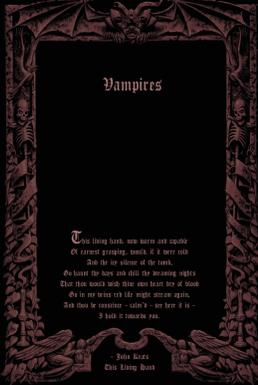


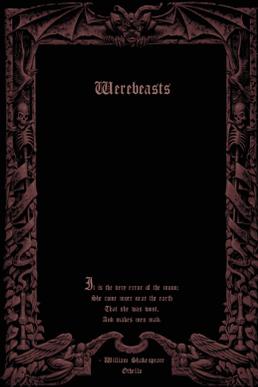
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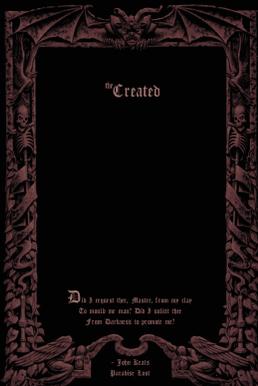
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Vampires

This living hand, now warm and capable
Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
And the icy silence of the tomb,
So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
That thou would wish thine own heart dry of blood
Go in my veins red life might stream again,
And thou be conscience - calm'd - see here it is -
I hold it towards you.



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*But first on Earth as vampyr sent
Thy corpse shall from its tomb be rent.
Then ghastly haunt thy native place
And suck the blood of all thy race.*

- Lord Byron

Introduction

My name is Dr. Rudolph Van Richten. By my background I am a scholar and a doctor. As I was growing up in Darkon, I believed it was my destiny to heal people, to treat sicknesses of the body with the herbal cures I learned from my grandmother.

Yet Fate flaunted my beliefs. I suffered a personal loss of such gravity, and was forced into an act of such trauma, that my entire direction in life was forever changed. Even though it still pains me to remember, it is important for the sake of what will follow to recount those unhappy events here.

My life in Darkon was placid, enjoyable. I was married to my childhood sweetheart, a goldentressed girl named Ingrid, and I thought my joy was complete when I learned that my young wife would soon bear a child. I still remember the birth of my son, whom I named Erasmus, meaning "beloved" in a little-known tongue, as one of the happiest days of my life. He possessed the radiant fair looks of his mother, and from me he inherited a quickness of mind and a sense of honor that set him apart from other children.

For fourteen summers Erasmus was my pride and joy. And then, tragically, he was taken from me - not by the arms of death, but by purely unnatural agents. While I was treating a woman in a nearby village, my son was set upon by vistani, the gypsies who wander the lands and travel the strange Mists, and swept away. When I returned home and found him gone, my panic-stricken wife bewailed the circumstances of the dangerous people who had stolen our child.

I swore an oath to myself that I would never rest until Erasmus was freed from whatever unholy fate possessed him. Leaving my affairs in the capable hands of my understanding Ingrid and committing my future to the search, I set off in pursuit.

The details of my journey are immaterial here. The trail was cold and difficult to find. Suffice it to say that I finally tracked the vistani caravan to Richemulot. Erasmus was not with them, but I extracted his whereabouts from the gypsy leader. They sold my son, I learned, sold him into servitude, to a local landowner who styled himself "Baron Metus". I hurried to the home of the Baron and demanded that he return my son immediately.

I can still, to this day, recall my first glimpse of Metus. He was a tall man, slender and graceful in his movements. His pale face was fine of feature, and his eyes were as black as pools of ink. As he heard my demand, his thin, expressive lips curled in a smile that could only be described as exceedingly cruel. He laughed coldly and turned his back on me. I was escorted from his property by his minions.

I camped that night just outside the walls surrounding Metus' land, and darkness and despair enfolded me. But then, around midnight, Erasmus came to me! He had evaded the Baron's soldiers and climbed the wall. He had something horrible to tell me.

I think that I knew the truth even before he spoke the words, as soon as I saw the ivory pallor of his face under the moonlight, as soon as I glimpsed the dark pits that were his eyes. The words he uttered only confirmed what I already knew.

My son was dead.

Yet still he walked! Life in death, death in life - such was his destiny. The Baron was a vampire, and he had passed on that dark gift to my only son! I wept there in the night, cried the inconsolable tears of a terrified child.

But the worst was yet to come. My son had something to ask of me. The dark gift had only recently been given and his thoughts still ran in the patterns of a mortal mind. He felt more kinship with me, with the living, than he did with the Baron

and others of his kind. But, he told me, he could feel those old patterns of thought slipping away. Soon, he believed, the horror he felt for his condition would fade, and he would forget what it was like to be a mortal. He would become a monster like the Baron!

And so Erasmus begged me to save him from this fate. He begged me to destroy him, right then, that very night. He had even brought with him a sharpened wooden stake and a mallet with which to pound it through his chest!

I doubt that anyone can ever truly understand the torment I suffered. My son was dead, in my mind I knew that to be true. But here he was still, standing before me, talking to me. How could I find the capacity in my heart to kill him? And how could I not? How could I damn him to an eternity of torment?

For several hours, as the moon sank toward the distant horizon, we talked. We relived together the joyous times we had shared, the poignant memories. We cried together. And then, as the harbinger of dawn tinted pink the sky, Erasmus Van Richten lay himself down upon the bosom of the meadow and wordlessly handed me the stake and the mallet. Our gazes met for one last time, then he closed his eyes and composed himself as if for sleep.

I positioned the point of the stake over my son's heart... and brought down the mallet. With each blow, the agony in my heart could have been no greater if the stake had been sinking into my own breast. When it was done, I lay beside the body of my son and wept again. I wept until the first rays of the sun touched his young body and reduced it to ash.

It took all the effort of my will to not lie down beside the dust that had been my precious son and slip into the darkness of death. Only the thought of Ingrid, waiting anxiously at home, prevented me from taking my own life. I turned my back on the horror and bent my steps to the weeks-long journey home.

But I found that horror followed me - in fact, preceded me. When I reached my home I found my beloved Ingrid dead! There was a note from Metus, stating that matters were now in balance. I had taken something from him that he valued - I can only presume he meant Erasmus - and so he had taken from me something that I valued.

It was at that moment, as I knelt weeping beside the cold, white body of my beloved Ingrid, that my destiny was turned. I had always prided myself on my ability to rid the body of disease or poison. Now I knew that this was as nothing compared to the importance of ridding society of a most evil "disease and poison". On that terrible day, I swore myself to a new career: the pursuit and destruction of those creatures such as the one that had taken my son and wife from me, that feed on the body of society as a cancer feeds on the body of man. And I swore that my first quarry would be Baron Metus!

It has been almost three decades since that fateful day. Over the intervening years, I have learned much about my quarry, about the enemies that threaten us all.

Today, I feel my advancing age and I can sense the chill wind of mortality blowing through my soul. It is time to pass on what I have learned, so future generations may pick up the stake and mallet when I am forced to lay them down. Thus, I am setting pen to paper in the hope that this tome will preserve what I have learned at such great cost.

Remember: The fight against creatures of darkness is a difficult, and often painful one! But it is a *good* fight, and one that *must* be fought. If this work inspires but one person to follow in my footsteps, then I have succeeded and my life's work has not been for naught.

The Background of Vampirism

In almost every culture, on almost every world, tales of vampirism exist to strike fear in both small children and grown adults. These tales are generally considered folklore by sensible people, and indeed it seems that the existence of the living dead is both implausible and impossible. Why then, do cultures so separated by distance and time that they have not even the smallest commonality, share nearly identical tales of supernatural creatures that drink the blood of the living?

I have recorded tales of a place called Krynn, and a race of sea elves who claim that if one of their race is buried on land, it will rise from the dead to seek vengeance on its brothers by drinking their blood. A native of another world, called Toril, tells a tale of a great undead beast that used to be a man. This beast roams the plains and searches for lone people to attack; the tale relates that it eats the internal organs of its prey. From still another place, called Oerth, a man has told me of a family curse that causes the first-born male in every twelfth generation to rise after death to drink the blood of the family unless the body is burned at burial.

These three worlds, so far from the lands of mist that I know them only by story and rumor, share many tales speaking of once living men walking the land and slaying the living. Can this be coincidence? Rather, it would indicate that these tales can only be the truth, speaking as they do of undead lords who tread upon the domain of the living.



The Question of Origins

How did vampirism get its start? If new vampires are spawned by other vampires, as virtually all tales would have us believe, how then was the first vampire created? These questions have plagued sages as long as the undead monsters themselves have plagued mankind. Perhaps the answer lies in Barovia.

The gift - or curse - of immortality was not thrust upon Strahd Von Zarovich, Lord of Barovia, by another vampire; rather, he stole it from the lips of death. I quote the following text from the diary of the Bard Gregorri Kolyan, who supposedly was captured by Strahd only to be released sometime later with the complete story of the creature. I do not know why Strahd allowed Gregorri to leave with this vital information. Perhaps the vampire felt a need to have his story told after years of exile and secrecy.

September 8, 453: Barovia is a stranger place now, although I cannot exactly put my finger on any changes. There is a physical nature to this change: colors are not as vibrant, sounds not as immediate; but the major change is in the people, in the life-blood of the land.

As near as I can tell, the change began about two years ago. I can remember a day when I used to play my songs in the local taverns and people would dance and sing. Now they seem satisfied just to sit and drink and to talk in hushed whispers. There is a dampness over their souls, like a dreary autumn day.

November 2, 453: I am on to something. It seems that my feelings about the people of Barovia have not simply been my imagination. There is a source, a spiritual suppression if you will, behind the changes. I have no means of verifying this, no magical detection devices that will lead me to it; I have only my heart and my love for the land and its people.

March 29, 454: For nearly five months I have searched for the answer to the puzzle. Barovia is in danger and no one else seems aware of it; I would swear to it. But it is not a danger to which people respond, not a physical enemy at the gates of a city or the border of a land. The enemy is within, within the hearts and minds of the Barovian people. Just last week I purchased some supplies from the market. The merchant packaged the items, handed them to me, and then turned away before I could pay him. It was as if he cared not about being paid. Very odd, almost self-destructive behavior pervades Barovia.

I have many suspicions. Many would call them paranoid, would say that my mind has become unbalanced. On certain days, when the sun warms the land and the birds sing in the trees, I myself doubt my certitude. But then I find my eyes drawn up, up to the castle on the hill, Castle Ravenloft. What mysteries do its walls hold within them - walls that are tall and unyielding like the secrets of an old man's heart? Strahd Von Zarovich has ruled Barovia for over a century and has not been seen in half that amount of time. Each day, the knowledge comes upon me with more certainty: I must learn more about this dark enigma of a man. And I fear I must do the unthinkable: go to the castle itself and investigate its enigma first-hand.

April 8, 454: Fear - cold and dripping, like blood from a hanging corpse - has been my constant companion for several weeks. The closer I get to that accursed Castle Ravenloft, the stronger I feel the grip of terror's icy hand. There can be no doubt now as to the source of Barovia's plight.

April 10, 454: I need search no longer. The object of my quest has not only appeared to me, but sequestered me away within his foul domicile! Late last night, he appeared in my room like some silent apparition from the grave. Ordering me to take up my quills, inks, and parchment, he seized me and leaped out my window to his waiting coach. This confirmed my suspicions that Strahd Von Zarovich is other than a natural man, you see, for my window is four stories from the ground!

April 15, 454: For five days and nights I have literally been Strahd's prisoner in Castle Ravenloft. Strange how the castle seems so warm and cozy inside - not the lurking horror its external visage portrays. I have discovered many things about Strahd and may scribe them later in a tome dedicated to such an endeavor. I feel, however, that this task will never be accomplished, for how can this man allow me to live when I know such dark secrets about him. He has shared himself, all his intimate secrets, with me as if I were his dearest friend.

Not a man, Strahd walks the land as a vampire - a once-living creature that now feeds on the blood of the living! Although there are endless details about his actions, mannerisms, and appearance that I wish to portray, in this journal I will pen only one aspect of him: his transformation from living to undead. And I will do so immediately, lest I forget the smallest detail.

It is a great testament to the sleepy, lethargic nature of Barovia that no one has questioned the rule of Strahd Von Zarovich. He rarely, if ever, shows himself publicly. Hence, it has been puzzling that he has ruled Barovia unchallenged for more than a century. I now know the answer to this riddle, but I am no more comforted.

In life, Strahd was tossed upon a sea of emotion and jealousy. His greatest jealousy was toward his brother, Sergei, who was young and handsome. To add to this, Sergei had the love of a beautiful girl named Tatyana. Envy swept over Strahd like a breaking sea, for he, too, loved Tatyana. As time passed, these natural emotions twisted into grotesque forms. His love became an overwhelming need to possess the object of that love, and envy grew into spite, and eventually into hatred.

