fighters (2nd-level fighters) and will fight to protect the peace in their domain. Criminals from the domain are nonexistent. The only lawbreakers in Staunton Bluffs are those who come from outside. The citizens deal with them harshly, often cutting off the hand of the criminal. There are no jails in Willisford, as the citizens are fairly sure that the criminals will reform after they lose one hand.

Destroying or damaging the trees is a punishable offense. The people do not look kindly on those who ruin the few natural areas still intact in this tiny domain. Certainly, the citizens could venture into the wild eastern half of the land for wood, but they would sooner sacrifice their lives.

The use of magic is frowned upon here. The people desire that life remain simple and explainable. They are a pragmatic populace and do not enjoy having the natural order of things disrupted by such inexplicable phenomena that magic often entails. They are not so fanatical that they burn mages and priests, but the company of such is not welcome, nor long tolerated.

The lord of the land, Sir Torrence Bleysmith, has established only a few laws, but the citizens observe these scrupulously. The first law dictates that the living remain well away from Castle Stonecrest. They do so almost fanatically, physically restraining those who plan to do otherwise.

The second law applies only to the dwellers of the eastern domain. They are forbidden to travel to the lowlands at night, no matter how greatly they despise the living. The supernatural beings are forbidden to wander west of the bluffs, or they may face the wrath of the lord.

Castle Stonecrest

The approach to the castle is along a deeply rutted dirt road which twists and winds through the sparse vegetation of the upper heath. Finally, after a difficult climb up the littered path, Castle Stonecrest comes into view. Constructed from the bedrock of the cliffs, the melancholy castle broods on the lip of the bluffs. It sits at the highest point of the cliff, overlooking the entire domain. Its morose gray stone walls guard against unwanted intrusion, squatting like a huge, dormant gargoyle on the stony ground. The four bastions at the corners form an honor guard for the manor within the walls. The open wooden drawbridge appears stout and menacing, like the maw of some strange predator.

Crossing the empty moat, one begins to get the sensation of being watched, of slipping from the known world into a place where all is subtly, horribly wrong. The feeling of intruding into a place of dark evil and malevolence grows strongly, as though the very stones of the castle

STAUNTON BLUFFS

disapproved of anyone entering it. Although this feeling dissipates somewhat once one enters the grounds, it does not disappear entirely until the intruder flees.

The drawbridge itself is a sort not often seen. It actually spans two trenches in the earth. The drawbridge is usually open, but when the winch is activated, the chains disappear into the ceiling where the closing mechanism lies. The drawbridge slowly rises, its outer half lifting ponderously from the ground. Its inner half descends into a 10-foot-deep pit lined with granite, until the stout wooden blockade stands upright. Any invaders would have to pass not only the first moat and the drawbridge, but the second pit as well. This generally left attackers open to counterattack, in which the defending forces could decimate the raiders.

In the past, this proved an excellent defense against invaders. With the treachery of Bleysmith, it became easily avoidable. However, it can still prove deadly as the crushed skeletons of two adventurers in the second pit can attest. If anyone is in the pit when the drawbridge begins to close, they may make a Dexterity check to avoid being crushed by the oaken mass. If not, they sustain 3d10 points of damage and suffocate in 6 rounds unless someone can open the drawbridge. This can be unusually difficult since the drawbridge usually closes on Bleysmith's command.

1a-b. Porter: These two rooms formerly housed those responsible for raising and lowering the gate and maintaining the security and comfort of visitors. Nowadays they contain only the decayed bodies of two squires. Other than the locking mechanism for the bridge, they hold nothing of interest.

2. Smithy: This was the main forge for the county of Staunton, the finest for miles. It contains those things common to a smithy including two anvils, hammers, trenches, and a good supply of iron. There are some finely crafted blades lying in the soot, held firm in the death grasp of the smith and his apprentices. If any-

one tries to take the swords, the smith and his helpers return from the peace of the grave to defend their best work.

Skeletons (4): AC 7; MV 12; HD 1; hp 8, 8, 5, 4; Int Non; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (weapon); SD Special; MR Special; ML Special; AL N; XP 65 each; THACO 19.

3. Guard Quarters: This tower room holds bunks and several large tables. It was obviously a guard barracks when the castle was still in service. Apparently the guards remained faithful to their posts even unto death, for there are no bodies in this room. In the northern corner is a stair leading upstairs to area 28.

4. Stores: The monotonous drone of flies fills the ears of those who enter the tower. Swarms of the pesky, biting beasts dart here and there through the dusty, spoiled air. The air reeks of decay.

This room contains many old and decayed provisions. The rotted bags of grain are home to several families of rats and the putrefied meat is home to hundreds of flies and maggots. Any food of use was stolen long ago or devoured by the vermin that are here.

The spiral staircase in the center of the room leads to area 30, another storeroom.

Rat, Common (40): AC 7; MV 15; HD 1/4; hp 1 each; Int Animal; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA Disease; ML 4; AL N; XP 7 each; THACO 20.

The rats will not attack unless their homes or young are threatened.

5a-d. Barracks and Servant Quarters: These rooms, located along the southern wall, hold nothing of value. The air is musty and stale, the furniture covered with a thick layer of dust. The air enters one's lungs only with difficulty, for these rooms have obviously not been opened for a long while.

6. Stores: Here is an additional storeroom. The bolts of linen that were in here are badly torn and moth-eaten. A rat-chewed corpse lies on the shattered stone floor, its one remaining eye transfixed in an expression of utter horror.

7. Armory: The walls of the room are blackened and charred, the result of an ill-advised

STAUNTON BLUFFS

fireball. It warped most of the weapons in the room and burned the shafts of the polearms. There are still a few useable items among the soot, one of them a *sword of cursed berserking*.

In the western end of the tower there is a secret trap door, concealed by a burnt box affixed to the floor. It leads down to the cellar where Bleysmith's skeleton is. The cellar has a low ceiling, the timbers supporting the roof rotten and decayed. There are numerous spider webs covering the entire area, but Bleysmith has made sure that all their owners have moved on to better haunts. He cannot tolerate spiders crawling over his body.

The skeleton has a broken neck and one of the arms is smashed.

Bleysmith knows that he can only be defeated if his skeleton is destroyed, so he keeps it hidden and guarded here. The guards are the incorporeal forms of the few soldiers who remained loyal to him after his treacherous betrayal of his own countrymen.

Ghosts (12): AC 4; MV 15; HD 4; hp 28; Int Very; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8; SA Special; SD Special; ML 13; AL CE; XP 650 each; THACO 17.

If the bones are disturbed, the ghosts become highly agitated, wailing hideously and pressing the attack against those who would defile their commander's bones.

8. Portcullis: This area was to be the last defense of Castle Stonecrest, should the outer gate have been breached. A force of attackers could be easily lured here and trapped between the stout doors to the foyer and the now-rusty portcullis. There is a ghoul trapped between the lowered gate and the barred double doors. It is gaunt and paces frantically back and forth. It will fight only in self-defense.

Ghoul (1): AC 6; MV 9; HD 2; hp 11; Int Low; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA Paralyzation; SD Special; ML 12; AL CE; XP 175; THACO 19.

9. Foyer: Sunlight filters in weakly from the windows high on the western wall, illuminating each falling dust mote. The hall, once so grand, now holds only a few moldering tapestries and

a pair of staircases leading to the balcony (area 16). The shields and banners display the Bleysmith family crest: a lion treading upon a viper. The weapons around the hall are purely decorative and of no use in combat.

A figure lies twitching underneath a fallen chandelier. A pool of tacky blood has gathered around the unlucky fellow who appears to be still alive. A powerful stink pervades the room, growing ever stronger as one nears the man under the crystalline mass. If he is freed, he reveals himself to be a ghost and attacks immediately.

Ghost (1): AC 4; MV 15; HD 4; hp 25; Int Very; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8; SA Special; SD Special; ML 13; AL CE; XP 650 each; THACO 17.

10. Jailor's Tower: The only entrance to the tower is through the guard room directly to the south. The huge metal door can be bolted from either side. Inside the room is a large table around which are seated several dead men, each holding a hand of cards. The center of the table still holds a few coppers, but not enough to make it worth anyone's while. Although their flesh has long since putrefied and their chests are prime breeding grounds for insects, it is still readily apparent that their throats were cut. Fortunately, they are not animate.

Three large, metal-reinforced doors with barred windows lead from the central area into the cells. A pitted iron spiral stair leads upward to more cells.

11a-c. Cells: The most dangerous prisoners were housed in these cells where the jailers could catch their mischief more quickly. Each of these cells contains a zombie wandering about constantly. Bits of rotted flesh dangle from the barred windows of the rusted doors, evidence of countless hours spent grasping at the bars.

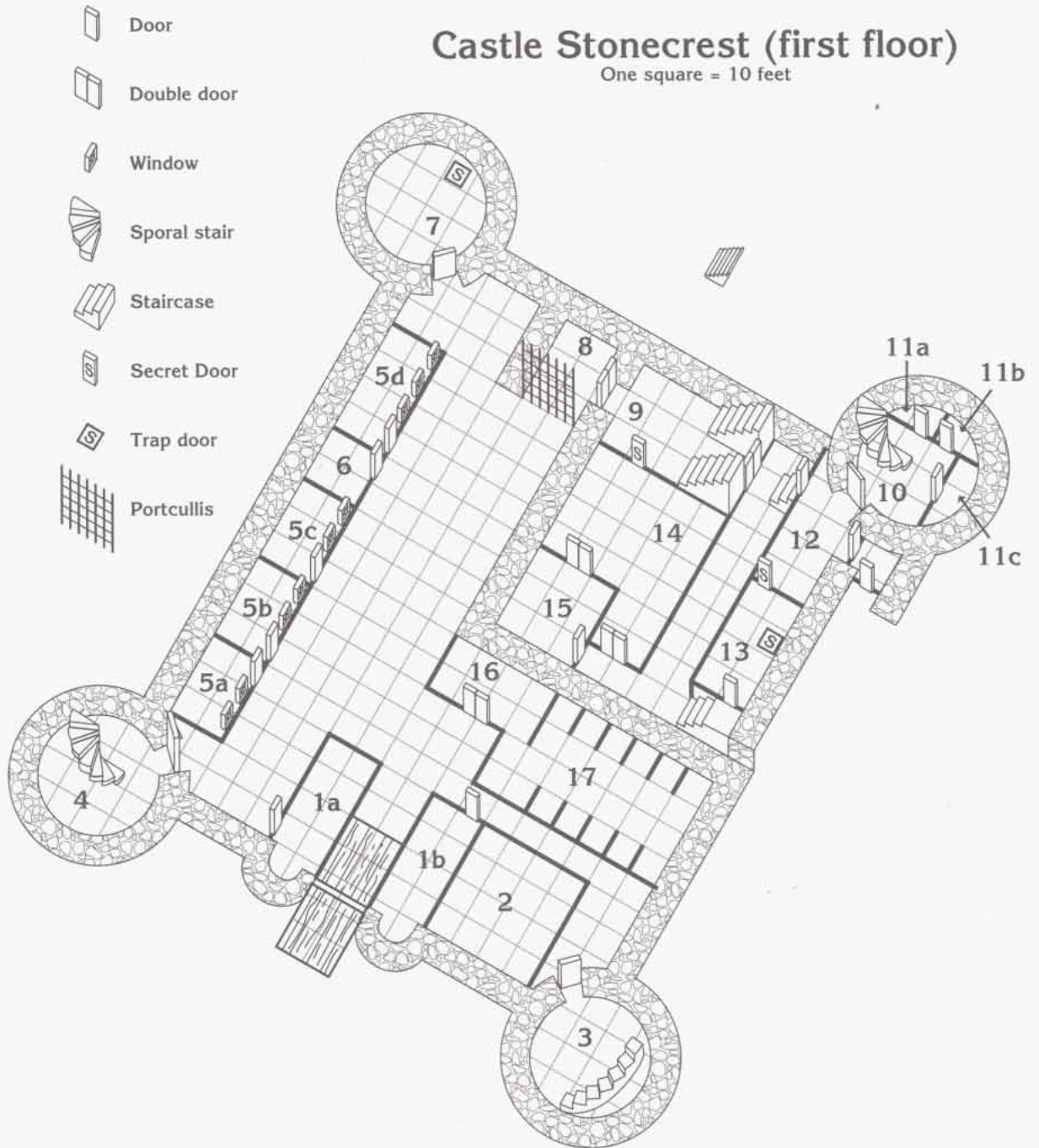
An aura of despair is thick in these cells. One can only imagine the desperation felt by Bleysmith's victims as they realized their fates.