At first, Strahd merely intended to frustrate Sergei's plans to marry Tatyana. But then Strahd's mind, apparently already twisted, broke, and he decided that only the death of his younger brother would give him what he wanted: sole possession of Tatyana. He planned this assassination, this fratricide, in private and - so he thought - in silence. But in his overwrought state, Strahd was given to speaking aloud as he strode his chambers alone. An officer of the guard, who was a personal friend to Sergei, walked the battlements just beyond Strahd's window and overheard the elder Von Zarovich's plans. Stricken with horror, he knew he had to warn Sergei at once. He turned to leave his post at the battlements, but as he did, the scabbard of his sword struck the stonework.

Strahd heard the faint sound! Immediately, he snatched up his own weapon and hurled himself out the window, onto the battlement. With a curse, he aimed a whistling cut at the guard's head. That officer was a veteran swordsman, however, and parried the cut. Although he had no desire to harm Strahd, his master, the officer was now forced to defend himself.

By Strahd's account, the battle was fierce and will make for a great song, should I live to compose it. Both men were

excellent swordsmen - Strahd from his years as a general and the officer from his constant training. Yet Strahd's madness gave him the edge, and he finally struck down the officer... but not before he himself had taken a wound that would have slain a lesser man instantly.

Strahd Von Zarovich was as good as dead. In his mind he knew that, but his hatred and rage would not allow his failing body peace. As the lifeblood poured from his body, Strahd made a pact with Death. He reached over, grabbed the dead guardsman, and drank the blood from the corpse.

Strahd would now live free from Death forever, cheating that dark and shadowy figure! But the pact required another act to be complete. He would have to kill his brother Sergei on his wedding day to finally seal the wicked contract.

Strahd hid the guard's body and continued with his day-to-day affairs, awaiting Sergei's wedding day. As the time passed, Strahd found his charade more and more difficult to maintain. The daylight hours were becoming increasingly uncomfortable and the naked rays of the sun physically painful to his skin. He also found it difficult to eat food, which hardly satisfied his hunger. The transformation to whatever creature Death had in mind for him was beginning.

On the day of the wedding Strahd sought out Sergei and instigated a fight, intending in this way to give himself some justification for killing the young man. Strahd expected his young and fit brother to be a challenge to defeat, but quickly found that his physical strength had increased far beyond its previous limit. With but a single, cruel, blow Strahd felled his brother and his pact with Death was complete. Strahd Von Zarovich had become a vampire!

No doubt perceptive readers will have noticed the same gaps in this narrative that I spotted when it first came to my attention. For instance, how exactly did Strahd Von Zarovich strike a "pact with Death?" As "Death" is merely a cessation of life, what possible manifestation of this natural condition could propose or accept such a pact?

It is questions such as these that force me to doubt the complete veracity of Gregorri's tale. Perhaps this famous bard could not resist the urge to embellish upon the tale told to him by Von Zarovich (although the diary entry shows little of the internal consistency and stylistic brilliance characteristic of tales known to have been written by Gregorri Kolyan). More likely is the possibility that Von Zarovich lied to the bard for his own reasons. This might explain Kolyan's eventual escape or release; the vampire wished to use him to spread misinformation. Or, in the perhaps most likely interpretation, Von Zarovich lied, but not only to Kolyan. Aging humans often color or alter their memories of events that were less than flattering to them. In humans this tendency appears in just a few years. How great may the tendency to embellish be in a creature that has lived for centuries and can expect to live forever? This interpretation raises a major question: how much trust can we put in anything spoken by Strahd Von Zarovich ... or by any of his unholy kind?

The "Necrology" of Vampires

It should come as no surprise that a vampire's metabolism is not like that of a mortal; in fact, strictly speaking, a vampire has no metabolism whatsoever. Although all of the biological systems present in a living mortal are also present in a vampire, most of these systems are changed in function. For example, most vampires do not need to breathe, and can function equally well in an airless crypt or in the vacuum of a void. Provided that immersion in water is not deadly to them, they can function unimpaired on the ocean floor. Vampires do retain the use of their lungs, but only for speech.

Because vampires have no metabolism in the normal sense, metabolic toxins and poisons - ingested, inhaled, or insinuated - have absolutely no effect on the creatures. This is not to say there are not certain substances which, when insinuated into the body of a vampire, cause it serious or even lethal damage. These substances, although they may seem to function like poisons, are more like allergens and are usually specific to individual creatures. For example, I myself have dispatched a vampire that was sensitive to holly, and I have heard that the ash of burned alder wood is lethal to another certain vampire.

Some examples of vampiric allergens are yew leaves, rose petals, salt, rice, silver, mistletoe, and lilies.

The digestive tract of a vampire is greatly modified from that of a living mortal. The stomach is frequently reduced in size, often to the size of a man's clenched fist, simply because no vampire needs to ingest large volumes of solid food.

There is wide variation among vampires with regard to the ability to eat solid food. Some vampires are unable to eat normal food at all, and any attempt to do so results in immediate regurgitation. Others can eat solid food with no ill effects, although

they extract no nourishment from the food, and pass the material through their bodies over a course of hours, as mortals do. In the middle ground, there are some vampires that can eat solid food, but must regurgitate it within a period ranging from minutes to hours. This issue may seem incidental, but it obviously has significant effects on a vampire's behavior, should the creature try to masquerade as a living creature.

The circulatory system of a vampire is little changed. The heart still pumps blood throughout the vessels of the monster's body. There are some differences, however. Because vampires have no need to extract oxygen from the air, their blood absorbs nothing from the lungs. This renders them completely immune to noxious gases that must be breathed to be effective. A vampire might inhale the gas - that is, draw it into its lungs - but the toxic chemicals in the gas would not cross from the lungs to the blood.

The blood of a vampire is also somewhat different from the blood of a mortal. When viewed normally, it has the same rich, red color as a mortal's blood. When it is viewed by transmitted light, such as when a vial of vampire blood is held up to a light source, it has a distinctive golden color. Blood drawn from an undestroyed vampire can manifest a wide variety of powers. In some cases, the blood is highly caustic, causing severe acid-like damage to anyone who touches it. In other cases, the blood bursts explosively into flame when exposed to sunlight. In still other cases, anyone who touches so much as one drop of the blood with bare skin instantly falls under the mental sway of the vampire. It is impossible to predict beforehand what effects the blood of a particular vampire might have, if any. There is one common factor: at the instant a vampire is destroyed, any samples of his blood immediately become completely inert, and frequently become corrupted and rancid within seconds.

The sensory organs of vampires become much more sensitive than those of their living analogues. If they did not already possess the power in life, vampires gain the ability to see in total darkness (i.e., infravision), typically with a range of some 90 feet. Their hearing also becomes much more acute, as does their sense of touch and smell; a vampire is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to surprise.

Because a vampire does not require oxygen and, as is usually the case, must feed only once per day, where does it draw the energy required, for the prodigious feats of which the creature is capable? Many sages disagree, but my own belief is that the creature has an innate link with the Negative Material Plane.

Whatever the reason, vampires are much more resilient and robust than living creatures. They seem generally immune to exhaustion and to the debilitating effects of pain and exposure, and seem able to shrug off the negative consequences of many magical effects. They are totally immune to the effects of *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells, and to other magical or psionic effects which mimic these spells. They are also totally immune to any magical effect which specifically causes paralysis. It is important to stress the word "specifically". While a vampire would be immune to the paralyzing touch of a ghoul or the dweomer of a *wand of paralyzation*, it could be affected by a potent enchantment, such as *alter reality* or *wish*, that emulated the effect. (Any mage capable of casting such powerful magic would almost certainly choose an effect more significant than paralyzation, of course.) Like many other types of undead creatures, vampires sustain little damage from any effect based on cold or electricity, whether caused by spell, item, breath weapon, or even the elements.

Vampires are totally resistant to several beneficial spells as well. The creatures are completely immune to the effects of priestly curative or healing magic, such as *cure light wounds*, *heal*, etc. Because the failure of such spells might well give away the monster's true nature, a vampire masquerading as a mortal will often go to great lengths to avoid exposure to such magic.

A vampire's hair will never turn gray, nor will the creature show any other physical signs of aging unless it already had before death. In general, as long as the creature is well fed and functions according to whatever other restrictions are relevant to its existence, it will never appear any different from the way it did on the day of its mortal death. This does not mean that vampires will flaunt their unchanging appearance, because doing so will certainly attract too much unwanted attention. A vampire that chooses to live within or on the outskirts of the society of men will, in most cases, go to great lengths to masquerade as a normal human or demihuman, pretending to age and even to "die" to remove suspicion. This deception is discussed at length in Chapter Twelve, "The Facade".

Vampires of Different Racial Stock

Most of this guide's discussions about "typical" vampires generally refer to vampires that were (demi)humans when alive.

There are some differences between these once-human vampires and those that arise from different racial stock.

Again, as with discussions of human vampires, these paragraphs refer to typical cases. A dwarven vampire (for instance) may exhibit specifically dwarven characteristics, may more closely resemble the human vampires, or may show attributes totally different from both. Perceptive readers will observe that a certain symbolism plays an integral role with most of these vampires. Their weaknesses and strengths are generally highly symbolic of the creatures natures while alive. For example, some dwarven vampires may be highly reactive to weapons made of mithril, especially if they coveted the metal in life. This kind of symbolic significance is a common feature with vampires of all races and natures.

Compilers' Hote: We have determined that, since Dr. uan Richten penned the passage above, that each demihuman race does indeed exhibit "uncommon" abilities for vampires. Further, many of these abilities seem consistent within a racial stock; in other words, many dwaruen uampires, for example, possess similar powers.

- LWF

Vampire Blood

Caustic vampire blood causes 1d6 hit points of damage if it contacts bare skin.

Explosive vampire blood (in a vial) when exposed to sunlight inflicts 1d3 hit points of damage on anyone within 3 feet. Vampire blood possessing a charm person effect has a saving throw penalty ranging from -1 to -5, depending on the age category of the vampire, beginning with Old.

Surprising a Vampire

In most situations, the chance of surprising a vampire is one half the chance for a normal creature of the race and character class of the vampire while it was alive.

A fiend we knew him to be, but we believed him to be a fiend of mortal aspect. Imagine our horror when the first blow, wielded by our stout dwarven companion with his razor-sharp axe, merely glanced off our foe's scalp with little effect, as though the weapon had struck a mountain boulder...

- From the journal of Aldyn Silvershield

Vampiric Powers

Caveat: It is important to recall that the following discussions refer to what might be called the "typical" vampire. Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a "typical" vampire. Vampires are perhaps the most individualistic of undead. What is true for one is an outright - and dangerously misleading - falsehood for another. The differences between individual vampires typically become more pronounced as the creatures advance in age and power: while most fledgling vampires typically show at least some similarities with each other, the differences between the aged Patriarchs are often so great as to make one suspect that they are completely different types of creatures. The following discussions deal with the most common powers and weaknesses of vampires. Many vampire hunters have died - or worse - through over-generalizing such discussions, however. An assumption that any individual vampire has any particular power or weakness is a dangerous assumption, indeed!

Great is the power of the vampire. These undisputed masters of the undead have an abundance of powers from which to choose, giving them an advantage in nearly every combat and noncombat situation. These monsters enjoy significant benefits in nearly every aspect of their being. Their senses, strength, reasoning, and intelligence are all far beyond human norms. In fact, if not for their special vulnerabilities (which I will discuss later), vampires would be nearly unstoppable.

Although all vampires are extremely powerful, there is a moderating effect on the abilities of vampires, and this is *time*. A newly-created vampire (in the vast majority of cases) is relatively weak when compared to those that have been in existence for decades or centuries. On the other end of the scale, a vampire who has existed for a millenium or more is unimaginably more powerful than a newly-created fledgling.

No one knows exactly why this is so. Some scholars believe this progression to be "an innate characteristic of vampiric nature", which of course is no answer at all. My personal belief is that all vampires are created with the potential to use all the powers available to a 1.000-year-old individual, but that actually *using* those powers is something that must be learned. Presumably, the more "advanced" powers require more subtlety to control, or are more taxing on the vampire, or perhaps both. To use these greater powers the vampire must practice the precision required and must build the willpower and mental fortitude needed to wield them.

Personally, I hope that my belief is wrong because of the following logical consequence: if all vampires, no matter how "young", have the potential to use the greater powers, might it not be possible for an exceptional individual to come into being with a natural aptitude for some of the greater powers? The image of a one day-old vampire able to use any of the powers of a millennium-old Patriarch is horrifying to think about. It discomforts me to learn that tales of such "precocious" creatures exist, and apparently they do, although they are, thankfully, extremely rare. It is best to keep this in mind and to



realize that the age progression discussed later (page 13) is merely a rule of thumb and not a law of nature. The well-prepared vampire hunter should expect exceptions.

Such exceptions aside, the age-related progression of powers is perhaps the vampire hunter's greatest ally. A Fledgling vampire is less adept at covering its tracks, less experienced at playing on the weaknesses of those who would pursue it.