One of them etched a message and a warning into the flagstones of his cell before he died. In

STAUNTON BLUFFS

Castle Stonecrest (first floor)

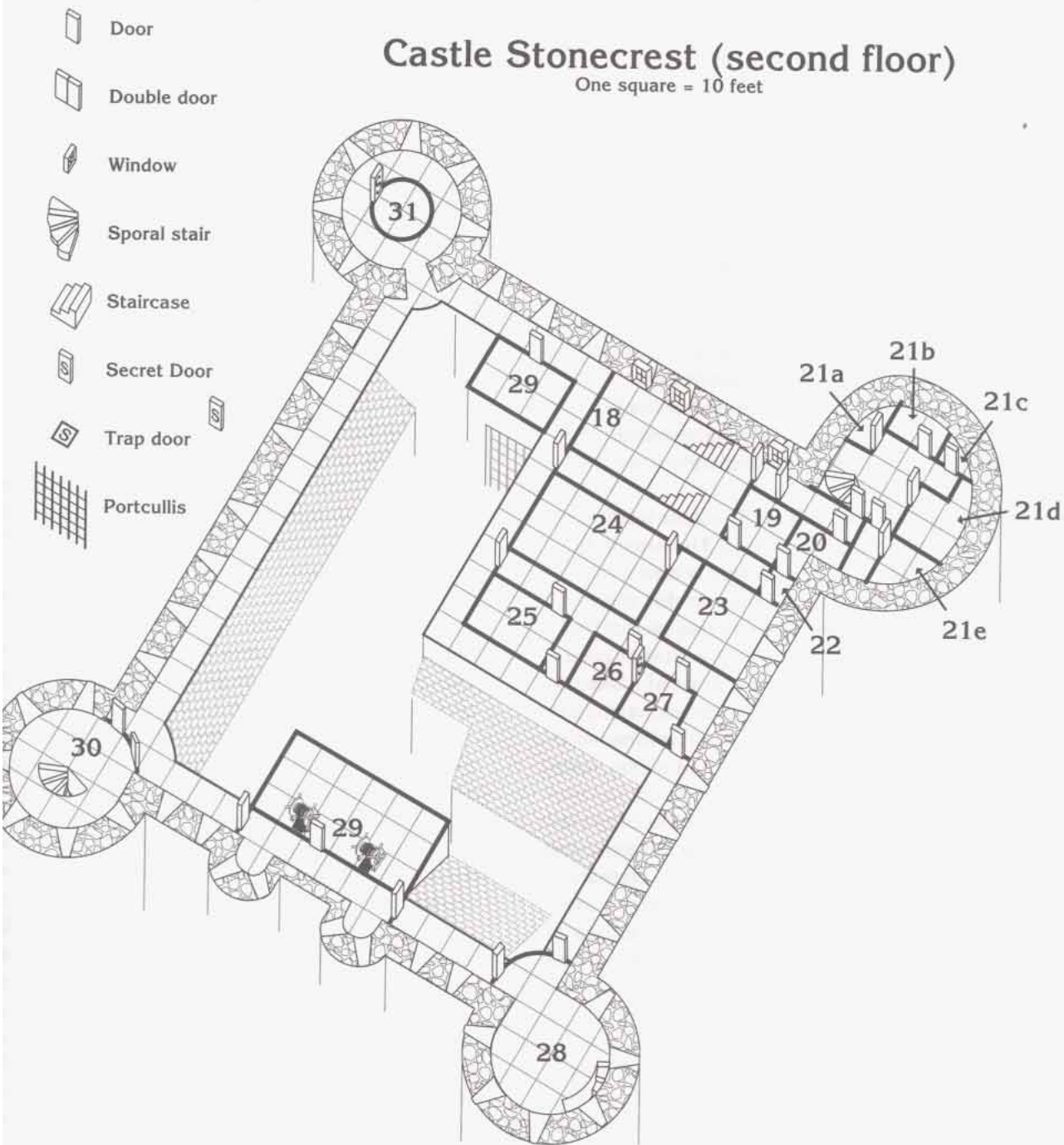
One square = 10 feet



STAUNTON BLUFFS

Castle Stonecrest (second floor)

One square = 10 feet



STAUNTON BLUFFS

a rust-colored ink, looking suspiciously like blood, he wrote, "Do not trust the ghost. Bones lie under the weapons."

Zombies (3): AC 8; MV 6; HD 2; hp 10, 8, 8; Int Non; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; MR Nil; ML Special; AL N; XP 65 each; THAC0 19.

12. Guard Room: These guards were responsible for maintaining the security of the prison, as well as watching the postern gate. Evidently they were lax in their duties, for their corpses still lie scattered on the floor. The rats have gotten to these bodies and time has not been kind. The stench that greets one's nose upon entrance to this area is overwhelming.

An open diary lies next to one of the bodies. Some of its pages are water-stained and illegible and others are torn completely from the book.

13. Council Chambers: The stair leading to the chamber rises only 5 feet. The reason the council chambers are elevated is now a mystery to all but Bleysmith. The floor in this room is in fact hollow, hiding the family treasure of the Bleysmiths and is accessible by lifting Count Rupert's seat. Unfortunately, most of it went to pay for the war effort. All that remains are a few chests of gold, some old portraits of the various Bleysmiths through the ages, and a *long sword +1, +3 vs. undead*.

14. Dining Hall: The spirits of the Bleysmith family float through this room in a stately, eternal dance. Wafting gently above the tremendous mahogany table, they drift through the crystal chandeliers and through the various settings on the table. This room, unlike all the others in Castle Stonecrest, is completely devoid of dust and the trappings of decay. The feeling is one of general permanence.

The silver utensils still sit on the table, unaffected by the ravages of time or tarnish. The crystalline goblets still refract the light gently and the wine still sparkles from the decanted bottle. All is as it was at the moment before the castle was overrun, seemingly peaceful and ordinary, except for the spectres floating throughout the room.

If any of this tableau is disturbed, the lights disappear suddenly, flames spring up from the candlesticks, and the gently floating spirits turn into vengefully swooping apparitions. The spectres move instantly to attack. •

Spectre (6): AC 2; MV 15, FL 30 (B); HD 7+3; hp 44, 44, 43, 41, 32, 32; Int High; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA Energy drain; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; MR Special; ML 15; AL LE; XP 3,000 each; THAC0 13.

If any of the party can *speak with dead*, the spirits can answer questions about Castle Stonecrest and how to hasten Torrence's demise. They do not know the location of his body. Since this is one room where he will not enter, the party may rest here if they do not mind being watched over by six undead creatures.

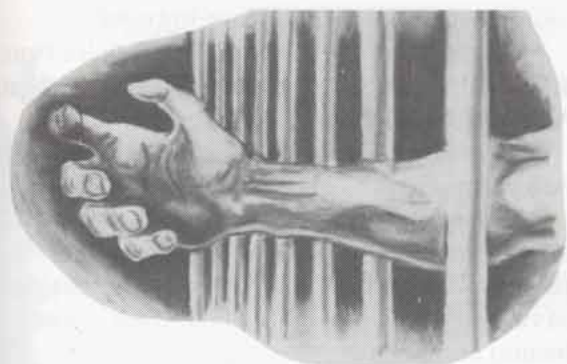
15. Kitchen: The kitchen is a picture of decay and ruin. The once-shiny pans hanging from the hooks near the stove are now rusted, dented blobs of steel, barely recognizable as implements of any sort. In fact, the whole kitchen appears very much as though some powerful child had a temper tantrum and destroyed the place.

The spice racks are overturned and the spices have long since blown away. They left only a slight residue of scent in the dead air, mixing together to create a mixture of smells that is utterly nauseating. The utensils are twisted, bent, and utterly useless. Thin trails of old blood lead to a flayed woman on the stove.

16. Tack and Harness: The moldering leather pieces of old harnesses dangle from the rafters and walls. Despite their lack of use, they still smell rather pleasantly of leather and horse.

17. Stable: Although any animals left here should be long dead, there seems to be something that sounds suspiciously like a horse's stamping coming from the farthest stall. The smells of old hay and musty horse still linger in the air, mingled unpleasantly with a deeper stench of decay. In each of the stalls, there is a dead horse. The exception is in the last stall, for

STAUNTON BLUFFS



this beast has not yet stopped kicking. Nor will it, once it detects the intruders.

Skeleton, Horse (1): AC 6; MV 12; HD 6; hp 35; Int Non; #AT 1; Dmg Special; SD Special; MR Special; ML 12; AL N; XP 650; THACO 15.

18. Balcony: This area runs along the upper eastern wall of the foyer (area 9). The walkway is somewhat rotten, requiring a Dexterity check to avoid falling to the ground 20 feet below. The worm-eaten banister wobbles erratically and is completely unsafe to lean on.

19. Guest Room #1: Once a finely-appointed room for visiting dignitaries, it has fallen into complete disrepair. The wardrobe is empty and the bedclothes are torn and tattered. The formerly lush carpet is worn and faded. Everything of value has disappeared from this room.

20. Guest Room #2: This room is larger than the other guest room but was reserved for less important visitors. The furnishings were less elegant, the carpet more threadbare. It is a joyless room now and it was a joyless room then. The only exciting feature in this room is the secret door contained in the bookshelf in the northwest corner. It leads directly to the jail door on the second level. Its hinges squeak eerily if opened, sounding uncannily like a spirit in pain.

21a-e. More Cells: These oddly shaped cells mercifully do not contain any occupants.

22. Facilities: The plumbing of Stonecrest was once a marvel to behold. Now it spits forth an irregular stream of rusty water. The various porcelain fixtures of the room are shattered, jagged pieces lying dangerously about the room.

23. Children's Room: This is where the young Bleysmith children used to sleep. Old toys lie scattered about the room, many of them crushed as if under a great weight. Others lie in pieces at the base of the walls as though someone had been hurling them at the walls. The small beds in here show no signs of recent habitation, a layer of dust covering them thoroughly.

24. Master Bedroom: As the former bedroom of Count Rupert Bleysmith, one would expect greater things of this room. As it is, the looter is bound to be disappointed. There are moldering silken sheets on a mattress on the bare wooden frame of the bed and there is nothing else of interest in the room.

25. Parlor: At first glance, this well-lit room seems to be a haven against the horrors of the rest of the castle. Upon further scrutiny, it becomes apparent that this room is a favorite resting place of the evil that haunts the accursed building. So much hatred and pride cannot help but leave a residue of itself imprinted in the very air in which it was released. The amount of each released in this room must have been tremendous.

There is an open bottle of wine sitting on the small coffee table. Dust chokes it thoroughly and has turned the fine vintage inside to a muddy, rose smudge. A note in Bleysmith's handwriting sits beside the half-empty bottle. This is his suicide note detailing the methods he used to betray his family and his country. He refuses to apologize, even in his farewell letter, instead cursing all who brought him to the necessity of suicide. He then delineates the place and method he chose to end it all.

26. Library: The ancient, leather-bound books in this room radiate an air of unspeakable venerability. They cover a broad spectrum of topics, from philosophy to romance fiction. Several advanced spellbooks for mages of 5th level and greater (DM's discretion) are scattered among the less serious reading material.

Sitting on the library's table is a book detailing the exploits of famous Bleysmiths in ages

STAUNTON BLUFFS

past. This book was once a well-thumbed copy. Now someone has defaced its fine pages with childish graffiti and it is unreadable.

27. Children's Room: This was the girls' room. It is full of the things with which young adolescent girls fill their rooms such as portraits of young men, sheet music from their favorite bards, and stuffed animals and dolls. There are also two very sharp-looking battle axes leaning in the corner. These are *battle axes* +3.

28. Guard Room/Watchtower: There are several guards in here, all dead from multiple slash wounds. There is also a more recent addition. A young, foppishly dressed man is shoved into one of the embrasures that dot the room. Someone has savagely stabbed him with several arrows which still protrude mockingly from the back of his head and shoulders. A smashed mandolin lies at his side.

29. Winch Room: This is the mechanism that operates the drawbridge below. Although the chains are extremely rusty, they work very well. The drawbridge can be lowered with a great squeaking of chains and gears, shedding rusty flakes in a great shower.

30. Stores: This room is connected to area 4 by means of a spiral staircase. It has none of the flies and vermin associated with the area below. The helpful intercession of the oak trap door separates the two, keeping the world of decay separate from this well-preserved store-room. The chilly air of this area does not extend any farther than the boundaries of the room. It is somehow contained within the room with subtle magics. The meats hanging in this freezer can still be eaten with no ill effects.

As harmless as this room may appear, all is not as it seems. Some of the flesh hanging from the meat hooks is human. Upon first sight, everyone must make a Horror check, or suffer its effects as outlined in the RAVENLOFT™ Boxed Set. A brown mold makes its home on one particularly fine haunch of beef, awaiting those foolish enough to draw near. Additionally, Bleysmith loves to lure his victims to this room, only to lock the

room securely after they have entered.

Mold, Brown (1): AC 9; MV 0; HD 0; Int Non; #AT 0; Dmg 2d8; SA Freezing; SD Absorb heat; AL N; XP 0; THAC0 19.

This mold is only half-size and can drain only 2d8 points from its chosen victim.

31. Storage/Attic: A narrow walkway encircles the large stone pillar in the tower. The stones radiate a subtle aura of evil, increasing as twilight draws near. The pillar itself emits a feeling of menace.

Hidden on the pillar's surface is a loose piece of masonry which reveals a small lever, if removed. When the lever is pulled, a section of rock slides inward. A wash of ill will from the air spills from the exposed attic, more potent for having been pent up for such a long while.

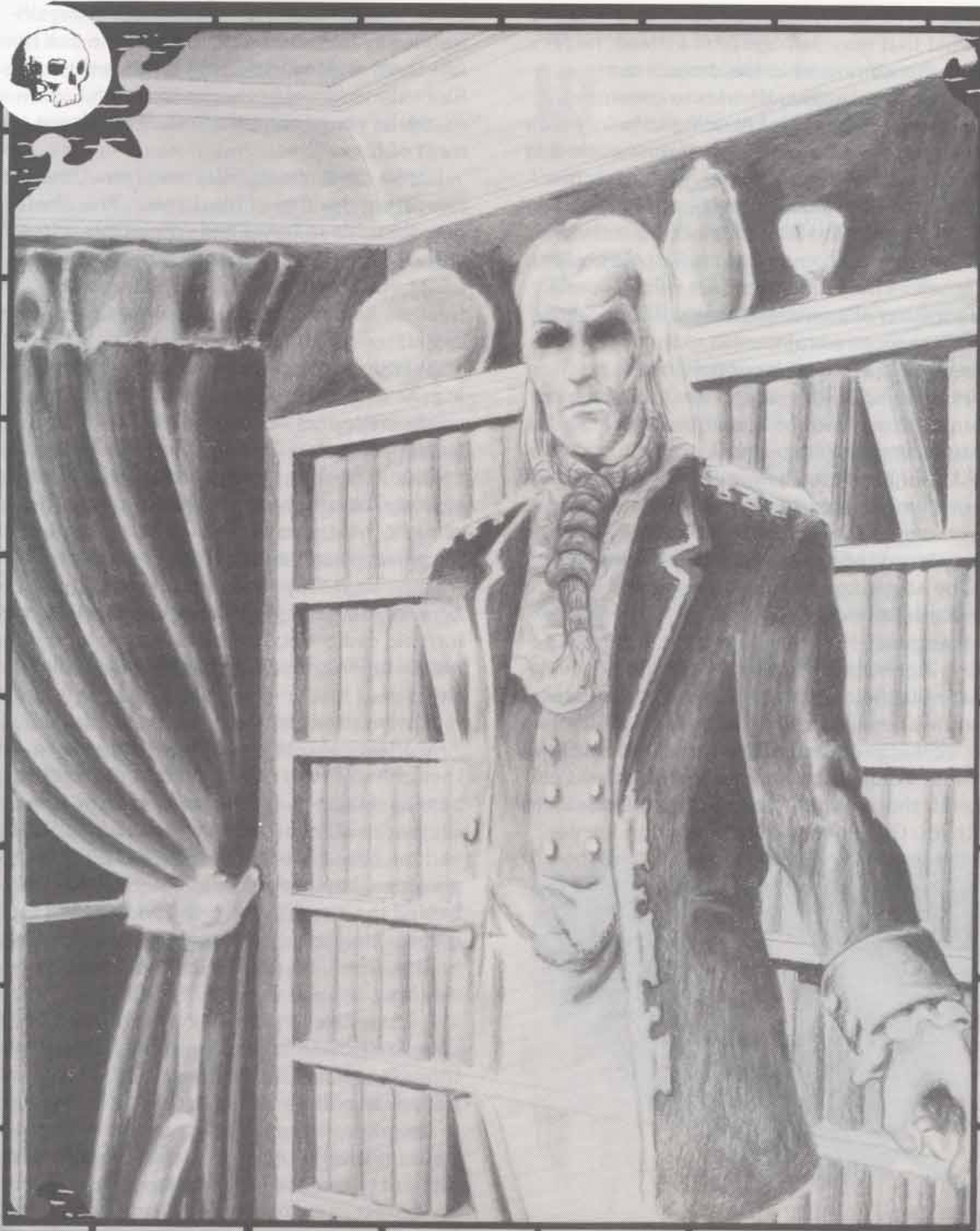
This is the room where Torrence Bleysmith met his end. The rotten hemp rope is still dangling from the upper rafters. A faded, discolored splotch on the floor still announces its presence, evidence of Bleysmith's fall from the weakened rope. The rope, if removed from the rafter, may be used to hold Bleysmith in place for 1d6 rounds. If someone touches him or the noose around his neck with this rope, the two pieces of hemp weave themselves together. The long end of the rope then attaches itself to the ceiling, leaving Bleysmith dangling from the ceiling. His feet kick and his tongue protrudes thickly from his mouth. All who witness this sight must make a Horror check or run terrified from the room for 2 rounds.

Bleysmith has no special attachment to this room, but his emotions at the time of his death imprinted themselves permanently in the very stones of the attic. (Unless he has been eternally destroyed, this is where his essence reforms if it is ever scattered.)

Confronting Torrence Bleysmith

Torrence Bleysmith: AC 0; MV 9; HD 10; hp 60; Int 19; Wis 19; Cha 16; #AT 1; Dmg Nil; SA Ages 1d4x10 years; SD See below; MR Nil; AL LE; THAC0 11

STAUNTON BLUFFS



STAUNTON BLUFFS

If at all possible, Bleysmith tries to avoid any conflict that may damage him. Instead, he relies on his command of the domain to remove his potential enemies. He tries to convince his foes that he is friendly, intending to betray their trust later. He will send them off on a quest that will most certainly prove fatal, preferably one that exposes his enemies to the spectral undead.

His favorite ploy is to convince his attackers that he desires an end to the evil of his undeath as much as they desire it. Then he will reveal the location of something that will supposedly enable them to terminate his existence. If the adventurers are foolish enough to take the word of a ghost, they will no doubt find themselves sinking into the quagmires and marshes that dot the highlands.

Although his attackers will return as undead, they will no longer pose such a threat to him. He has somewhat grudgingly come to accept the presence of those whom he has betrayed.

One advantage to being linked so closely to the castle where he perished has become clear to Bleysmith. He can tell whenever any living being larger than a bird enters his home, and where that being is within the estate. If he exercises his malignant will, Torrence can influence the workings of Castle Stonecrest. Doors blow shut for no apparent reason and windows slam closed, shattering the panes of glass remaining in them. Ghostly howls echo through the deserted passages, sending chills through the

blood of listeners. If he can maneuver the unwary away from their companions, he can isolate them and toy with them at his leisure. Since the doors of his home lock at his command, he can prevent the rescue or escape of most of his victims.