Age Categories

Vampires are divided into age categories. Essentially, as a vampire grows older, its power also grows. The creature gains new abilities that it did not previously have and becomes increasingly less susceptible to past weaknesses. In short, the older the vampire is, the more formidable a foe it becomes.

Happily, I know of only two Patriarch Vampires in existence. Patriarchs are extremely rare, for seldom do vampires survive this long. As will be discussed later, the strain of immortality is frequently too great for them. I see the hand of Providence in this, because to encounter a Patriarch is almost certain to become totally subject to its will.

Each vampire age category has a title associated with it. The titles and related ages are:

Fledgling: 0-99 years
Mature: 100-199 years
Old: 200-299 years
Very Old: 300-399 years
Ancient: 400-499 years
Eminent: 500-999 years
Patriarch: 1000+ years

These titles are more of academic interest than of practical value; one would not normally refer to a vampire by its title. If someone were addressing Strahd, for instance, who falls in the 400-499 category, they would still call him "Lord Strahd", rather than "Ancient Strahd".

It seems that vampires make use of similar terms when talking to each other. In such cases, however, they are much more concerned about relative age, and their uses of titles are almost exclusively symbolic and valued only for their psychological effect. For instance, a vampire addressing a vampire that is its senior in age might address it as "Old One", "Ancient One", or even "Eminence", regardless of the senior vampire's actual age category. In this case, the formal address would reflect respect (or, more accurately, fear) for the senior vampire. In the converse situation, an older vampire might address a younger creature as "Fledgling" regardless of the younger creature's actual age, to signify contempt for the junior vampire's weakness.

In most cases, of course, vampires meeting for the first time will not know each other's age. The use of titles in such a situation would depend on the intentions of the creatures involved. They might refrain from using titles to avoid giving offense, or might use them extensively in a game of "one-upmanship".

Although age categories apply to all vampires in or out of Ravenloft (keeping in mind the exceptions discussed above), it is extremely unlikely that the most powerful of the vampires will be seen outside the demiplane of dread. Quite simply, as a vampire grows older and more evil, the chances of being drawn into Ravenloft increase.

Table 1: Powers by Age

Age Category	Fled.	Mature	Old	Very Old	Ancient	Eminent	Patr.
Hit Dice	8+3	9+3	10+2	11+1	12	13	14
Str*	18/76	18/91	18/00	18/00	19	20	21
Int*	16	16	17	17	18	19	20
Dex*	16	17	17	18	18	19	20
Cha*	14	15	16	17	18	18	19
Movement**	12	15	15	18	18	21	24

Save vs.	-2	-2	-3	-3	-4	-4	-5
Charm					(voice)	(voice)	(will)
Weapon	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4
Needed to Hit							
Regenerated Hit Points/ Round	3	3	3	4	4	4	5

Vampires, regardless of age, have a Con of at least 18

* These values are minimal - if the vampire had greater ability scores prior to becoming a vampire, the higher score is retained

** Vampires fly (in bat form) at a rate of 18 (C)

Spell- And Nospell-like Powers

Jarmin had asked me to take a walk with him, for he said he had something very important he wished to discuss with me. I have to admit I suspected what his topic would be. After all, we had been spending considerable amounts of time together, and it was only logical that marriage would be on his mind.

We were within the cathedral when the earthquake struck. The ancient stone structure shuddered, and there was a terrible crashing noise from above. With hideous strength, Jarmin flung me aside, just in time to prevent me from being struck by the massive stone blocks that had fallen from the roof of the apse. Jarmin was not so lucky. The first boulder struck him solidly on the back and smashed him to the ground.

I buried my face in my hands, weeping inconsolably over the loss of my one and only love. And then I screamed in shock as a familiar hand rested on my shoulder, and a familiar voice whispered in my ear! "There will never again be need for tears", Jarmin told me as his lips brushed my neck. "Nothing, not even time, will keep us apart".

- From the journal of Maria Castries

All vampires enjoy certain abilities which, were they possessed by a mortal, would certainly be ascribed to the realm of magic. To a vampire, however, such faculties are quite innate. Some of the powers, indeed, appear to be the result of casting spells, yet others render the creature "superhuman", so to speak. At this point I shall divide these capacities into "nospell-like" and "spell-like" powers and expound upon each, but I hasten to add that to the vampire, they are one and the same, and altogether inherent.

Nospell-like Powers

All vampires are extremely powerful in the physical sense. The reasons for this are unclear. Perhaps the transformation from life to undeath somehow tempers the body physically, making muscles stronger and flesh, bones, and sinew more resistant to damage.

From the moment of their creation, vampires are hideously strong. Unlike mortals, who weaken as they grow older and their muscles atrophy, vampires actually gain strength as the years pass. Patriarch vampires, for example, develop a strength rivalling that of some lesser gods. Vampires gain great benefits from their monstrous strength, including both the ability break through an opponent's guard and to deliver massive damage when a blow strikes home. Although these creatures are very intelligent and will seldom enter physical combat, they certainly have the tools to dominate such bouts.

Vampires also possess great speed. Fledgling vampires are as fast a normal human. As vampires grow older, they become faster and faster until they reach Patriarch age, when they can move as quickly as an unencumbered light riding horse! These dark creatures will typically use this power to their advantage when facing a priest or someone presenting blessed accoutrements. If the vampire can close and attack before the mortal can attempt the turning or presentment, it can negate the danger to itself.

In addition to an advantage in their speed of movement, vampires enjoy an increase in their dexterity and speed of reaction as well. The process of becoming a vampire seems to imbue them with significantly increased coordination, and this benefit only grows as the years pass. Older vampires can react to events with a speed that is, quite literally, inhuman.

As a vampire grows older its intelligence, too, is enhanced. These creatures are extremely cunning, their actions calculated. Vampires have a keen power of reason and they will frequently achieve their goals through cunning alone, never having to rely on crude force. Do not draw the wrong conclusion from this: these creatures do not fear, loathe, or otherwise shun the direct use of force. They simply view force as one possible tool with which to achieve their aims, and will usually select the tool best suited to the situation. After all, why should a creature put its own "life" at risk when, through guile, it can get everything it wants at no potential risk?

When hunting a vampire, be especially careful to remember the creature's intelligence. Vampires may, for example, have their lairs ingeniously hidden and laden with many traps and snares to protect it. They can also blend into mortal society, dominating and manipulating the people around them, even going so far as to win unsuspecting allies and even friends. Cunning vampires may have the support, if not the love, of those around them. In short, do not assume that a vampire is a "two-dimensional" monster, interested only in drinking blood and draining life-energy. The creature's intelligence is often a more effective weapon than its other innate powers.

If these advantages were not enough, with time most vampires develop an incredible force of personality with which they delude and sway the gullible. This seems to spring from the immense self-confidence that vampires develop over centuries of existence, and from the fact that they have had sometimes more than a millenium to learn the nuances of human behavior. Even taking the monster's seemingly magical hypnotic gaze into account, conversing with a vampire is incredibly risky because the creature is persuasive enough to convince virtually anyone of anything. This same powerful magnetism makes most vampires incredibly charming characters - "charm" is used here in its nonmagical sense. Vampires are almost always exceedingly adept at gaining the favor of the opposite sex.

The above does not apply to all vampires, of course. While most vampires learn more about how the human mind works, and thus how to pervert its thought processes, there are some who become less attuned to human interests and desires with the passage of time. For these creatures, passing time leaves them more alien and less capable of understanding the motivations of mortals - and vice versa.

Spell-like Powers

If one were to consider only the innate abilities discussed above, vampires would appear to be a lethal enough foes. Unfortunately for those of us who hunt the creatures, they have at their command a formidable array of spell-like abilities as well. These powers seem to be common to most, if not all vampires, and are independent of the spellcasting tradition that a vampire may have followed in life.

Some vampires that were spellcasters while alive do indeed retain their arcane abilities. This occurrence is generally limited to those who were wizards in life. Only very rarely do priests retain their powers, and then only if they served the most vile and evil gods during their lives. This particular section, however, deals exclusively with the innate spell-like powers of vampires. Spellcasting vampires will be dealt with later.

Perhaps the most fearsome and wholly destructive power of the vampire is its ability to drain life energy by touch. These monsters can, by making physical contact with their opponents, drain away the very living essence - experience levels of those opponents. Contrary to several tales, a vampire need not make actual flesh-to-flesh contact with its opponent to drain life energy. Even if the creature lands a solid blow on clothing or armor, it is capable of draining life force through such obstacles. Some theorists explain this fact through concepts of symbolism and symmetry, if a vampire strikes a blow hard enough to inflict *physical damage*, then it is also sufficient to drain away the life of its victim. As with many facets of magic, this theory holds that the symbolic force of the attack is more important than the superficial boundaries of armor or clothing. These same theorists are silent when it comes to explaining an additional fact, however: a vampire can drain life force only when it strikes unarmed. If the vampire uses a weapon, it is incapable of draining energy. For this discussion, metal gauntlets, and "brass knuckles" are considered weapons. Perhaps the open-handed attack symbolizes an action of seizing as much as one of inflicting.

All vampires have the power to charm a mortal at will. This is equal in effect to the wizard spell *charm person*, except that

there is no casting time involved and the victim must be looking directly into the vampire's eyes. The range of this power, technically, is sight. For all practical purposes, however, a vampire would not be able to affect a victim at any range greater than ten feet. This power, as well as having practical combat applications, is highly useful for overcoming a number of vampiric weaknesses. If, for example, a vampire could not enter a prospective victim's home, it could attempt to charm the person into leaving the safe haven of the building. As with a *charm person* spell, the vampire is unable to order its charmed victim to do anything obviously self-destructive, such as jumping off a cliff. The creature could convince the victim that the vampire is his or her friend, however, and that the victim should leave a place of safety to greet his or her "friend".

As these dark creatures get older, their charm-gaze gets stronger. An Ancient vampire can charm simply by the sound of its voice. By uttering soothing words, the creature enraptures its victim. Under optimum conditions, the maximum range of this vocal charm is 40 feet. This range is greatly curtailed under certain conditions such as in a strong wind or loud battle. Most fearsome of all, perhaps, is the charm gaze of Patriarchs. These great vampires are capable of charming with their powerful will alone. No barrier is capable of blocking this ability. In fact their thoughts are so strong, they can affect a victim even on the other side of a stone wall. Thankfully, several restrictions apply to this power. First of all, this ability is limited in range to some 40 feet. Second, the charm can be performed only on someone that the vampire knows is present. A Patriarch could not, for example, simply extend its charm-gaze beyond a wall, on the off-chance that somebody might be there. The creature must know the victim is there by first detecting him or her with its delicate senses.

Vampires have the innate ability to imitate another wizard spell: *spider climb*. They are able to use this power at will, with no limits on duration or frequency. This innate spell-like power operates, in most respects, like the wizard spell except that it requires no verbal, somatic, or material components. Note that a vampire is still subject to all its normal restrictions when using its spider climb power. Thus, many vampires cannot climb up a tower and enter a castle unless they are first invited. They could, however, climb up a tower and attempt to charm someone through a window. (These and other restrictions, and weaknesses of, vampires are discussed in the next chapter.)

The ability to climb otherwise unclimbable surfaces enables vampires to situate their lairs in places that mortals cannot enter. A tall tower with no stairs or doors leading up to it would be a perfect place for a vampire to hide its sanctuary. It would be able to climb up the sheer wall of the tower and enter through a window to its waiting coffin.

In Combat

Great magic is required to combat a vampire. These lords of darkness are not subject to attacks from non-magical weapons. To a vampire, mundane weapons are not even an annoyance. Only lesser magical arms are required to harm a young vampire, but as the creature progresses, ever more powerful enchantments are required.

If a weapon of insufficient enchantment is used against a vampire, it will simply be ineffective. In some cases, the weapon will simply glance off the body of the vampire, doing no more damage than would a strike from a feather. In other cases, the weapon seems to inflict a wound - albeit a very minor one - but this wound does not discommode the vampire one whit. In still other cases, the weapon seems to pass *right through* the creature, as though the vampire were simply a mirage.

The only common exception to this discussion is a nonmagical weapon that has been *blessed* by a priest of a good deity. This is not a certain thing, however. *Blessed* weapons are discussed in more depth In Chapter Five, "Vampire Weaknesses".

When weapons of insufficient enchantment are used against a vampire, it is up to the DM to choose exactly how such an attack will fail. Van Richten's description of the possibilities can be embellished upon by inventive DMs. The best choice is the one that will be most dramatic at the moment.

Even if weapons sufficiently enchanted to cause physical damage are wielded against a vampire, the creature's destruction is still far from assured. This is because the monsters have the innate ability to regenerate physical damage. Wounds close, broken bones reform themselves, even missing limbs regenerate with time. The speed at which this occurs increases with the monster's age. Still, even the most lowly vampire regenerates at an alarming rate.