Unlike most ghosts, Bleysmith can travel away from the area of his demise. The whole domain is his to travel and no place is unreachable by his ghostly presence. Still, he finds it uncomfortable to move from his regular retreat, so he does not often venture from his castle.

Although he can move about his castle during the day and influence the material of the castle, he cannot become substantial and able to harm intruders until nightfall. Only one exception applies to this rule. During thunderstorms, Bleysmith may appear sporadically. It is at night that he comes into the full measure of his powers, and can deal with intruders as he wishes. Thus, it is generally safe to explore the haunted castle by day. However, even the most intrepid explorers will find it advisable to leave before the last rays of sunlight fade from the sky.

Bleysmith cannot be *turned* in his domain. Any priests who attempt to do so may find themselves sorely disappointed, for it will appear as if their gods have abandoned them. Bleysmith often pretends to be affected by the various holy symbols presented to dispel his presence. Later, when he silently materializes behind the unwary cleric, the horror is all the greater. Holy symbols normally have no effect on Bleysmith. He may touch them freely if he desires.

It is possible to harm Bleysmith greatly, and even to disperse his essence for a week or two through typical attacks. Bleysmith finds these periods of oblivion terrifying and will attempt to flee anyone capable of causing this. He always returns though, for it is extraordinarily difficult to remove him permanently. To assure his demise, a complex set of conditions must be organized.



STAUNTON BLUFFS

Bleysmith can be permanently destroyed only if someone claims the western half of the realm in the name of the Bleysmiths. That person need not destroy the citizens, but only assert the right of the Bleysmith family to that land. This process, unfortunately, renders the resident Avergnites susceptible to the dubious charms of the ghost lord, and Bleysmith knows when he can begin assaulting the inhabitants. Those who wish to rid the land of his evil whim must therefore move quickly before he lays waste to the innocent farmers.

Next, the company must find the skeleton of the malevolent ruler and lay it to rest. Since he had it hidden in the cellar among a pile of some of his former victims, this will be quite an accomplishment in itself. Bleysmith is intimately connected to his bones and will immediately rush to their defense. He can materialize even in daylight if his bones are threatened. The tower shakes around the ambitious ones, dislodging pieces of rock on them. Those under the rocky shower suffer 1d8 points of damage per round of exposure.

While damage to the bones causes Torrence to suffer the same pain as he would were he alive, he takes no actual damage from them. He may be incapacitated with pain, but he can recover from this in 1d6 rounds. Only if holy water is sprinkled on his bones, followed by a *bless* or similar spell and finally a *remove curse*, can Bleysmith be ultimately destroyed.

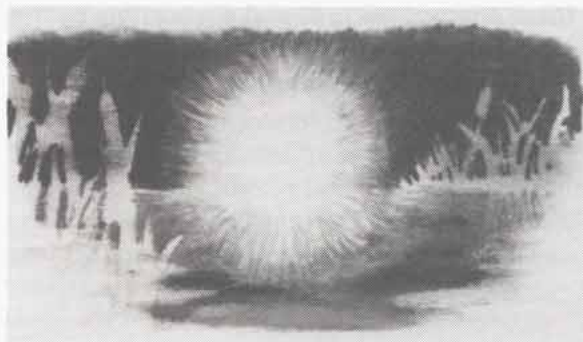
When Bleysmith falls, the domain goes with him. The undead created by him slump to the ground in real death and the unholy vitality that sustained them vanishes into the Mists. The nightmare of his reign finally ends and the domain disperses into the Misty Border. If it doesn't, the party may assume that some other being has taken control of the domain. This creature might not be bound by the same laws and it is certain to look for those individuals responsible for the demise of the previous lord for fear it may suffer the same fate.

Closing the Borders

When Bleysmith wants to ensure that none leave his domain, the Mists of Ravenloft arise to surround the realm. All who wander into the fogs eventually find themselves back in Staunton Bluffs. No matter what means they might employ in escaping the land, their paths through the Mists lead back to the domain.

Occasionally, the Mists take the form of a phantom army that masses on the border. The closer one gets to the army, the more solid it appears. Once an escapee is within 10 feet of the army, the men of the force all assume a totally solid wall. However, the army's composition is entirely of dead men, their grim faces decaying and their bodies festooned with bits of rotting flesh. Here and there, a bit of polished bone flashes. The dead soldiers form an unbreakable front, and no amount of hacking at them will reveal an exit.

If someone attempts to fly over the wall of bodies, the corpses simply stack upon one another. Their reach is virtually limitless. It is impossible to go over them. Digging is likewise of no use, for the bones of those buried in the soil knit together to create a ghastly wall. When Bleysmith wills it, there is no escape from Staunton Bluffs.



STAUNTON BLUFFS

Encounters

The western land is relatively clear of monsters. Occasionally one will wander in through the Mists, but the villagers mostly live in complete freedom from monstrous attacks. There is wildlife in the thickets that cluster haphazardly about the land, but no monstrosity dwells among these. Only natural creatures make their homes here.

The only monsters anyone is likely to encounter in the lowlands are an occasional wolf and the more brutish peasants. Some commoners have found that their lives become much more enjoyable if they abuse those weaker than themselves, and derive their pleasure in this way. Their victims are generally not in a state to do anything about it afterward.

The eastern portion of Staunton Bluffs seems to be a haven for the supernatural. Spectres, ghosts, wraiths, and various other spirits make their lairs in the haunted highlands. These are the spirits of the original Stauntonian citizens, slain by the treachery of Sir Torrence Bleysmith. They haunt the areas in which they were slain, venting their grief and rage on those foolish enough to pass by.

Although they are not active by day, these vengeful apparitions infest the night air of Staunton Bluffs. Any who pay a visit to the eastern realm are likely to encounter one of these spectral horrors, and die horribly by their ghostly hands. All who die in eastern Staunton Bluffs return as a bodiless undead, whether

they were a victim of an undead or not. Those who drown in the bogs return just as surely as a wraith's victim will.

The only exceptions to this rule are those who die as a direct result of Bleysmith's betrayal. If they received directions from him that proved fatal, they will return as the type of corporeal undead with Hit Dice closest to their former level. They remain unintelligent, their minds having gone to feed whatever forces power the dark land. They stir from their oblivious stupor only to defend their existence.

If Bleysmith dies the true death, all the undead native to his realm pass into non-existence as well. Those who may have wandered in may carry on with their undeath as normal.

Lycanthropes can stray into Staunton Bluffs as well, wreaking their own special brand of havoc until they are approached by Bleysmith or one of his undead minions. Since the westerners can mobilize themselves effectively to handle menaces like these, they are not often a problem in the lowlands. There are a few citizens who are infected with the dread disease who are not averse to adding to their company and are canny enough to hide their presence.

Any who travel in Staunton Bluffs should remember that the whole domain is haunted. Even the western half is not free from the influence of its ghostly lord. The wanderers should always wonder if the wind sighing mournfully through the trees is merely the wind, or a foreboding of something more.

*ill thy physician, and
the fee bestow
Upon the foul
disease.*

Shakespeare

Many of the lands of Ravenloft hide their true nature behind the beauty of the earth. Their panoramas often rob travelers of their breath, the stunning scenery to be found nowhere else. The full force of the contrast between the

beauty and the evil of the land often paralyzes a casual wayfarer, allowing the malevolent forces of the domain to seize him or her.

Not so in Nosos. Nosos wears its deformity like a badge of honor, its stinking filth pits like the finest perfume. It is almost as if the creator of this dungheap were proud of what he has wrought and does not hesitate to reveal his true nature. Yet the truth is hidden by deeper veils of illusion.

Like many other realms in Ravenloft, Nosos is not a place of horror at first. Those entering the land will most likely feel a wave of revulsion at the putrid essence of the land laid before them. The horror, as happens so often in this dark demiplane, creeps up on the unwary individual. Most of the other domains of Ravenloft focus one's horror on what one sentient being can do to another. Nosos is an example of the horrors a sentient being can levy on the landscape, and thus indirectly to others.

The Lord

The lord of Nosos is Malus Sceleris, a lumber and mining baron. Actually, he was a lumber baron until he killed all the trees by deforesting the region and polluting it with

the smoke from his refineries. Now he focuses on trade and his profitable coal mines, which is all he ever wanted with his life.

People are happy to inform Sceleris of the plots against him, for he obviously holds the reins of power. They hope to be elevated by virtue of their service to him when they expose conspiracies to dethrone him. He has a willing net of information and he can get the truth about nearly anything in Nosos within the hour.

Sceleris is fascinated with disease. It is rumored that he fosters the diseases in Nosos himself to observe their effects on others. Some say that he even creates the illnesses himself. Whatever the truth might be, Sceleris is enthralled with the idea of disease and has a more extensive knowledge of them than almost anyone else alive.

Malus Sceleris is the son of two druids, both of whom were sworn to protect the same region of forest. His mother died in childbirth, leaving the stricken father to care for the boy himself. Since a druid's life is harried, the elder Sceleris had little time for his child except for discipline and instruction.

Malus grew to hate his father. The words his father spared were never kind and punishments were nearly as common as meals. Young Malus began to plot ways to kill his father. To achieve his vengeance in suitably horrific fashion, he threw himself headlong into his studies, searching his texts on subtle and terrible deaths.

Since he was not sure if poison would work on his father, he devised a more devious scheme. Stealing some of the money that his father had accumulated from the dead foes of the forest, Malus hired a band of mercenaries in a nearby town. He disguised himself as a wealthy young nobleman and hired a band of lumberjacks as well. Finally, he purchased some old blankets which he contaminated by wrapping around lepers, the terminally ill, and dead bodies. Then he and his band headed back into the woods.

He set up a wood-cutting operation, ordering his men to destroy the trees in as brutal a fash-



ion as possible. He knew this would attract the wrath of his father, making him oblivious to other dangers. While his father was occupied in fending off the attacks of the lumberjacks and mercenaries, Malus slipped home to infect his father's pallet with the tainted blankets.

When his father returned that evening, sorely wounded by the mercenaries' weapons, Malus tended to the injuries and sent his father to bed. When Sceleris awoke, fever racked his body and he could not fend for himself. He cried out for his son, but received no comfort. Instead, Malus sat by to watch his father writhe in agony and eventually die.

Malus then systematically worked to deforest the wood, to defile all that his parents had made natural. His hatred knew no bounds and neither did his ravaging of the forest. When the Mists of Ravenloft arose early one morning, no one noticed, for the smoke of the refineries and burning coal mines obscured them. The lands simply disappeared into a vast smoky abyss and reappeared as one of the lands of Ravenloft.

Appearance

Malus Sceleris is much too young to be as steeped in evil as he is. He is a recklessly handsome youth, 20 years of age. His short brown hair is kept neatly trimmed and he

favors clothing that demonstrates his wealth. He has a carefree manner and an easy, sometimes irritating, smirk which seems to mock the rest of the world. Even in repose, his face never loses the trace of the smirk.

Current Sketch

Malus has everything his money could possibly provide, including bodyguards, fine food and clothing, and a beautiful house and grounds. Yet there are still things that nag at him. He does not feel as if he has sufficiently avenged himself for the abuses of his childhood and continues to despoil the land. Most of the rest of Nosos beyond his manor is a stinking mess, blowing the stench into his personal grounds, reminding him of what he has made it. Yet he does not slow in his course to eliminate nature from the land entirely.

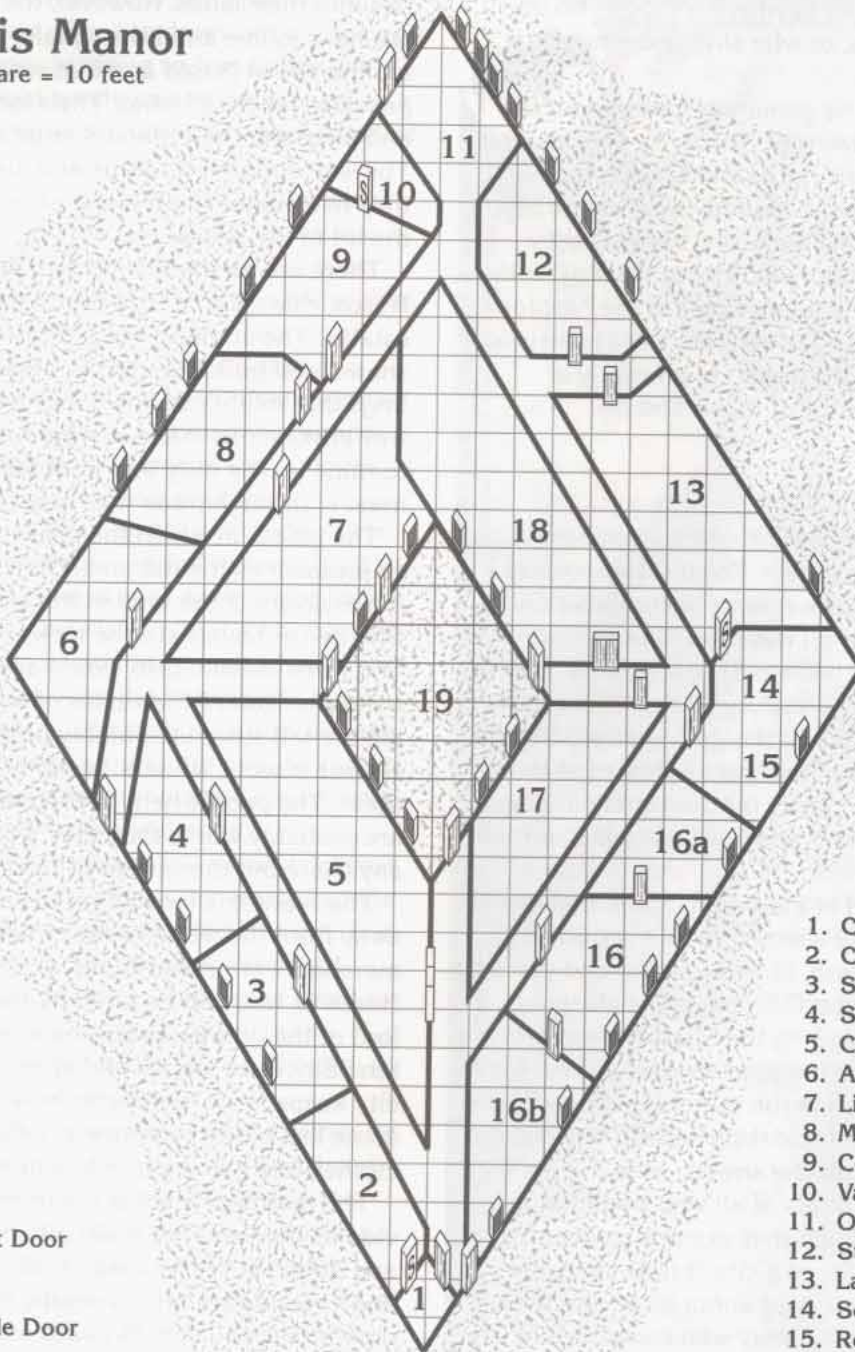
His experiments with causing diseases have increased in scope and audacity since his entry into Ravenloft. The Dark Powers have responded well to his temerity and granted him an ability to manipulate disease as he wishes, to halt or to expand upon them, to confer them or to heal them. So far, Malus has only chosen to expand them and confer them.

Malus also has the ability to ensure trade through the Mists and is the only known being who can do so. His domain travels freely throughout the Mists and can settle its border near any other domain which has a Misty Border. Thus, he ensures that his people have enough to eat while he conducts his experiments and defiles the landscape. He earns his wealthy peers and himself some money, for Nosos produces an amazing quantity of minerals.

Malus can best be described as deceptive, oily, and charming. He acts friendly until he can remove someone who is a threat to him and then reveals his true scheming nature. Until that point, he will gauge how useful a person can be to his cause and manipulate them until they are no longer useful. He has absolutely no

Sceleris Manor

One square = 10 feet



1. Cloak Room
2. Cells
3. Servants' Quarters
4. Sitting Room
5. Council Room
6. Art Gallery
7. Library
8. Master Bedroom
9. Conservatory
10. Vault
11. Observatory
12. Study
13. Laboratory
14. Secret Laboratory
15. Recreation Room
16. Guest Suite
17. Kitchen
18. Dining Room
19. Blasted Garden



Door



Secret Door



or Double Door



Window

compunction about destroying those who impede his progress, or who simply are not valuable.

He claims that he genuinely cares about the welfare of the citizens of Nosos. He speaks long and loudly for their rights and against their deplorable treatment. Nobody who knows him fairly well takes this seriously, because they know that he is simply mouthing the words. He is responsible for the large part of the "deplorable treatment," and speaks the words solely to see who agrees with them. He promptly arranges for the deaths of those who do.

The Land

The first thing anyone notices upon entering Nosos is the stench. Rotting compost, raw sewage, and the reek of decomposition greet the noses of all travelers. The second thing they notice is the pale, gray-yellow grime that coats nearly everything. This nauseating color is a byproduct of the garbage that creates huge mounds down the thoroughfares of the city. The sky is a crazily mottled study in gray, black, yellow, and orange. Blue sky is a rarity in Nosos.

It is a junkyard of a domain. The broad avenues of what once seemed to be a proud city are now full of trash, blowing hither and yon in the stinking breeze. Filth clogs the alleyways, a fetid haze overhanging the offal. The sewers apparently do not function as they should, for sewage runs through the gutters that overflow with litter. Where the debris lies too thick, the waste runs out into the streets, creating a muck that befouls the boots of all who tread there.

Nosos is a domain that exists almost entirely inside the confines of a city. It is about three miles square. Scattered about its perimeter are the estates of the wealthy who can afford to live free from the refuse that the commoner must endure. These estates seem to be immune to the worst effects of the trash that permeates the rest of the domain.

The stench from the rest of the city still car-

ries into their lands. However, the wealthy do not have to live amid the squalor and trash that typifies life in Nosos and that more than compensates for the ill wind. Their lands are green and pleasant, their manors large and spacious. The well-appointed rooms and luxury in which they live makes them kings when compared to the lot of the peasants.

There are no trees or other natural plants in Nosos, aside from those found on the manor estates. The stinking wind, tainted rain, fouled snows, and pollution utterly destroy any seedlings that might put down root here. The only way anyone can make a living from the land is to mine it. The only way to obtain grain and meat is through trade with other lands.

The places in which the peasants live are not so pleasant as the manors. Their hovels take up the majority of the land in the city. The serfs who live in hovels are the lucky ones, though. The worst dwellings in Nosos are the flats in the buildings toward the center of town. Not only are the tall structures highly unstable, but poisonous insects, spiders, and other vermin infest them. The people here live in conditions that are probably worse than they would encounter anywhere but the sewers of Nosos.

The market is located on the edge of town, away from the worst of the conditions. The merchants are either those who are native to Nosos or who can be lured by the money the lord of the domain promises to each who enters. Since the stench and appearance of the city keeps most merchants away, those who do come leave with full purses, although their clothes must afterwards be burnt.

The metropolis holds the mines which provide its income. The main pits produce coal and gold, two items easily traded. The smithies and coal-powered mills nearby belch enormous clouds of gritty soot skyward and mix with the other ingredients lofted by the wind.

The weather itself is the worst possible kind for the land which it encompasses. Nosos is a hot, humid land where the winds whistle constantly throughout the day. The clouds skid

NOSOS

insanely across the blotchy sky, spurred on by the howling wind. The sun dares not show its face for too long, seeming to fear the blight that Nosos would surely cast upon it. Even as it is, the sun appears only through a hazy cataract of pollution.

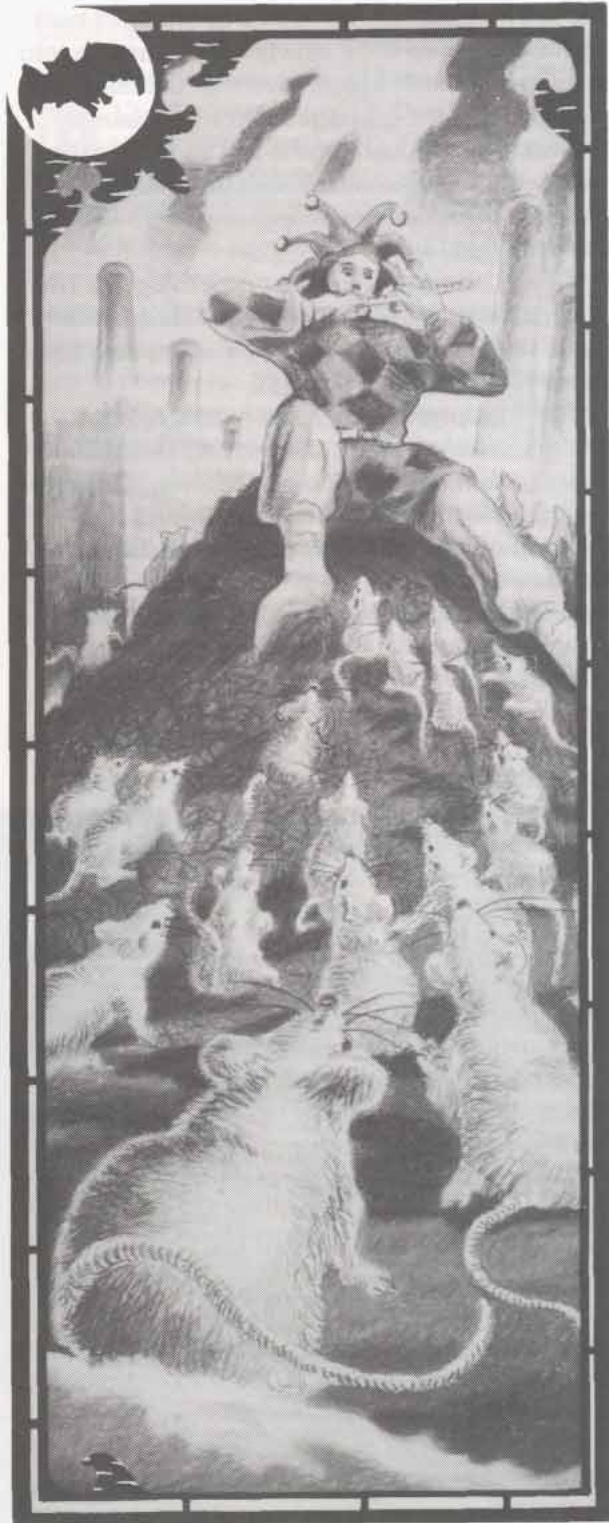
When the air becomes colder and the winds cease, the humidity in the air condenses into a thick mist. The fog obscures vision for more than 10 feet ahead, slowing all travel other than pedestrian almost to a standstill. This is the perfect time for murderers and assassins to roam the streets. Yet many take advantage of this weather to conduct their business simply because the wind is not blowing the rankness of the garbage into everyone's nostrils.