The physiological (or more correctly, *necrological*) processes of vampire regeneration remain largely unknown, despite the best efforts of several sages. Symbolically, however, the reason is understandable: a vampire's undead body is somehow locked in its physical condition as it crosses the veil between life and undeath; as aging is halted, so is incurred damage. This

has a number of interesting side-effects. For instance, if a vampire cuts its hair or nails, they will grow back to the length they were when the vampire died as a mortal, and then cease to grow further. A tattoo or other mundane mark placed upon the skin of a vampire after its mortal death will quickly fade, while such a mark that was in place before its death will reappear no matter what the vampire does to eliminate it.

Certain marks inflicted upon the flesh of a vampire by magical means, called *stigmata*, will not fade except under specific conditions. Such marks and stigmata are discussed in Chapter Five, "Destroying a Vampire".

Even with the above conditions taken into account, it is still very difficult to destroy a vampire through physical combat. In the majority of cases, once a vampire has suffered sufficient physical damage to "kill" it, it transforms to a gaseous form and attempts to return to its coffin or other sanctuary. After eight hours of complete inactivity, it regains corporeal form with all of its physical wounds healed. For this reason, it is vital that vampire hunters finish the job when they force a vampire into gaseous form! If they do not track the gaseous creature to its sanctuary or prevent it from reaching its sanctuary, they will be faced with the prospect of a totally unharmed vampire rising after only eight hours. This vampire will likely be somewhat "irked" and plan some distinctive kind of vengeance against those who challenged it. (If a vampire forced into gaseous form by overwhelming physical damage is prevented from reaching the safety of its coffin or sanctuary for a period of twelve hours, the creature is destroyed.)

Shapechanging

The bright light I brought forth from my staff was highly effective in driving away the flock of bats that had bedeviled us for so long. In our naivete, we thought we were safe. In fact, our troubles were only beginning.

The thick mist appeared without warning, seeming to rise from the ground like a foul exhalation. At first we paid it little mind; at night, ground fogs are fairly common. But then we noticed how the fog was moving, swirling toward us even though there was no wind to drive it. What could we do? How can you fight a fog?

It was then that the leading tendril wrapped itself around Batlas, our scout. Poor Batlas screamed, screamed as though his soul was being torn from his mortal body. And then he collapsed lifeless into the mire.

Little did we think we would ever see Batlas again...

- From the journal of Morgren Dunderlorn

Probably the most visually obvious testament to a vampire's supernatural nature is its power of shapechanging. In order to better protect themselves or combat others, all vampires share a common ability to spontaneously alter their physical forms. The forms presented here are those available to the "typical" vampire. There are many vampires, however, who possess unique powers and can assume an even wider variety of shapes.

Gaseous Form

Vampires are capable of intentionally disassociating the physical components of their bodies, turning into a cloud of mist. The transition from physical to gaseous form takes one minute (one round), during which period the creature is unable to take any other action, either physical or magical - including, of course, parrying attacks. While the creature is in the process of changing to gaseous form, it is also fully susceptible to physical and magical attacks.

A vampire in gaseous form is totally immune to any physical attack. Even the most highly enchanted weapon passes right through the vaporous cloud with no effect. Magical attacks are still effective against some vampires in gaseous form; this varies from individual to individual. Some vampires are totally immune to all magical attacks while in gaseous form. There seems to be no way to predict beforehand whether an individual vampire will show this immunity or not. I surmise that the older a vampire is, the more likely the creature is to be totally immune to all attacks when in gaseous form. Some sages see this as evidence that such immunity is an acquired or learned trait; I, however, think it more likely that creatures possessing this immunity are more likely to survive over the long term.

Vampires regenerate their damaged parts normally while in gaseous form. The only exception is if the creature has been

physically defeated in battle, in which case it must rest in its coffin or sanctuary for eight full hours to regenerate fully. If a vampire is forced into gaseous form by physical damage and then the creature is pursued to its coffin or sanctuary, it will be found to have reverted to corporeal form within this sanctuary. In the majority of cases, the creature will be totally comatose - unaware of its surroundings and incapable of responding to stimuli - until eight hours have passed. In this condition, it is unable to revert to gaseous form again and is thus highly vulnerable to destruction.

This is not always the case, however. I, myself, have faced a vampire whose behavior was horribly different. I followed the vaporous cloud to the creature's sanctuary and gained entrance. Within I found the fiend, lying there still as death. I prepared my stake and mallet... and with a terrible roar the monster sprung up from its bier and attacked me and my colleagues with immense ferocity. At the first strike from my compatriot's enchanted sword, however, the creature crumbled to ash.

This particular vampire could rouse itself from its comatose state and fight, gaining a +3 bonus to hit, due to ferocity. However, the creature had only 1 hit point remaining. Any hit that inflicted damage would instantly and irrevocably destroy the monster. Inventive DMs can easily come up with other interesting variations on the theme.

Returning to the subject at hand, a vampire in gaseous form has considerable control over its characteristics. It can modify its density to range from that of a thick fog to that of a thin, virtually invisible mist. As its density changes, as a matter of course, so does the volume the gaseous cloud takes up. In its most dense form, which is thick, white and totally opaque, the creature takes up a total volume of six cubic feet. In its thinnest form, it takes up a volume of 36 cubic feet. It can change the actual dimensions of the cloud almost without restriction, so long as the shortest dimension is no less than one tenth of an inch. Thus, in its densest form, a vampire could range from a sphere a little over two feet in diameter to a tendril of fog one-tenth inch in diameter and over fourteen miles long! A vaporous vampire can change the density and shape of its gas cloud at will, and such changes take no more than a few seconds (1 segment).

A vampire in gaseous form demonstrates an amazing cohesion that even the strongest wind cannot dissipate. The vaporous vampire can totally control its motion, and its movement is unaffected by winds up to hurricane force! If a vampire in gaseous form is caught in winds of hurricane strength, that is, speeds of about 75 miles per hour or more, it is swept along with the wind. Although it is not dissipated, it is totally incapable of controlling its own motion. This failing is of little help to mortals, I suspect.

Vampires in gaseous form move slower than do creatures in corporeal form, but not much slower, and their speed increases with age. Vampire hunters should be aware that an "Old" vampire in gaseous form can travel faster than a man on foot. This is very important because successful vampire hunters *must* be able to follow a vaporous vampire to its coffin or sanctuary and destroy it there. In gaseous form the creature must remain close to the ground; specifically, within ten feet. It can, however, flow up a flight of stairs, although not up a ladder or the wall of a building. The cloud of vapor can pour *down* a wall or cliff face, regardless of height, without any damage to the vampire, and does so at the same rate of speed as the cloud can travel across flat ground.

The ability to assume gaseous form offers many benefits to a vampire. The most obvious is a means of escape. Many vampire hunters have seen victory slip from their grasp as their infernal foe dissipated into a mist, invulnerable to their attacks. It can escape thusly from locked rooms, prison cells, sarcophagi - in essence, from virtually anywhere a mortal would be imprisoned. As long as there is a gap with at least a dimension of one-tenth inch - the space under a door, for example - the creature can reach freedom. (Remember, too, that with its great strength a vampire can frequently make such a gap.) Conversely, this ability makes it very difficult to forbid a vampire entrance to some place in which it is interested.

For those vampires that must return daily to a coffin or other sanctuary, gaseous form allows them to protect this sanctuary from intruders. As an example, I recall a creature whose sanctuary was a sarcophagus in the catacombs beneath a deserted church. The monster had waited up all entrances to the catacombs with stonework, and had surrounded the sarcophagus itself with rock, using a *transmute mud to rock* spell. The only entrance to the catacombs was a fissure between the rocks less than half an inch wide, and to the sarcophagus a tiny bore hole no more than one-quarter inch in diameter. The creature was indecently proud of its slyness, fully expecting that no prospective hunters would ever be able to find its sanctuary. As it turned out, its slyness proved to be its downfall. I located the sanctuary and blocked the fissure between the two rocks. Then, when my warrior colleagues inflicted sufficient damage on the creature to drive it into gaseous form, it had no way of reaching its haven and was hence destroyed. (Had the creature shown the forethought to leave two entrances to its lair, the

story might have turned out differently.)

Animal Form

In addition to the ability to assume gaseous form, a vampire can physically change its form into that of a wolf or a bat. This transformation is always voluntary, unlike that to gaseous form; a vampire cannot be forced to assume animal form. (In other words, a vampire cannot assume an animal form when physically defeated in battle.) The animal form that a vampire assumes will always be slightly larger than the norm, and more menacing. Some experts claim that the animal form of a vampire is always close to the archetype for that creature, the perfect form of the species; others state that the animal form always has the spark of intelligence visible in its eyes. Personally, I believe both statements to say more about the experts than about vampires. A hunter trying to recognize a vampire in animal form should not depend on such subjective measures.

Even behavior is not a foolproof way of determining whether a particular wolf (or bat) is actually a vampire. An animal-form vampire is, of course, completely in control of its own behavior, and hence can act either in ways totally in or out of character for the natural animal. Thus, if it suits the monster's purposes, it can blend undetectably with the normal members of a pack of wolves or bevy of bats. Unless the monster commands otherwise, however, the natural members of such a group will consider the animal form vampire to be the dominant leader of the group, and will treat it as such unless the vampire commands otherwise.

The transition from human to animal form takes one minute (1 round), and during the change, the monster is unable to do anything else. Vampires are generally unable to transform directly from animal to gaseous form, or vice versa, but must change to human form as a transitional step. Thus, changing from animal to gaseous form would take the creature two minutes (2 rounds) - one minute to change from gaseous to human form, then another minute to change from human to animal form. The only exception seems to be when the vampire in animal form suffers massive physical damage. Then and only then the creature seems able, indeed forced, to transform directly from animal to gaseous form.

Considering that the transition from human to animal form takes one minute, and that the monster is unusually vulnerable during the transition, why would the fiend choose to change forms at all? The most obvious use for this ability is camouflage, allowing the creature to stalk victims unseen, or to escape detection by those with the temerity to hunt it.

There is another major benefit, too. When a wounded vampire changes form, it often seems to totally shake off all damage it has suffered up to that point. Speaking from experience, there are few things quite so terrifying as to have grievously wounded a vampire in animal form, and then have the monster transform into human shape and show no signs whatsoever of ever being wounded! It seems that when the vampire changes form, the new form it assumes is "perfect," in this case, free of wounds or other damage. Luckily for all mortals, I have noted that the monsters seem to be able to use this ability only once per day, no matter how many times they change form.

It is important to recall one thing. As I stated at the outset, these observations refer to the "typical" vampire, and there is no such thing as a typical vampire! There are tales of vampires capable of taking the form of dogs, cats, birds (particularly owls or crows) - even, in one case, an evil black steed similar in appearance to a nightmare. I have come to suspect that Patriarchs have the ability to assume at least one form in addition to the "standard" wolf and bat, and that this additional form is specific to the individual vampire.

The movement rate for a vampire in gaseous form is three less than the vampire's normal movement rate. For example, an Old vampire would travel at a rate of 13.

While changing form, a vampire suffers a +4 penalty to Armor Class and a -1 penalty to all saving throws.

Once- and *only* once- in any 24-hour period, a vampire can automatically heal all damage it has suffered to that point simply by changing form from human to animal, or vice versa. (It cannot heal itself by assuming gaseous form, however.) In other words, when the transition is complete, the vampire is restored to its full hit-point total. If a vampire in animal form has even a single hit point and reverts back into human form, it regains full points from the change. If the vampire in animal form is reduced to zero or less hit points, however, it is forced to assume gaseous form.

The statistics for a vampire's two animal forms are as follows:

Wolf form: Int per vampire; AL CE; AC 2; MV 18; HD per vampire; hp per vampire; THAC0 per vampire; #AT 1; Dmg 3-36; SZ L; ML 16.

Bat form: Int per vampire; AL CE; AC 2; MV 3. Fl 18 (C); HD per vampire; hp per vampire; THAC0 per vampire; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; SD Special: -3 penalty to opponents' attack rolls (see the *Monstrous Compendium*, Bat, Giant); SZ M; ML 16.

As with the transition to gaseous form, the vampire suffers a +4 penalty to Armor Class. and a -1 penalty to all saving throws during the change into and out of animal form.

Animal Control

Combating and destroying a solitary vampire is difficult enough. The creature's powers and abilities are enough to strike fear into the heart of even the doughtiest vampire hunter. However, the hunter is almost never lucky enough to face an unallied vampire. The monsters are very protective of their unlife, and will usually surround themselves with servitors or minions of one variety or another. Vampires have the innate ability to summon and control certain species of lesser creatures.