If the winds continue to blow when the cold commences, rain begins to fall in torrents. The clouds open their gates, and water practically pours forth in waterfalls. While the rain has the pleasant function of diluting much of the filthy reek of Nosos, it floods the houses and businesses with rank, murky waters. It also sweeps garbage and sewage around the streets, redistributing the waste throughout the city, creating new piles and destroying old ones.

Although the rain cleans the squalid domain, it also contributes heavily to the erosion of the buildings and the destruction of plant life. The rain is slightly acidic to humans, causing 1 point of damage for every 10 minutes spent in it. It is much more damaging to the plants, which require a softer rainfall. No plant can survive long in the driving rain.

After the rains, the weather tends to clear up a bit. The winds resume their roars and the air becomes much colder. The water left on the streets by the rains freezes over, becoming thick ice, indistinguishable from the street. Soon, the snow begins to fall. Gentle flurries of dirty snow falling at first, it soon turns into a raging blizzard, shielding everything from sight. Even the steaming trash heaps vanish from sight, to be replaced by the white-gray shroud of snow.

This relative whiteness does not last. After



the snow stops, the air begins to retain its heat again. The deep snow slowly melts, turning into gray-brown slush which covers all the land. Even frozen, the garbage makes its presence known, for the slush smells just as foul as the warmed offal. The slush leaks in through even the best-insulated boots, infusing them with an eternal reek.

Finally, the warm weather arrives again. The slush clears entirely from the streets and the cycle begins again. This sequence repeats itself every four months.

The flies proliferate in the humid muck. Everywhere one turns, the buzzing swarms are there to foul one's vision and hearing. Clouds of insects occasionally darken the murky sky, droning off to some unknown destination. Rats are plentiful in the streets, building their nests in the piles of garbage that accumulate everywhere.

The Folk

The native folk of Nosos are generally pale-skinned, blue-eyed, and light-haired. Occasionally, there are exceptions to this, but they are quite infrequent. There are roughly 6,000 people in Nosos.

The people are a scabbling, miserable folk who care nothing for the lives of others. They seek only gain for themselves, no matter the cost to anyone else. They occasionally pull cruel pranks simply for their own amusement. A favorite pastime is to empty their chamber pots on passers-by. All that matters to them is the short term profit for themselves, despite the cost it may have for others. There are few exceptions to this rule, all the way down the social ladder.

One of the ways to socially climb in Nosos is to attend the masquerades of the wealthy. These balls are open only to the other rich folk, but all those in the city see them as a chance to increase their standing. Most of the gate-crashers still smell strongly of the filth in which they live and are evicted. However, a few bathe previous to the masquerade and can pass into

the crowd of prosperous people without detection.

One of the recent stories that circulates among the rich people is that the lesser people of Nosos are afflicted by a strange plague. This sickness seems to be largely resistant to the normal methods of healing. No doubt it is the result of their poor environment and the excessive pollution.

Nonetheless, this plague will quickly reach epidemic proportions, and will doubtless spread to even the wealthy as other diseases have before. The affluent people live in terror of this plague and guard their doors against any infiltration by the lower class. They hire anyone they think they can trust to guard their properties, such as adventurers and those not of the inferior class. They cannot imagine why the pathetic folk would harbor such a grudge as to infect them all.

The Law

The law in Nosos is only that dictated by the whims of the wealthy. The general state of the land is nearly anarchy. The poor folk keep to themselves and the wealthy use them as the need arises. The bodyguards of the wealthy enforce the desires of their employers on all who stand in their way. The only real law that applies in Nosos is the Golden Rule: He who has the gold makes the rules. In this land, most of the gold is owned by Lord Malus Sceleris.

Disease seems to be a way of life in Nosos. The effects of the various diseases combine to create a fatal version, which even the best of the modern healers cannot cure. Since the people of Nosos disdain healing magic, claiming that it is only superstition, clerics are not welcome.

Besides, their spells are much less effective here. A healing spell will function at only half power. *Cure disease* merely reduces the severity of any disease rather than removing it altogether. That is, a fatal disease becomes only debili-

tating, while a victim of a debilitating sickness becomes healthy. Nonetheless, all capable of casting it are feared. The stubborn folk prefer the more modern methods of herbs, poultices, and leeches.

Lord Malus Sceleris is at the forefront of this modernism. Since he is the most prosperous man in Nosos, the others follow his lead. Clerics are reviled by the common folk as witch doctors and no one of importance pays them any heed.

The first week any player character is in Nosos, a save vs. poison must be made each day. A failed save means that the character has contracted one of the numerous wind, food, or water-borne diseases that infest Nosos. This disease acts as the cleric spell *cause disease* (the debilitating version). If a character fails his save a second time, the pace of the disease doubles. If he fails it a third time, the disease becomes fatal. If all his saves are successful in the first week, he must make them only once a week thereafter. If he fails a later save, the ailment progresses as described above.

Confronting Malus Sceleris

Malus Sceleris (0-level human): AC 9; MV 12; HD 0; hp 5; Str 13; Dex 15; Con 13; Int 19; Wis 15; Cha 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 +3 (Dagger +3); SA Disease attack; SD Charm; MR 20%; AL NE; THACO 20

Malus has no spectacular magical powers, nor is he especially good at fighting. His only skills lie in his genius, his shrewdness, and his bargaining powers. It is these things that keep him in power, for he can talk his way out of nearly anything, and has contingency plans when this fails. He is a capable judge of human character and knows how to manipulate people in the best manner to ensure the best possible reaction and performance from them.

When it looks as though combat is inevitable, Malus will use his *charm* ability. He hates to use this because it gives him blinding headaches that last for hours. If his charm, both magical and natural, should fail, he must rely on his limited combat abilities.

Fortunately for him, he can resort to his dis-



ease ability. This ability is similar to the clerical *cause disease*, but is five times as effective. The results begin to show immediately. They cannot be reversed except for a *limited wish* or *wish* spell.

Closing the Borders

When Sceleris wishes to close his borders, great mounds of stinking, sliding garbage spring from the fabric of the land. The putrid heaps, standing well over 75 feet high, prevent all sort of climbing, threatening to avalanche down upon those who dare them. The reek is very nearly overpowering, and the piles of garbage are dripping with unnameable substances.

Any climbers who somehow persist through the stench and reach the mid-point of the garbage will find that broken glass, rusty jagged metal, and other sharp and dangerous objects impede the ascent. If they insist on continuing their climb, they are sure to slice open some part of themselves. The keen shards of debris can cut through even enchanted substances, and inflict 1d6 points of damage per foot climbed. The victim must successfully save vs. spell at -4 or suffer from the effects of the debilitating version of the *cause disease* spell.

Should the climbers succeed in making it to the top, all their efforts will be for nothing. The roaring winds blow hard from the border over the mounds of rot and unseat even those who are securely anchored. The wind takes no notice of any enchantment, sweeping all atop it from the festering pile. The climbers will sustain 8d6 points of damage from the fall.

Gulls, crows, and other carrion-eating birds assault those who attempt to take to the air. No matter how many the flying adventurer destroys, there are always two more for each one that dies. Any person in the avian frenzy will suffer 2d8 points of damage per round, until the individual returns to the ground. Whether that person returns alive or dead is entirely an individual choice, for the birds do not relent in



their assault until the fleeing person has landed inside Nosos.

Even those who are not near the border can tell when the border has been closed, for the winds howl with more intensity than usual. The stench of rotting garbage becomes even stronger, if that can be possible. An air of tense expectancy invades the foul atmosphere of the entire domain, and the folk become edgier and crueler than usual.

Encounters

Most of the encounters in Nosos will be with the various disease-bearing creatures such as rats, flies, and various other small vermin. Also, the dungheaps and piles of offal make excellent homes for some of the various breeds of fungi.

There are other, larger creatures which make themselves known from time to time. They crawl from the putrid and largely disfunctional sewers to plague the land above with their pres-

NOSOS

ence. Among these are the carrion crawler and the giant centipede. These types of creatures are more common than anyone would care for them to be, yet the residents do nothing about their problem.

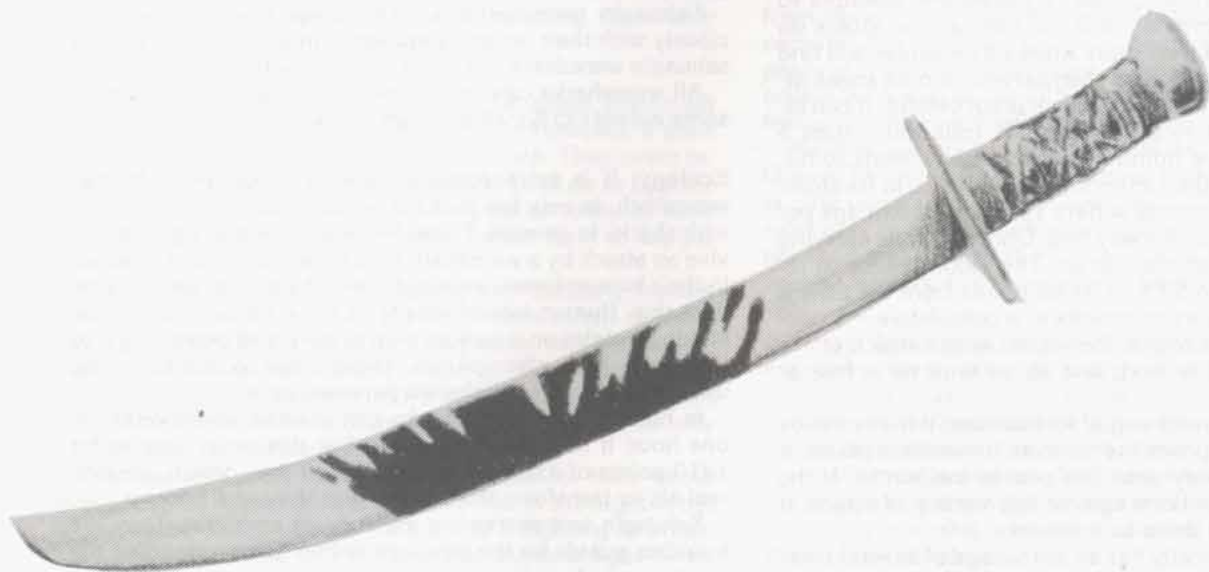
Other creatures that clog the sewer pipes include a healthy, growing colony of were-rats. They are eager to insure that their kind can propagate itself quickly, and so go about the business of gaining converts to their point of view. Their number grows rapidly, and they are beginning to feel secure enough to go above ground during the day. They are not yet so bold as to actually emerge from sewers where people can see them, but that day approaches. Since they have to deal with the various other creatures in the sewers, they must still be careful about revealing themselves openly.

Naturally, with all the flies and vermin infesting the domain, there are bound to be those creatures which prey on the pests. Spiders are not an uncommon sight. Less common are their larger cousins, the giant spiders. These prey not only on the insects and sleek rats, but those wanderers foolish enough to step through

their territory.

Since the city of Nosos is a prime breeding ground for these creatures, oozes are not unusual. Ochre jelly and gelatinous cubes skim through the reeking sewers and city streets, devouring the refuse and sewage that are the prevailing conditions of the town. These creatures are more common in the sewer system, and are definitely a severe danger to any choosing to head that way.

Finally, there are the undead. They are fairly common and they are not restricted to graveyards. Because there are no graveyards in Nosos, these creatures can wander through the streets at whim. No one knows who is responsible for animating these creatures and their number grows constantly. There is nothing even slightly glamorous about these undead and there are no tales written about their charm and woes. These undead are zombies and ghosts, and their existence is disgusting. Their stench and their appearance ensure that they will, like so many other races in Nosos, remain objects of revulsion rather than pity.



Lycanthrope, Wereshark



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any Ocean
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Nil
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low to Exceptional (5-16)
TREASURE:	See following
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil
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NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	12, Sw 18
HIT DICE:	10+3 or 12+3
THACO:	10 or 8
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	5-20 or 6-24
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See following
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+1 or silver weapon to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (20 feet long)
MORALE:	Steady (11)
XP VALUE:	4,000 (10 HD), 6,000 (12 HD)

If all fishermen fear sharks, they fear the wereshark even more so. It is an avaricious hybrid of man and shark or even worse, sahuagin and shark. These huge predators destroy good catches of fish and even better men, devouring all that falls before them.

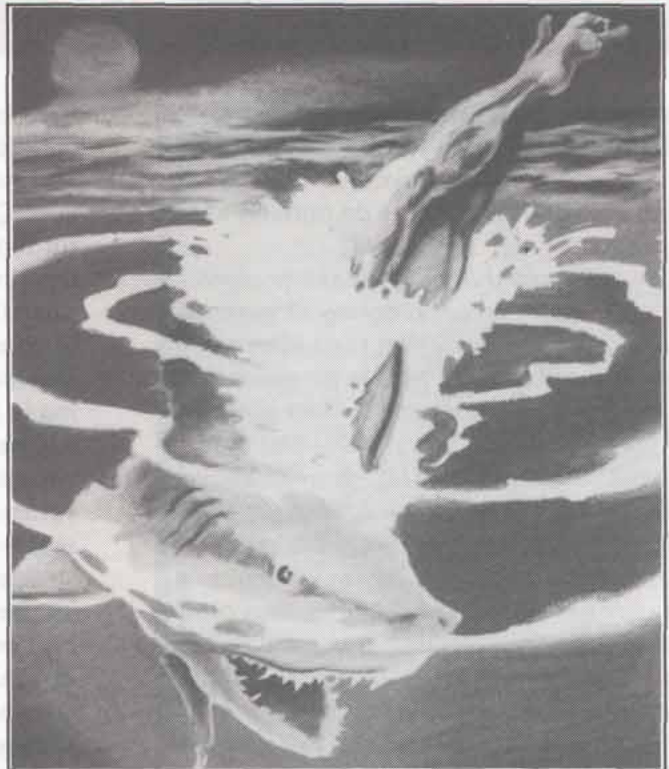
The wereshark is a huge, muscular brute in human form. It takes the form of a great white shark when transformed. Cruel in its humanoid forms, it is even more so when it assumes its shark form.

Combat: When entering combat, a wereshark attempts to swim beneath its opponents so it can have a clear attack on its enemies' legs. The wereshark knows its enemies will find it nearly impossible to defend themselves from its sneak attacks. If the wereshark's sneak attack is successful, it can attempt to swallow its victim. If the DM rolls more than 5 points higher than the number the wereshark needs to hit, the creature engulfs the victim in its huge jaws. In its stomach, the unfortunate enemy suffers 15 points of damage per round unless he can cut his way free. Only someone carrying a sharp-edged weapon may do so. The victim needs to reduce the wereshark to 50% of its hit points from the time it swallowed him. The victim attacks at a cumulative -1 penalty per round. For example, the victim would attack at -1 the first round, -2 the next, and so on until he is free or dead.

If the wereshark cannot engulf its enemies, it tries pass-by attacks. Since this exposes the creature to needless abuse, it tries to swallow its prey until this proves ineffective. If the swimmers take precautions against this variety of attack, it resorts to gnawing at them as it passes.

The wereshark typically has an entourage of several common sharks. These attack at the same time as the wereshark. In heavily shark-infested waters, the scent of blood may bring swarms of sharks and whip them into a frenzy.

A wereshark is affected only by silver or enchanted weapons. All others are either deflected from the skin or slice harmlessly through the outer layer of skin, which heals immediately.



Habitat/Society: Human weresharks are typically solitary creatures and as such do not organize themselves into societies. Occasionally, one can find them cooperating with each other or with the sahuagin, but this tends to be rare, since these creatures are mostly individualists out for their own gain.

Sahuagin weresharks, on the other hand, often work closely with their normal sahuagin contemporaries. To be a sahuagin wereshark is a great honor in sahuagin society.

All weresharks can communicate with and command, to some extent (35%), all ordinary sharks.

Ecology: It is extraordinarily rare to encounter a human wereshark, as very few humans actually have good relations with sharks in general. Those few who have managed to survive an attack by a wereshark tend to be maimed or crippled in their human forms, although their shark form does not reflect this. Human weresharks tend to be fiercely territorial, staking a claim on a sunken ship or cave and defending it to the death. They often plunder these areas so that they may use the treasure for their own personal gain.

In human form, weresharks can breathe underwater for one hour. If they do not get air after this time, they suffer 1d10 points of damage per round until they drown, breathe real air, or transform themselves into their shark forms.

Sahuagin weresharks are much more common. They are found as guards for the sahuagin nobles or commanding the sharks around a sahuagin city. Sahuagins that reach maturity may elect to take the tests to become weresharks. Roughly 10% survive these tests to become weresharks, and they are elevated above most normal sahuagin in their society.

Weresharks revert to their human or sahuagin forms within two rounds after death.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Sewers and catacombs
FREQUENCY:	Common
ORGANIZATION:	Pack/hive
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore/fear
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	A, B, F (lair only)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING:	2-20
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	3+2
THACO:	16
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3 (claw/claw/bite)
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-6/1-6/1-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See following
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6-7 feet tall)
MORALE:	Elite
XP VALUE:	420

Although marikith are common enough in the domain of Timor, they are only rarely seen, for they slide through the shadows, exposing themselves only when their victim has no chance of escaping. By the time the city guard arrives, summoned by the shrieking of the marikith target, there is nothing left.

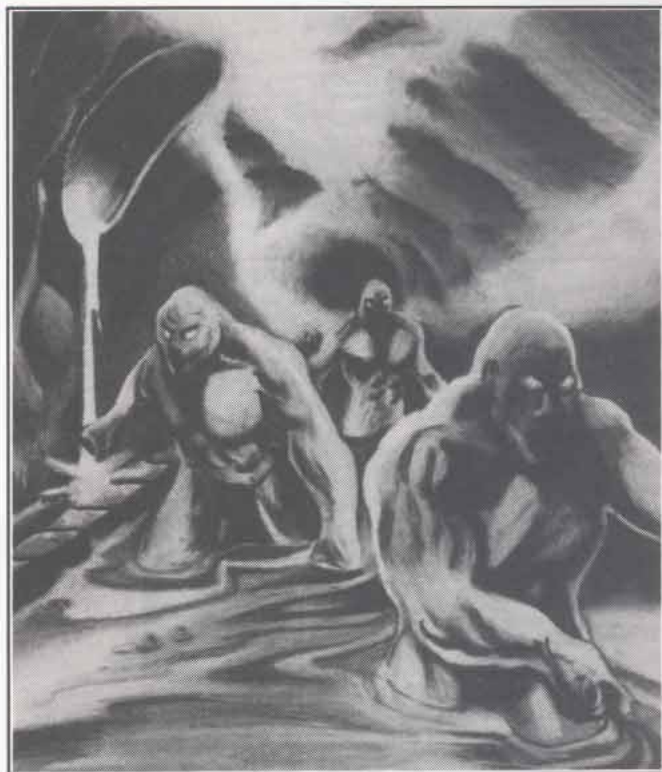
The marikith are hulking, musclebound humanoids covered with a tough, black, leathery skin. This skin does not impede their movement in any way, but seems to aid them in their motion through the slippery sewers and catacombs. Their glowing red eyes allow others to see them, but the marikith can veil these eyes at will, unveiling them only when it is the best moment to strike.

Combat: Marikith never enter into combat alone, preferring to overwhelm their foe by sheer numbers. However, if their companions are slain, they fight to the death. They never retreat from a combat unless they are ordered to do so by their Hive Queen. If they must flee, they grab as many of their dead as they possibly can, for they do not wish to expose themselves to the world.

They fight with their sharp claws and incisors, tearing their victims to pieces. They prefer to snatch their unfortunate prey from the streets and drag them into the underworld where they may devour them at will. Even if their quarry fights back, the marikith's skin protects them from the brunt of attacks from blunt weapons. They receive only half damage from bludgeoning weapons.

The marikith prefer to fight in darkness, for their whole lives are spent in the murk of the sewers or in the night of the upper world. They suffer a -4 penalty if fighting in bright light, -2 in dim light, -1 in minute amounts of light. Their 120-foot infravision allows them to see others perfectly well in the darkness. Those using infravision to spot the marikith see only faint, blurry outlines of the creatures. Their leather skin diffuses most of the heat that emanates from their bodies. There is only a 25% chance that someone with infravision can see a marikith in the dark.