By nature, a vampire is able to completely control all animals whose form the vampire can assume. Thus, because a "typical" vampire can assume the form of a wolf or a bat, the monster is the natural master of all wolves and bats. As with the shapechanging capability, there are probably vampires capable of summoning and controlling many different types of creatures. This could explain recurring, albeit unsubstantiated, rumors of attacks on mortals by huge flocks of crows and other birds. Theoretically, the creatures that can be controlled by individual vampires will usually relate to the personal nature of the monster, or to the characteristics of the vampiric line: a subterranean vampire might be able to control rats and burrowing creatures; a vampire that once was a woodsman might be the master of all forest creatures; a seaman converted into a vampire might be able to command fish, sharks, or even whales; a vampire from tropical climes might command tarantulas or venomous centipedes, and so forth. The possibilities are so wide-ranging as to be terrifying to dwell upon.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that there is not the same connection between a vampire and its minions as there is between a wizard and its familiar or a homunculus. There is no shared life-force. Thus, the vampire suffers no ill effects should a minion be destroyed.

Only the rarest of vampires can summon animals in the magical sense - that is, cause the animals to magically appear in the vampire's vicinity. Most vampires, instead, send out a mental call which all animals of the appropriate type must answer. The call seems to have a maximum range of something over one mile. If there are no appropriate creatures within that range, then of course no animal will answer the vampire's summons.

A vampire can call upon those creatures three times per day, but the type of animal the monster can summon is dependent upon the surrounding environment. In a subterranean place, for instance, bats or rats will typically be called. In the wilderness, wolves and, rarely, bats will be called. The creatures respond to this magical call and travel as fast as they can to the vampire. The summons fails if the animals are physically prevented from approaching the vampire (for example, by a crevasse, fast-flowing river, etc.). It is important to remember that summoned animals do not appear immediately - a wolf one mile away from the summoning vampire will take several minutes to answer the summons.

Once the animals have arrived in the vicinity of the vampire, they are totally under the monster's mental control. (Any such creatures already present will also obey the mental commands of the vampire; this does not count against the vampire's three daily uses of its summoning power). They will fight (to the death if so ordered) or do anything else within their physical and mental capabilities. The vampire is even able to overcome the summoned creatures' normal fears and instincts. For example, it may force wolves or rats to attack foes from which they would normally flee. The length of time the vampire can maintain this total mental control varies depending on the type of animal and (sometimes) on the individual vampire involved.

While a vampire can summon creatures from one mile away, it can issue mental orders to creatures no more than 50 yards distant. Thus, even though a pack of wolves might answer the monster's call, the vampire could *not* cause those wolves to attack an enemy more than 50 yards from the vampire.

Summoned bats do not physically attack. Rather, they will swarm around a vampire's enemies, confusing and blinding them. Hence, wolves are perhaps the most fearsome animals that a vampire can control; these beasts are usually ravenously hungry

and will quickly answer a vampire's call. If wolves are called by the lord of a land, they will always be worg wolves, while wolves summoned by a common vampire will always be of the common variety.

Most vampires are unable to communicate bi-directionally with the animals they summon and control. The vampire issues mental orders; the animals obey. In general, there is no way the vampire can receive information from these animals. Thus, a vampire typically could not use a summoned bat as a spy to gather information. Of course, this is only true of the "typical" vampire. There are some unique individuals that can communicate bi-directionally with certain animals, or even "speak" their language. I must admit I find this a terrifying concept, because virtually any creature of the forest or hedgerow thus becomes a potential spy or scout for a vampire. Nevertheless, as with the spell *speak with animals*, there remain severe limitations on what the vampire can communicate and learn by this means. The minds of lesser animals are very limited, and are focused almost exclusively on the moment-to-moment requirements of survival. Animal communications reflect these limitations. Thus, it would be impossible to conduct a philosophical discussion with a rabbit, for example, or to instruct that creature to perform complex tasks, those involving judgment and contingencies. Nor would a controlled rat be able to turn a key, and a controlled wolf would likely be unable to remove the bar from a door, and so on.

These limitations of communication and control are *not* sufficient to stop a vampire who can speak with animals from forming close bonds - friendships, as it were - with certain creatures. These animals would consider the vampire a compatriot or a leader, and would obey the monster's commands willingly even after the period of complete mental control ends. Such willing "animal friends" would probably not sacrifice their lives for the vampire, but otherwise would be loyal minions.

Some examples of vampire-controllable animals are rats, bats, wolves, cats, snakes, ravens, vultures, and wasps.

Table 2: Results of Summoning

Type	Number	Duration
Bats	10-100	2-12 rounds
Rats	10-100	1-10 rounds
Worg Wolves**	3-18	2-8 rounds*
Wolves	3-18	2-8 rounds*

* Will remain in area, free-willed, when this period expires.

** Can be summoned only in Ravenloft, and only by the lord of the land.

A summoned swarm of bats will cover a roughly circular area measuring 20' in radius. Anyone caught in this swarm will be blinded, make all attack rolls at -4, have their armor class reduced by 4, and have their movement rate cut in half. The swarm will move at a movement rate of 18, attempting to envelop the greatest number of people. After 2-12 melee rounds, the bats will disperse. Under most circumstances, the bats summoned will be the tiny "flying mouse" variety. In special environments, larger bats such as flying foxes or fruit bats may respond. Only 4-24 of these larger creatures will answer the call.

In tropical climates, vampire bats may answer the summons. If the vampire summons the bats to bedevil foes who are awake, 10-60 of the tiny creatures will arrive, having the same effect as the "standard" swarm of small bats. Vampire bats frequently carry diseases, and anyone bitten by one of the nasty creatures has a 5% chance of contracting a serious disease.

Other minions

It is an unpleasant point to add that vampires also exercise power over their fellow undead, particularly zombies, ghosts, and the like. Fortunately, they are not omnipotent in these matters, even though they are technically the "kings" of the undead, and many of the more powerful creatures may resist being controlled, particularly other vampires. Because of this, the presentment of holy accoutrements can disrupt the vampire's authority. Take not too much heart in this; breaking the vampire's control does not guarantee that the undead will leave you alone.

Table 3: Undead Minion Control

Type or Level of Undead	Fled.	Mature	Old	Very Old	Ancient	Eminent	Patr.
1 HD	13	10	7	4	1	*	*
Zombie	16	13	10	7	4	1	*
2 HD	19	16	13	10	7	4	1
3-4 HD	20	19	16	13	10	7	4
5 HD	-	20	19	16	13	10	7
Ghast	-	-	20	19	16	13	10
6 HD	-	-	-	20	19	16	13
7 HD	-	-	-	-	20	19	16
8 HD	-	-	-	-	-	20	19
9 HD	-	-	-	-	-	-	20**

Undead of higher HD (including special) are immune to control by vampires of any age category.

* Automatically controlled (no chance of failure)

** Vampires of any age category are automatically entitled to a saving throw, to resist being controlled

Controlling Undead

Once undead are controlled, the vampire can maintain its dominance indefinitely. A vampire can simultaneously maintain control over a number of undead whose HD are equal to half the vampire's age. For example, a 137-year-old (Mature) vampire can control up to 68 HD of undead.

Salient Abilities

Many laypersons and even some experts who should know better, cling to the totally false belief that all vampires are virtually identical. I must admit that I can understand this fixation: if one can list, categorize, and completely describe all the attributes and powers of a vampire, the fiend becomes significantly less horrifying. Humans and demihumans find the *unknown* to be much more threatening than the worst of the known. Consider, then, how much more terrifying a vampire becomes when one must admit that the creature might have abilities and attributes that are totally unexpected. Clinging to the familiar catalog of characteristics is, thus, intellectual laziness - a refusal to take that first step into uncharted territory. It is also a highly self-destructive behavior, particularly among those who would hunt vampires.

As mentioned earlier, most of the discussions to this point refer to the "typical" vampire - and hence are wrong to one degree or another, because the truly typical vampire does not exist. We could, of course, consider "typical" to refer to a broad category of creatures into which most vampires fall. The majority of vampires will show some similarity with this "main sequence" of *vampirism* (if I may so coin a word). The more unusual vampires, thus, fall outside this sequence.

Even those vampires that do fall near the "typical" classification sometimes exhibit abilities beyond the norm. These otherwise undifferentiated vampires sometimes show one, or perhaps more than one, unique *salient ability* or power. Research seems to indicate that vampires develop such abilities over centuries of unlife. Whether this implies that the salient ability is a learned skill, such as a human's proficiency in some normal endeavor, or that it is merely a gift of prolonged existence, is unknown. Whatever the truth of the matter, salient abilities have rarely been reported in vampires younger than the "Eminent" age category.

In addition, it seems that only vampires who are lords of a land can develop salient abilities. If, by some magical means, a vampire stops being a lord of a land, it immediately loses any and all salient abilities and becomes once again a mundane vampire.

Once again, I feel it necessary to re-emphasize that the following descriptions are by *no means* comprehensive, but I hope that I have provided at least a solid foundation for understanding these creatures of the damned.

One particular vampire may exude such control over its undead minions that they become very difficult to turn aside through the presentment of holy symbols. Thus, a common zombie or animated skeleton might continue to assault a cleric

and his party who would normally obliterate the walking undead in their tracks. It is almost as if one were trying to turn the vampire itself. Such an occurrence becomes even more dangerous to the unwary vampire hunter because, occasionally, the undead master is not even present - it simply exercises its salient ability over its minions and they carry its power against holy wards with them into battle. And I believe the older the vampire, the more powerful the undead it may so protect.

One of the more alarming aspects of vampires which I have mentioned is their ability to drain the very essence of life from a victim with a touch. Even more troubling, I have heard reports of certain vampires who possess an enhanced capability. Long-experienced warriors and clerics can, at the touch of one of these ultra-powerful monsters, find themselves as weak as novices, and those of limited experience may die with a single touch!

Just as some vampires may have superior life-draining abilities, other may enjoy superior regenerative powers. Imagine striking at a cursed beast with all the might of magic and steal that your party can muster, only to watch the vampire's wound heal a minute later! It is fortunate that such puissant creatures are far and few between.

One particularly unpleasant vampire with whom I have battled was one of such ill temper that, at the end, when we had finally traced it to its lair, it flew into a frenzy of rage and became a blur of lethal blows before us. We were struck, it seemed, from all sides at once by this solitary adversary, and our best-executed blows in retaliation found only thin air where we expected its solid body to be. In its rage it moved so quickly, in fact, that we were forced to retreat until the sun rose, and then had to hunt until almost sundown for the creature's resting place.

There are a few vampires who were spellcasters in their previous lives, and they frequently retain those abilities as long as they are not clerics whose deities have forsaken them. But there are also a few vampires who, through unknown means (perhaps their master is a spellcaster, perhaps they rest in a magical place; I cannot say with any authority), gain the innate ability to cast wizard or priest spells. The vampiric quality of immortality, alone, makes this type of vampire quite dangerous. Consider the ramifications of an evil being with innate magical powers and an eternity in which to develop them!

While all vampires retain the facility of animal summoning, a few also have the ability to call upon gargoyles. These despicable monsters are often indiscernible from the ornate architecture which graces many castles, so they may become a sudden and terrible hindrance to vampire hunters who thought they had caught their quarry alone. Gargoyles are so malicious that a vampire need only summon them and they will do the rest, without need of instruction. They seem to sense goodness and delight in goading and torturing it.

I have also mentioned previously the ability of the vampire to charm the unsuspecting. A simple look into the eyes of the creature and an unfortunate hunter becomes the vampire's ally or willing victim. Yet an even more frightening prospect is that of a vampire who can even charm you while it is in gaseous form! There are a few of those, by report, who have charmed their pursuers when they believed it to be helpless and on the run. As the vampire swirled into airy mist, it twirled in hypnotic patterns and left the hunting party dumbfounded, glassy-eyed, and altogether helpless. No matter that it was near death; it convinced its new devotees to follow it off a cliff and was rid of the danger.

Another specific vampire who is particularly dangerous while in gaseous form is the one whose life-draining ability remains intact in that form. I have seen a young warrior cry in triumph upon dealing the blow to the vampire that dissolved it into mist, only to find himself immersed in that mist, swooning and dying before my eyes. He suffered no pain, no injury - only a look of dizziness and then death.

Experienced vampire hunters have witnessed their prey taking gaseous form while attempting to escape or when severely injured, but few have seen the creature simply step through a nearby wall while in solid form. Yet, as I have once seen, there is a unique vampire or two who can do just that. Unlike the wizard spell *passwall*, which, as I understand it, requires the presence of even the tiniest fissure in the obstacle, these salient vampires may pass through solid objects as if they were not there!

Still another special talent among some of vampire-kind is that for creating extraordinary fear, even beyond the norm. While most vampires must consciously put fear into their enemies, there are a few select monsters that are of such horrifying countenance that their mere presence strikes terror into the mortal heart.

One other salient talent which springs to my mind is that of the lucky vampire who can disappear and reappear elsewhere instantly. Such vampires can hardly be fought to the point of dissolution. Rather, at that point in which they consider themselves to be in trouble, they simply "pop" out of view. Although I have witnessed this ability only as a means of escape,

I imagine that the vampire could also use it to gain a constant surprise upon its adversaries.

In another vein (if you will pardon the expression), some salient abilities are not so enviable among vampires. For example, there are a small number of vampires who have an entirely unquenchable thirst for human blood. Such monsters ravage the countryside, attacking numerous victims every night, creating perhaps even more new vampires than they would care to. Such creatures, fortunately, do not long survive, for they enrage even the lowliest of the masses to hunt down and exterminate them. Those insatiable blood drinkers are usually the victims of lynch mobs who hunt them *en masse* and destroy their lair and everything in it. While they survive, though, they create an enormous amount of mayhem and suffering.

A related "especially cursed" vampire is one who is enslaved to blood lust. The mere sight of blood pitches them into a frenzy which can be satisfied only by the ingestion of that source of blood, virtually at all costs. This is not much of a boon to the vampire if he is attempting to masquerade as a mortal, to live in even the slightest harmony with society. Such a compulsion might be compared to a water-starved man in the desert who stumbles unexpectedly upon an oasis protected by lions - he must have that water, even at the cost of his life. A few unlucky vampires are so affected by blood lust that they need not even have the sight of it; the simple warmth of the human body unhinges them.

Still other unlucky vampires are unable to mask their true natures. With years of unlife, their skin tone changes perceptibly, becoming waxy or unnatural of color. This infirmity may be concealed with makeup, of course, yet the creature is vulnerable to the inevitable smudge or discerning eye. A rare few become somewhat translucent with time, almost ghostlike, and there is little that makeup can do for them.

Lastly, there are some vampires who become so alienated of nature that their control of animals escapes them. Rather, animals become crazed in the presence of such a vampire, impossible to control, wont to flee. Occasionally, such animals are so enraged by the creature that they willingly, even anxiously help to track him down and attack him if possible (bless them).

The use of salient abilities is optional, and DMs should use them sparingly. Their purpose is to help create unique and powerful creatures that will keep player characters wary of creatures whose stats the PCs think they know. Of course, the DM is free to create other salient abilities to suit his or her needs. The following list of abilities can be used for random determination, but powerful NPCs are best shaped by the DM's designs and campaigns, enhancing the story as much as the vampire.

If random determination is required, the procedure is as follows: for every full century the vampire has existed beyond the age of 500, roll 1d10. (Thus, for a vampire that has existed 975 years, the DM would roll 1d10 four times.) For each roll that yields a result of 1-4, the vampire receives one salient ability; roll 3d6 and consult the following list. If the vampire already possesses the ability, follow the instructions given under "Reroll". Should a previously gained power be rolled a third time, disregard the result and roll again.

Roll 3d6:

3. Innate Magic: The vampire can cast any selected 1st level spell at will. There is no limit to the number of times per day the vampire can use the power, and it never requires material components. The spell must be selected when the vampire first gains this ability, and it may never change.

Reroll: The vampire may select an additional *2nd-level* spell that it may cast at will. As with the first-level spell, there is no limit to the number of times per day the vampire can cast the spell, and it need not use material components.

4. Passwall: The vampire can pass through walls at will as if they were simply not there, traveling at the movement rate appropriate for gaseous form (although the vampire is not gaseous while using this ability). Note that unlike the *passwall* spell, the vampire does not actually create a physical hole in the wall. It merely passes through the wall. The duration of the power is 2d4 melee rounds, and it can be used once per day.

Reroll: The power is the same as above except that it can be used two times per day.

5. Transport: Once per day, the vampire can transport itself as by the wizard spell *dimension door*.

Reroll: Once per day, the vampire can *teleport* itself, as per the wizard spell of the same name.

6. Charm While Gaseous: When the vampire is in gaseous form, it can attempt to "charm-gaze" with the same restrictions that apply to its normal charm attack. The mist will begin to swirl in hypnotic patterns, attracting the attention of the victim. This is considered a gaze-type attack. The vampire can use this ability once per day.

Reroll: The victim of the gaseous vampire need not be looking at the creature for the charm to be successful. The vampire attempts the charm by "whispering" thoughts into the victim's mind. This may be used two times per day.

7. Blood Lust: The creature has a mad craving for blood and must have it at all costs. If the creature can see an open wound or other source of fresh blood, the sight drives the monster into a frenzy. While in this frenzy, the vampire will do whatever it takes to reach the source of blood and drink it. The frenzy is *not* so intense that the creature will put itself into a situation that it knows will certainly destroy it. (The DM must adjudicate this carefully. The monster will attack the largest of adventuring parties in its attempt to drink blood because there is a chance that it can defeat them. It will not attempt to ford a river (if running water destroys it) or expose itself to sunlight to do so.) The vampire is sated after having reached the source of blood, and isn't susceptible to further frenzies for 2d6 turns.

Reroll: So strong is the creature's craving that it need not see blood to go into a frenzy. The vampire can smell any exposed blood within 20'. If it can either see or smell the blood, but not both, the creature won't destroy itself in its frenzy, as discussed above. If it can both see and smell the blood, however, the frenzy is so strong that the creature will do *anything*, even something obviously self-destructive, in an attempt to reach its goal. The vampire is then immune to further frenzies for 1d4 turns.

8. Undead Master: Lesser undead under the control of a vampire are turned as if they were the vampire controlling them. The vampire must be in the immediate area directing the combat.

Reroll: The vampire does not need to be present. It need only deploy its minions to a task.

9. Superior Energy Drain: The vampire drains *four* life energy levels with a hit, rather than the normal three.

Reroll: The vampire drains *five* life energy levels with a hit.

10. Fear aura: All living things will fear the vampire because it constantly exudes an enchanted aura of fear. Any living thing within 10' of the creature suffers the same effects as a dragon's fear aura. (Humans and demihumans with fewer than one Hit Die flee for 4d6 minutes. Characters with fewer Hit Dice than the vampire must save vs. petrification or suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls against the creature, and will be in constant fear of it. Characters with more Hit Dice than the vampire are immune to the fear.) The vampire can still attempt to charm-gaze a victim normally. If it fails, however, that person is immediately overcome with fear and may not be charmed by the vampire again that day.

Reroll: The fear aura has a range of 15', and even characters with more Hit Dice than the vampire must save vs. petrification or suffer a -2 penalty to hit. In addition, characters with fewer Hit Dice than the vampire make their saving throw with a -3 penalty. So strong is the fear effect that the creature is unable to charm a victim by gaze or by voice. A Patriarch can still charm a victim by will.

11. Vampiric Rage: Once per day, the vampire can fly into a vampiric rage. The rage will last for 2d4 melee rounds, during which time the vampire can make two physical attacks per round. This benefit does not affect spell-like or spellcasting attacks.

Reroll: The vampire not only enjoys double normal attacks while enraged, but its AC is improved by two (i.e., AC 1 becomes -1). The vampire may use this power three times per day.

12. Improved Saves: The vampire receives a bonus of +1 to all its saving throws (in addition to any other bonuses it might receive).

Reroll: The vampire receives a bonus of +2 to all its saving throws.

13. Superior Regeneration: The vampire regenerates two more hit points per melee round than it would normally.

Reroll: The vampire regenerates four more hit points per melee round than it would normally.

14. Animal Frenzy: Natural (non-monstrous) animals within 50' of the vampire sense the creature's evil nature, which drives them into a panic. This makes trained animals skittish, nervous, and nearly impossible to control, and causes wild or untrained animals to flee.

Reroll: So great is the evil nature the vampire exudes that animals are able to track a vampire. Only predatory or hunting animals (such as wolves or dogs) will willingly track a vampire. The base chance for success in tracking the vampire is 50%. The following cumulative modifiers apply:

Each hour since the vampire's passing:	-10%
Tracking over muddy or slushy ground:	-5%
Light drizzling rain:	-5%
Downpour:	-10%
Animal is a trained hunting animal:	+10%

Note that the vampire can assume gaseous form or fly away as a bat in order to avoid being tracked.

15. Skin Tone: Years of undeath have affected the vampire physically. The monster's skin has turned stark white, identifying its nature to anyone viewing the creature. (The creature could still disguise its nature using makeup, of course.)

Reroll: The vampire's flesh is translucent. Any light source of equal or greater intensity than a torch will shine through the creature's skin and flesh, silhouetting its skeleton. As above, the creature can attempt to disguise this with makeup. Masks and clothing remain normal.

16. Gargoyle Control: The vampire can summon and control 1d4 gargoyles. The monsters will arrive in 2d4 melee rounds and will remain in the vampire's control for 2d4 melee rounds. When the period of control expires, the gargoyles will remain in the area as free-willed monsters. There must be gargoyles available to be summoned (within 1 mile) for this power to be successful.

Reroll: Gargoyles need not be in the area for the summons to be successful. The vampire has the power to transform any native rock in the immediate area (maximum of 1 mile) into an appropriate number of gargoyles. The transformation takes 2d4 rounds to occur.

17. Energy Drain While Gaseous: The vampire can drain life energy from a victim even when in gaseous form. The monster can affect only one victim per round with this attack. By surrounding the victim, it drains one life level but does no physical damage.

Reroll: The power is the same as above except the vampire drains *two* life levels from the victim.

18. Extra Feeding: The vampire must feed twice as frequently as normal (see the section on feeding).

Reroll: The vampire must feed three times as frequently as normal.

All vampires with salient abilities are subject to the rules governing mundane vampires unless their special power specifically counters it. For example, a vampire that has gained the transport power cannot *dimension door* into a sanctified place that it has not received permission to enter.

I can still remember my first night in this form, the vampire said quietly, "even though it was five centuries ago. It was a mixture of joy and horror as I contemplated both my escape from death and the nature of that escape. I still remember keenly the feel of the chill air on my face as I broke out of the earth into the moonlight, and the raging fire in the pit of my stomach that was my hunger..."

- From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

Creating New Vampires

Traditional Methods

According to most related tales, a vampire can create another simply by killing a mortal either with its life-energy draining power (draining all the character's experience levels) or by exhausting the mortal of his or her blood supply. If the victim's body is not properly destroyed, it arises as a vampire, under the control of the creature who killed it, on the second night following the burial. As an aside, I pose the question: What exactly does it mean when the victim "arises" as a vampire? When the sun sinks fully below the horizon on the second night after the burial, the victim in the grave "awakens". The occupant of the grave is now a Fledgling vampire with all the characteristics, powers, and weaknesses which accompany that condition. Most vampires remember the instant of their death and the nature of their killer, and understand immediately their new nature. Certainly their new hunger gives them a good idea of what they have become.

They must immediately free themselves from their grave, either by breaking it open from within or by assuming gaseous form and diffusing out. If this is impossible, the vampire will die in about a week unless it can somehow summon minions such as a pack of wolves to dig it out. Once free of its grave, the vampire's first and only priority is to feed. Only after it has fed sufficiently *might* it remember to conceal the fact that the grave has been opened and is now empty.

There are several *non*traditional processes of creating new vampires as well, but these are much less widely known. One is in the taking of a "bride" or a "groom". I shall discuss that peculiar marriage at length in Chapter Ten, "Relationships Between Vampires". Other methods of proliferation are as follows:

Vampiric Saliva

This method is, thankfully, exceptionally rare. The saliva of certain vampires contains various neurological substances. First among these is a slow-acting but highly lethal poison. A single bite from a vampire can inject enough toxin to kill a robust warrior. Unlike most poisons, however, this toxin does not kill the subject for several days. Few people make the connection between the vampire bite and the victim's collapse, hence the body is quite likely to be buried improperly. Meanwhile, within the dead body of the victim, other neurological agents from the vampire's saliva are having their effect. Several nights after the victim's death, he or she comes to consciousness as a vampire.

Vampiric Curses

Some of the monsters also have the dread ability to import vampirism via a curse. With their voice and their gaze they are able to afflict a victim with a terrible wasting disease that drains body strength. After a number of days, the victim dies and then rises as a vampire the night after burial. The only means of saving the victim known to me is to destroy the cursing vampire before the victim finally succumbs. Of course, the body can be destroyed to prevent it from rising, but this is obviously too late to help the victim.

In general, any victim brought to death by any draining effects of a vampire, but not by normal combat or spell damage, is a candidate to become undead.

Saliva Poisoning

A character bitten by this type of vampire is entitled to a saving throw vs. poison. It is best if the DM makes this roll secretly. If the save is successful, the victim suffers only 2d4 points of damage: should this be enough to kill the victim on the spot, he or she won't rise as a vampire. If the character fails the save, 2d4 days later he or she will suffer sudden heart failure and drop instantly and painlessly dead. Within 1d4 days of burial the character will rise as a Fledgling vampire, under the control of its killer.

Vampiric Curses

Some vampires have the ability to cast a special version of the unique priest spell, *divine curse*, once per day or even less frequently (DM's choice). The effects of this curse are always the same. Should the victim fail a saving throw vs. spells, every time the sun rises thereafter he or she loses 1 point of Str. When the victim reaches 0 Str, he or she dies and will rise the next night as a vampire under the control of the monster who cast the curse. If the vampire that inflicted the curse is destroyed, the curse comes to an end and the character regains 1 point of Str per day. This is a particularly unpleasant effect, and vampires able to use this curse should be few and far between.