The marikith prefer the darkness, for it allows the victim's terror to build. Slithering noises and strange scufflings force their target to reevaluate their night fears. By the time the



marikith are ready to strike, the victim will most likely have worked himself to a fever pitch of terror. Their targets must make a successful save vs. spells or attack at -2, because of the fear they feel.

Habitat/Society: Marikith live in a communal hive hollowed from beneath the city of Timor. Their society is under the command of the Hive Queen, an ancient evil beast. She appears as a spider-like creature, bloated and maleficent. She orders her brood about with some form of hive telepathy, effective for about a 5-mile radius.

Marikith society has only two classes, the hunters and the Queen. There is only one Queen per hive, but currently there is only one known hive in existence. The Queen seems to exist only to feed herself and reproduce. The hunters bring her food and tend to the babies she produces. She mainly spawns hunters, but occasionally a baby queen is born.

Ecology: Timor appears to be the only place marikith have ever been seen, although there exists the possibility that some of the Hive Queen's brood have been exported from the domain. Perhaps the fate of her young queens is decided somewhere outside Timor and she is directed to destroy them. If Timor is destroyed, the eggs are transported out of the land, but it is not known where. The marikith appear to enjoy a relationship with Timor, having survived as long as the city has stood.

The marikith feed on both the meat of their victims and their fear. Some sort of fear energy seems to be necessary for the marikith to sustain themselves.

It is rumored that the marikith were once humans who followed the directives of their Queen, hunting and slaying the defenseless and weak. They revelled greatly in the fear they created and soon became dependent on both the food of fear, as well as their ordinary food. They became totally subservient to their mistress and their dreary existence holds no joy.

Mist Ferryman



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any mist
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Misty days or nights
DIET:	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil
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NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	4
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3 (claw/claw/bite)
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-6/1-6/1-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Disease
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+1 or better weapons to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5 1/2-6 feet tall)
MORALE:	Average (10)
XP VALUE:	420

The Mist Ferrymen are frightful beasts, appearing as skeletal parodies of a human. Their mouths are full of sharp incisors which often have bits of rotting flesh caught between them. An unwary traveler can almost never see their full form, because the Mists hide the shape of Mist Ferrymen strategically, allowing only glimpses of their horrifying figure.

Combat: Mist Ferrymen are foul creatures of the Mists of Ravenloft, haunting the Misty Borders of the Core and the Islands. They prey on the travelers of the Mists, occasionally cooperating to bring down the more powerful specimens. They are mostly solitary creatures and attack any interlopers in their territory, including other Ferrymen. When they need help to defeat an invader, they issue a strange, ululating howl, sounding like the sobbing of a frightened woman. This attracts all other Ferrymen within 2 miles (usually 1d8 + 1), which arrive in five rounds, traveling through the Mists with preternatural speed.

Their method of travel is somewhat unclear, as no one has ever seen one in transit. Perhaps they assume the form of mist and speed through the greater Mist which surrounds them, re-forming when they reach their destination. They never use this ability in combat, so there is no proof they use this method of transit.

When they appear, they fall upon their victims, tearing at them with their sharp claws and powerful teeth. Any who receive damage from these must successfully save vs. death or suffer from a debilitating disease. The victims lose 1 point of Constitution per week unless a *cure disease* spell is cast upon them, which allows them to regain lost Constitution at a rate of 1 point per day. If a victim reaches 0 hit points, he becomes a Mist Ferryman himself after three days.

Ferryman attempt to keep the victim alive as long as possible as they devour him, for they relish the flow of the living blood as well as the flavor of the struggling flesh and muscle. They attempt to overbear their victims, overwhelming them with sheer numbers, at which point they take turns eating. (See the *Overbearing* rules in the *Player's Handbook*, page 98). They can be turned as ghosts.

Habitat/Society: Solitary Mist Ferrymen occasionally band together for hunting purposes. It seems that they have some-



how acquired the ability to travel anywhere they desire in the Mists, but it is not known just what in the Mists gives them this ability. It is this ability that gives them their name and value to the dark lords. When the lord of a domain or a powerful denizen of Ravenloft desires the presence of certain folk, he attempts to summon forth a Mist Ferryman. To accomplish this, he makes an entreaty of the land on a misty night, spilling the freshly harvested blood of innocents into the fog-choked air. There is a base 5% chance Ravenloft will answer, with an additional 5% per innocent slain.

If it works, the closest Mist Ferryman comes to the lord to receive its instructions. When it has received its orders, it rides the Mists to wherever the intended target is, sometimes even from the demiplane itself. It brings the Mists with it, ensuring that its target travels to Ravenloft. The Ferryman is able to control the destination of the Misty sojourn, and so guarantee that the victim will get to the summoning lord. Unfortunately, the Ferryman have voracious appetites, so a traveler cannot always be sure of a summoned Ferryman's intentions. If one subdues a Ferryman in combat, it is possible to force it to take one to a desired destination within Ravenloft. There is no way to make a Ferryman take someone from the plane if the creature does not desire to leave.

Ecology: It is sometimes said that Mist Ferrymen are manifestations of the Mists themselves, lesser forms that sometimes serve the whims of the lords. Their ability to cause the Mists to work for them lends credence to this theory. It is known that they come into being when an individual falls victim to their disease. However, the source of their powers is unknown, as is the origin of the first Ferrymen. Mist Ferryman appear only within the confines of the Mists, wherever they may travel. The relationship between the Mists and the Ferryman is not entirely clear, although the Ferryman are definitely dependent on the Mists for their own survival.

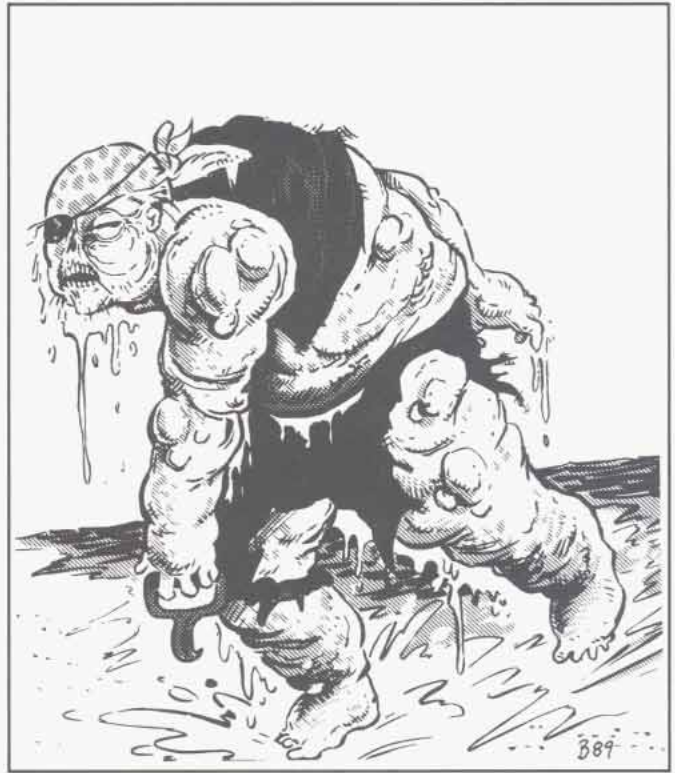
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any/shallow waters
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Scavenger
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	M
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	2-24
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	6, Sw 12
HIT DICE:	5
THACO:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Stench, disease, spell use
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Spell immunity
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6 feet tall)
MORALE:	Fearless (19-20)
XP VALUE:	420

Sea zombies, also known as drowned ones, are the animated corpses of humans who died at sea. Although similar to land-dwelling zombies, they are free-willed and are rumored to be animated by the very forces that hold Ravenloft together.

Sea zombies look like human corpses that have been underwater for some time. Their bloated and discolored flesh drips with foul water. Their eye-sockets are empty and their tongue frequently protrudes from between blackened lips. Often, they bear the marks of having been feasted upon by the creatures of the deep. Their visage and their stench of decay are so disgusting that anyone seeing a drowned one from 20 feet or less must successfully save vs. poison. A failed save indicates that the character is nauseated and horrified, suffering a -1 penalty to his attack rolls and a +1 penalty to his AC for 2d4 rounds. On land, sea zombies move slowly, with a clumsy, shambling gait. In water, however, they can swim with frightening speed.

Combat: Like most undead, sea zombies have an abiding hatred for the living and attack them at any opportunity. These attacks often show surprising cunning. For example, they may lure ships onto the rocks and attack the sailors as the victims try to save themselves from the wreck. Sea zombies take advantage of their swimming speed by attacking ships as they lie at anchor. They climb aboard the vessel and try to drive the sailors overboard where they can attack them more easily.

Sea zombies often attack with the weapons typical of sailors, such as short swords, daggers, hooks, and clubs. The creatures possess unnatural strength, so these weapons all inflict 1d10 points of damage. The putrid water that drips from the sea zombies contains many diseases, so any successful hit has a 10% chance of causing a severe blood disease in the victim. The water-logged condition of the beast's flesh means that fire-based attacks cause only half damage. Lightning, electrical, and cold-based attacks inflict double damage. Sea zombies are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *illusion*, and other mind altering spells. The sea zombies are animated by the forces of Ravenloft, so priests suffer a -2 penalty when *turning* them.



Sea zombies retain the powers they had when they were alive. There is a 25% chance that each sea zombie encountered is a spellcaster of level 1-6. They receive their spells directly from the Dark Powers of the demiplane.

Habitat/Society: Sea zombies congregate in loose packs. Their only motivation for living is hatred for those who are alive. Because they are undead, they have no need to eat, but they sometimes rend and chew the flesh of their prey, although this is probably just to strike terror in others. Underwater, sea zombies are active 24 hours a day and are often found in the sunken wrecks of the ships in which they drowned. They are only active above water during the night. Sea zombies normally stray no farther than 100 yards from the water. If the wind drives a fog inland along the coast, however, the fog allows them to roam inland as far as the substance reaches. When the fog retreats, or when the sun is about to rise, the sea zombies must return to the water. Dwellers on foggy coastlines usually fear the fog for just this reason. In some areas, living sacrifices are often cast into the fogs when they roll inland, in the hopes that sea zombies take the offerings and leave everyone else alone.

Sea zombies communicate among themselves by a form of telepathy. They have no need of a spoken language, other than for spellcasting. The verbal components for spells are spoken in unintelligible whispers.

Sea zombies are most common in the domain of Saragoss, because it supplies the most constant stream of bodies. The area near the Sea of Sorrows and the water near the island of Souragne also spawn a considerable number of these creatures.

Ecology: Sea zombies consume and produce nothing. They interact among themselves only to make their killing more effective.

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*"I found her voice thrilling.
So seductive her words, I
gladly bared my neck.*

*I gasped as she touched my
flesh. Then an instant of
pleasure so piercing, it was
like pain. My heartbeat raced
with hers. I was one with the
creature."*

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