Vampires with Surviving "Goodness"

It's entirely up to the DM if a particular newly-formed vampire retains some part of his or her mortal attitudes, emotions, and beliefs upon the transition to undeath. For DMs who like concrete rules, try the following:

If a character is killed by a vampire, and the creating vampire is destroyed or leaves the area before the victim rises as a vampire, roll 8d6 and compare the result to the victim's Wis. If the result is equal to or greater than the victim's Wis, the newly-formed vampire is completely and utterly Chaotic Evil. If the dice roll is less than the victim's Wis, however, there's a possibility that the new Fledgling vampire might retain some portion of its previous world view, possibly including alignment. (See Chapter Eleven, "The Mind of the Vampire".)

I was highly impressed by our neighbor when he stopped by for his first visit. He was a very well-spoken chap, exceedingly polite, and almost over-formal for simple folk such as we. For example, when I responded to his knock on our front door, the gentleman simply stood on the doorstep and conversed, even though I stood back and opened the door to allow him to enter.

When I asked why he preferred to talk outside, he responded that his upbringing had indoctrinated him with the belief that one should never enter another's home unless one is specifically and formally invited. So charmed was I by this olden-style formality that I immediately bade him enter...

- From the journal of Vidimus Tansim

Vampire Weaknesses

My discussion of those few salient abilities that are a hindrance to the vampire seems a natural bridge to the subject at hand: that of their general weaknesses. Do not take too much heart from this chapter! Vampires are among the most powerful of the undead, possessing great strength and numerous seeming magical abilities. Coupled with this is their inhuman tenacity and their undying hunger. Taking all into account, vampires should surely be masters of all they survey, destroying civilization and life as they see fit.

It is very fortunate for (demi)humanity that vampires have a number of weaknesses that can be exploited. Again, those who would hunt vampires should be cautioned. These creatures are of great might and terrible cunning. To confront one is literally to stare death in the face. Not only must the hunter overcome the monsters' strengths, but also must he master his own weaknesses; almost surely the vampire will discover and capitalize upon them.

Some of the most common vampiric vulnerabilities are holy symbols, blessed accoutrements, sanctified places, mirrors, garlic, and running water.

One thing that the potential vampire hunter should remember is that not all vampires are affected by the same things. The discussions below relate to "typical" vampires - which, of course, is an oxymoron; no vampire is "typical". In practice, there is no guarantee that any individual vampire will suffer from any of the above "standard" weaknesses.

This holds particularly true with respect to uniquely powerful vampires, or the heads or progenitors of vampire lines. (A "vampire line" is defined as "all those 'subsidiary' vampires created by the same progenitor vampire, or by vampires who were created by the progenitor, etc". A progenitor is a vampire whose creator has been destroyed, or one who was not created by another vampire, but came into being by some other method.) These creatures tend to be unusual and will commonly possess strengths and weaknesses altogether different from the "standard" vampire.

This same is true for the original set of vampires created personally by a head of a vampire line. These creatures are referred to as the *first brood* and comprise the progenitor's strongest and best "children". Typically, a first brood will be approximately five-to-ten vampires in size. The first brood will exhibit many of the same qualities as their progenitor but modified in form. For example, if the head of a vampire line were able to shapechange into the form of a fly, his first brood might be able to summon and command swarms of flies. As another example, if the progenitor were held at bay by anyone reading from a holy book, the sound of such readings might cause physical harm to members of the monster's first brood.

To repeat, any mortal who comes into contact with the head of a vampire line, or other such uniquely powerful creature, should exercise the greatest of caution. Such an encounter may require many months of painstaking research as the hunter



attempts to glean some hint as to the vampire's unique weaknesses.

Keeping a Vampire at Bay

Althea kept the mirror between us and the blood-sucking fiend, as we instructed. At first the vampire circled, glaring at us in hatred, seemingly unable to approach the silvered glass which Althea kept always before its eyes. But then suddenly a huge bat swept down from the night sky, claws reaching for Althea's eyes. In her attempt to protect herself, she let the mirror fall, and it shattered on the stony ground. And in that instant, the vampire was among us, and the screaming began.

- From the journal of Donal Pembroke

Ideally, any vampire encountered should be destroyed, because such evil is corruption in the heart of the land. This, however, is beyond the abilities of most mortals, and the primary goal becomes one of survival. Fortunately, there are a number of ways that might allow mortals to hold a vampire at bay, or even drive it away.

Good Holy Symbols

There is no consensus among experts as to exactly why the holy symbols of good aligned faiths have such an effect on vampires. No one can argue with the fact that this effect exists, however. The majority of philosophers believe that the symbol itself is not significant; it is the faith of the person holding the symbol that is important. The precepts of any good-aligned faith will classify the vampire as a blasphemer against the gods and against nature. Thus, any pious follower of such a faith will view a vampire with righteous outrage. According to these philosophers, it is this righteous abhorrence, of which the holy item is just a symbol, that so affects a vampire. It should be noted that a holy symbol need not be a traditional one, such as a cross or star, to have power over a vampire. Any symbol of a deity dedicated to the precepts of Goodness will serve the purpose. Again, what seems to be more important than the actual condition or shape of the symbol is the faith and belief of the person presenting it. If the person's faith in his or her god is weak, then the symbol's power over the living dead is also weak. Therefore, good-aligned holy symbols can be used, to limited effect, by laypersons (that is, people who are not priests) or by priests of insufficient experience to truly turn a vampire. This is usually referred to as "presentment", to distinguish it from true turning. Presentment is discussed below.

To be effective, a presented holy symbol must be from a Good aligned religion, and must be presented boldly by a character who is actually faithful to that religion. The DM should adjudicate this according to previous role-playing. "Sudden converts" to a faith to which they normally just give lip service will find themselves "vampire fodder".

The character then makes a Cha check on 4d6, modified by +1 for every age category of the vampire above Old. This means that a character trying to hold an Eminent at bay must make a Cha check with +3 added to the dice roll. If the dice roll is equal to or less than the character's Charisma the vampire is held at bay for 2d4 melee rounds. If the DM wishes, some of the modifiers below may be applied;

Table 4: Modifiers for Turning Vampires

Situation	Modifier
Priest has major spell access to the Sun Sphere	+2
Priest has minor spell access to the Sun Sphere	+1
Priest is using a makeshift holy symbol	-1
Priest is using a blessed or finely-crafted holy symbol	+1
This specific vampire has previously caused the priest to fail a horror or fear check (Ravenloft only)	-2
Priest is any Neutral	-1
Priest's player role-plays the turning/controlling attempt in an exemplary manner	+1

In order for a holy symbol to qualify as finely crafted, it must be made of some precious metal or a material that is sacred to the priest's religion. For example, a priest of the goddess Mielikki (from the FORGOTTEN

REALMS campaign setting) would probably use a symbol made of finely-wrought wood, preferably still living, rather than of gold or platinum. In any event, the symbol must be constructed by a priest of at least 7th level, and takes a minimum of one week to prepare. If the symbol is a precious metal, it must be of at least 1,000 gold pieces in value. If it is of some other material, it must be of the finest quality possible. For example, the wooden holy symbol would have to be made of some rare and particularly sacred tree and would be difficult to find. A makeshift holy symbol, in contrast, would be something that was hastily put together.

The role-playing modifier has been included in the interest of colorful game play. This is an optional modifier that allows the DM to reward players who really get into character for example, if the player stands up at the gaming table and declaims something like, "Profane Creature of Darkness, in the name of Torm I expel you from the domain of the living". If the DM is running a game that is not heavily role-play oriented, this modifier can be excluded.

A number of other modifiers may be applied to the die roll, depending on the personal power of the vampire in question, the priest's faith and willpower at the moment of turning, any prior and unsuccessful conflicts between the priest and a vampire, and a number of other factors. DMs should feel free to add other modifiers that make sense in their campaigns.

Because the lands of Ravenloft are a physical manifestation of evil incarnate, the effects of sanctified land and structures are diluted as compared to those in other locales. Normally, when in Ravenloft, undead are turned according to the Turning Undead table presented in campaign setting. If the vampire is on sanctified ground, however, the standard Turning Undead table from the Player's Handbook is used (making it easier for priests to turn the monsters).

Sanctified places also give the following modifiers to related functions (in or out of Ravenloft):

- ☼ presentment of holy symbol: + 2 on Cha check
- ☼ vampire touching/manipulating holy item: -2 on saving throw
- ☼ vampire passing portal warded by blessed item: -1 on saving throw

In addition, when the vampire is in a sanctified place, it can't inflict the -2 penalty on turning subservient creature.

Players and DMs should bear in mind that keeping a vampire at bay does not negate its ability to attack the person presenting a holy symbol. The creature could hurl objects, attempt to gaze-charm the character with the symbol, summon minions to deal with the offender, or a host of other actions. A successful presentment simply means the vampire cannot approach within 5' of the holy symbol. (If the vampire is somehow forced to come within five feet of the character, the effect of the presentment ends.) Note that a vampire could attack with a long polearm, such as a spear.

If a Good-aligned holy symbol is within a vampire's field of vision, it suffers a +1 penalty to its initiative for as long as it can see the item. A vampire seeing a Good-aligned holy symbol will normally show some sign of distaste or hatred hissing and spitting in anger, flinching away as if in pain, etc. unless it successfully saves vs. spells. A successful saving throw means the creature has suppressed its natural reaction. If it successfully saves, the creature can view the item without effect from then on.

Vampires find it very difficult to touch, move, destroy, or otherwise manipulate Good-aligned holy symbols; even covering the item or removing it from view requires a great effort of will. To touch or otherwise manipulate a holy symbol, the vampire must successfully save vs. spells. This save is separate from the roll to see if it can suppress its visible reaction. A successful save means the monster can touch the item *this time*. Any subsequent attempt to touch or manipulate the item requires another save.

Note that vampires gain a bonus to both the above saving throws as they progress in age. The monster receives a bonus of +1 for every age category past Fledgling. Thus, a Mature vampire gains a +1 bonus, while a Patriarch receives a bonus of +6!

Evil Holy Symbols

As with other undead, vampires are sometimes subject to control by priests of evil-aligned faiths. Just as a good-aligned priest can use a holy symbol in an attempt to turn or banish a vampire, so can an evil-aligned priest use his symbol in an attempt to control the vampire. In both cases, the priest's faith and willpower are key issues, and the outcome is never certain.

With lesser undead, should the evil priest establish control, that control is virtually complete. Not so with a vampire; a controlled vampire retains its own free will, and acts in much the same way as a mortal might when threatened with physical pain. It will obey the letter, but not necessarily the spirit, of any orders it is given, and will always try to pervert the controlling priest's intent so as to break the control. Only if the priest's and the vampire's desires run in perfect parallels will the monster truly and wholeheartedly cooperate. In the vast majority of cases, the vampire will use its cunning and considerable powers to reverse the situation, likely without the priest's awareness, so that the slave will become the master....

There is no equivalent of presentment with evil-aligned holy symbols. A vampire is totally unaffected by an evil symbol presented by a layperson or by a priest of insufficient experience.

When an Evil priest tries to control a vampire, use the appropriate Turning Undead table. A success on this table means that the priest has established control over the vampire. As with good priests turning vampires, the optional rule of percent spell failure can be applied to evil priests attempting to dominate a vampire.

Turning Versus Presentment

In addition to priestly turning as discussed above, many vampires are also subject to the presentment of a good aligned holy symbol by a layperson or by a priest of insufficient experience to actually turn the creature. It should be noted that presentment of a holy symbol will never drive a vampire away: it will only keep it at bay temporarily.

As with actual turning, presentment depends almost exclusively on the faith and the force of personality of the person presenting the symbol. Even the slightest wavering of faith or dip in confidence can allow the vampire to ignore the effects of a holy symbol. A presented holy symbol in the hands of the most virtuous and pious believer will force a vampire to remain at least five feet away from the character holding the symbol.

Whether or not the item is actually being used in a turning or presentment attempt, vampires hate the sight of good-aligned holy symbols. This hatred usually manifests itself in an unwillingness to look at or touch the symbol, or to flinch away from it. A masquerading vampire must exercise much self-control to suppress this natural reaction. Vampires seem distracted and apparently have difficulty concentrating when a good-aligned holy symbol is within their field of vision.

Blessed Accoutrements

In addition to holy symbols, there are a number of other religious items that can be used to exert control over the majority of vampires. Although they are usually not as effective as holy symbols, they can be used in a pinch.

These items, collectively called blessed accoutrements, vary in nature and form, depending on the religion or mythos from which they come. Regardless of the mythos, however, to be effective, blessed accoutrements must be associated with a faith that reveres a good-aligned deity. These items must have been blessed by a priest of that religion. (Note that an item that is not directly associated with the faith, but has nevertheless been blessed, does not qualify as a blessed accoutrement.) Blessed accoutrements can never be used to turn a vampire; only to keep it at bay. Although a priest's *bless* spell normally has a temporary duration of approximately six minutes, a *blessed* holy item remains blessed *only* for the purposes of holding a vampire at bay or warding a portal until something befalls the item that would desecrate it. (Events that would qualify as desecration vary from faith to faith, although there are certain actions that would *always* fill the bill, all of which are too unpleasant to discuss here.)

Some examples of blessed accoutrements are holy waters, holy water, prayer beads, blessed books or tomes, and robes or clothing.

Blessed accoutrements can occasionally be used as weapons uniquely able to mark and harm vampires. This will be

discussed in the next chapter, "Destroying a Vampire", under the heading "Stigmata".

The procedure for holding a vampire at bay using a *blessed* accoutrement is the same as that for using a holy symbol. Use the table for Turning Undead in the DMG (or, when playing in the RAVENLOFT campaign setting, table from campaign setting), but with a +2 penalty to reflect the lesser power of a *blessed* accoutrement. The dice roll is *further* modified by +1 for every age category of the vampire above Old. If the dice roll is successful, the vampire is held at bay for 2d4 melee rounds at a distance of five feet. If the DM wishes, some of the modifiers from the Modifiers for Turning Vampires list above may be applied.

Another common use for blessed accoutrements is to keep a vampire from entering a certain place. These evil creatures have great trouble passing through a portal that is adorned or protected by blessed accoutrements. A portal so protected will keep a vampire from entering for 2d4 rounds. After that time, the creature must make a saving throw vs. spells in order to enter. This saving throw is modified by a bonus of +1 for every age category of the vampire beyond Fledgling.

Below is a list of typical accoutrements that are frequently blessed. Keep in mind that these are examples, and the collective list of accoutrements would be as varied as the number of existing religions. Two die-roll modifiers are included with each item. The first is applied to the Cha check die roll when someone tries to use an accoutrement to hold a vampire at bay; the second is applied to the vampire's saving throw roll when it attempts to pass through a portal warded by a blessed accoutrement:

- ☼ holy water (+2/-2)
 - ☼ holy water (+3/-3)
 - ☼ prayer beads (0/0)
 - ☼ blessed book or tome (+1/-1)
 - ☼ robes or clothing (-1/+1)
-

Additional Protection

There are three additional items that are useful for keeping vampires at bay. Once again, one must realize that not all vampires will be subject to these items.

The state of undeath offers many powers and abilities denied to mortals. The connection with the Negative Material Plane also causes vast changes in a mortal turned into a vampire. Despite these issues, however, there is one vital fact that can always be used against a vampire: *at one time it was a mortal*.

It is this fact that likely explains a vampire's negative reaction to mirrors. If a mirror is presented boldly and with conviction to a vampire, the monster will recoil from it. Exactly why is this? It appears that vampires often resent their undead stale, and yearn for the warmth of humanity and feeling of being alive. Mirrors, because they do not reflect the image of vampires, remind the creatures in a most painful manner of their undead state.

Garlic also has a strong effect on vampires. The reasons for this are unclear, but some innate quality in the plant causes vampires to cower from it. Some sages believe the reason is simply that vampires find the odor extremely offensive - so offensive, in fact, that a vampire will never approach any significant quantity of garlic, but I find this explanation much too simplistic. Perhaps vampires find garlic to be toxic to their necrological processes, as wolfsbane (actually aconite) is to werewolves. In any case, garlic can be used as a partial protection against the monsters.

Many legends tell of vampires being kept at bay by running water, and conclude that running water somehow has some warding power over vampires as does garlic and mirrors. As far as I can tell, these tales are probably true with regard to the base events, but totally wrong in their conclusions. It is true that all but the most powerful vampires - generally speaking, Eminent and Patriarchs are quickly destroyed if they are immersed in running water. Vampires are, of course, aware of this vulnerability, and hence will avoid running water if there is a chance they can be immersed in it. This means that vampires will be particularly wary of bridges, stepping stones, ferries, and other means of crossing running water. (After all, bridges can collapse, ferries can sink, etc.) If the benefit is great enough, vampires will risk such means of crossing running water,

but will always do whatever it takes to minimize the risk. If circumstances allow, however, the fiends will shapechange to bat form and fly across a river. Thus it can be seen that an aversion to crossing running water is not a strict prohibition, but merely a rational choice.

There is one exception: a vampire in gaseous form is *strictly prohibited* from crossing a body of running water that is more than three feet wide.

Myths and legends tell of other items or situations that can drive away vampires or keep them at bay. Among these are wood ash, dove feathers, and the singing of a small child. It is not known if these items are truly effective against vampires. I believe that these tales actually describe idiosyncratic weaknesses of certain individual vampires, which should not and cannot be generalized to all of the foul race.

A character can also use a mirror to keep a vampire at bay. In much the same way as a holy symbol, except the Cha check is made with a +1 penalty. A successful roll means that the vampire is kept at bay for 2d4 rounds at a range of 5', but *only* if the mirror is directly between the character holding it and the vampire, so that the vampire can see its reflection (or lack thereof). The vampire can, avoid the effects by "flanking" the character with the mirror, by shattering the mirror in some manner, or by forcing the character to drop the mirror. As with other means of keeping a vampire at bay, modifiers from the Modifiers for Turning Vampires table can be used.

Sanctified Places

Although the realization caused my gorge to rise, I suddenly perceived the only way I might escape the fiend that pursued me. There was one fresh grave in the graveyard, one that had been closed this afternoon. In desperation, I cleared away the fresh earth, exposing the coffin. I could hear the unnaturally fast footsteps of the vampire as I climbed into the coffin with its cold occupant and closed the lid. Of course I was unable to re-cover the coffin with dirt, but I preyed - more fervently than I had ever prayed before - that it would make no difference.

- From the journal of Zylara Windermere

There are certain structures and locales that can strongly influence or prohibit vampires. These structures and locales can best be described as sanctified places. As a general rule, these locations are rare.

In order for a building, structure, or area to be considered a sanctified place and to hold power over a vampire, it must be one of two specific types of establishment.

The first type of safe house from the vampire is one that is expressly owned. The location must be owned by an individual or strongly defined group. If the location is inhabited, it must be inhabited by the owner or by a member of the owning group. The following are examples of locations that meet this criterion:

- ☼ a house, owned by the residents
- ☼ a monastery, owned by the order of priests that dwells within it
- ☼ a graveyard, owned by the priestly order that oversees it

The following locations would not qualify:

- ☼ an inn, because the residents staying in the various rooms do not own them
- ☼ a public area, such as a village green
- ☼ a town's public graveyard, because the area would generally be "owned" by an elected (and hence ephemeral) town council
- ☼ a trading coaster's warehouse, because the building is owned by a "corporation", which is a legal fiction

Churches, temples, and the like, even when, officially owned and operated by amorphous groups such as a town council,

qualify because they are symbolically owned by the deity to which the buildings are dedicated.

The second type of place that is off-limits to a vampire is one that is in some way hallowed.

In the case of personal homes, they are the retreat or sanctuary of the owner, and are inherently hallowed. Churches and temples are obviously hallowed by their nature. Note that, in this case, the word "hallowed" does not necessarily mean religious or holy; rather, it means "respected" or "venerated". The following list of structures/areas gives a general idea of what might be considered hallowed ground. As with holy symbols, the types of hallowed ground vary with different cultures and religions:

- ☼ house or home
- ☼ church
- ☼ holy burial sites
- ☼ hallowed hunting grounds

In general, even the most powerful priest is unable to sanctify a location that does not have some tradition of sanctity or veneration associated with it. Thus, even a high priest could not buy the title to an abandoned estate - actually the lair of a vampire - and then somehow sanctify it, just to aggravate the vampire if nothing else. Unless the estate had some tradition of sanctity attached to it, the priest would have to establish the building as a temple, attract a body of other priests and a congregation, hold services, etc. Then and only then might the building be considered sanctified. (And if you think the vampire in the catacombs would sit still for that, then you would not last very long in the lands of mist....)

Homes

Homes, that is, houses or other spaces where individuals or families have their permanent residence, enforce their own restrictions on a vampire. Homes are not actually sanctified places (except in the most unusual of cases) and so give priests or laypersons no benefits when turning or holding at bay vampires and other undead. They do, however, give those within a unique protection against vampires.

In short, a vampire is completely unable to enter a home unless invited by a resident; the creature is simply unable to physically enter the residence. There are a few important notes that apply. First of all, to qualify as a "resident" of a home, a person must have been invited to live there indefinitely. This can be the actual home owner, the spouse, a relative of the owner, a live-in servant, etc. A guest of the owner does not qualify as a resident. Second, the invitation must be overt, stated in words. An implied invitation, such as an open door, is not sufficient. A single invitation to enter a home will allow the vampire to enter that home but once, immediately after the invitation is extended. The sole exception is if the invitation is offered by the "man of the house" - the oldest member of the household. If it is the "man of the house" who formally offers the invitation to a vampire, the creature is thereafter always free to enter that home without further invitation. Third, just because a vampire is unable to actually enter a house, those within are not totally protected from the creature's wrath. A vampire has a number of options open to it. For example, it could attempt to charm someone inside the house, or otherwise convince them to officially invite the creature to enter. It could summon minions, who would not be forbidden to enter the house. Alternatively, it could burn the house to the ground or otherwise force its potential victims to leave the structure. In short, fleeing to one's home to escape a vampire offers temporary protection at best.

In the lands of mist there are a number of exceptions to the above remarks. Strahd Von Zarovich is the absolute ruler of Barovia and thereby owns all properties contained in it. This mighty vampire lord can enter any building or structure that he wishes, simply because he "owns" them all.

Graves

Many experts find the statement hard to believe, but it seems that the majority of vampires, the "lords of the undead", are unable to physically open the grave, crypt or other final resting place of another who was interred according to the precepts of the religion the person followed in life. (They can obviously open their own resting place with impunity.) Although surprising on the surface, when viewed symbolically, this makes perfect sense. An interment site is, in one manner of speaking, the only property owned by its inhabitant, for eternity. And, assuming the deceased was interred with the formality and ritual associated with his or her faith while alive, the interment site is thus sanctified, at least to a degree. For these reasons, a "typical" vampire is unable to enter, break open or otherwise physically disturb an interment site without the

express permission of the "inhabitant" (who, obviously, is unable to give it).

This does *not* prevent a vampire from magically animating the inhabitant of a grave, however, and then having the animated corpse break out of the interment site. The restriction also does not apply to unfortunates who were interred without benefit of clerical rites and rituals: bodies buried in a mass grave, criminals who were excommunicated before or after death, etc.

Causing Damage with Holy Symbols and Holy Water

In order to damage the vampire with a holy symbol, the presenter must make a successful Cha check on 1d20 and then touch some part of the vampire's skin with the symbol. Generally, this requires a successful hit vs. AC 4, although this can change, depending on the circumstances. If the Cha check and the attack roll are both successful, the vampire sustains 2d6 points of damage and is kept at bay for 2d4 rounds.

The character wielding the holy symbol must be of Good or Neutral alignment. Vampires suffer no damage from a holy symbol wielded by an Evil character. Below are some optional modifiers to the Cha roll:

- ☼ Character is CN, N or LN: +4
- ☼ Character is CG or NG: +3
- ☼ Character is LG, but does not worship the deity to whom the holy symbol is dedicated: +2
- ☼ Character is a priest who worships the deity to whom the holy symbol is dedicated: -2

Damage inflicted by a thrown vial of holy water, or by any other contact with holy water, is 1d6+1 hit points. In addition to taking damage, a vampire will be kept at bay for 2d4 rounds after any direct hit from holy water.

The small boat capsized, and all of us - my colleagues and the fiend - were cast into the torrent. This was our opportunity. As the rocks battered at us and the rapids threatened to drown us, we grabbed at the hissing, screaming monster and struggled to immerse it. Its strength was inhuman, and the wounds it inflicted on us were terrible. But we withstood it as the only certain way of destroying the hideous creature.

We thought we had succeeded when the thing wailed as if in agony, and its body shifted in our grip - but the creature had become a bat. We grabbed for it, but it slipped from our grasp and flew away into the night sky. At that point we knew that even if we survived the upcoming rapids, our troubles were only just begun...

- From the journal of Vraymar Orcbane

Destroying a Vampire

Driving a vampire away or keeping it at bay is quite difficult enough. Unfortunately, in the majority of cases this will only guarantee that the fiend will approach again, at a time of its choosing and when you are least prepared. The ultimate goal is to significantly damage and then destroy the creature. Unfortunately, this feat is much more difficult to achieve than it is to discuss. However, the creatures are not wholly omnipotent and there are, thanks to all that's holy, some means to strike them down! That, of course, is my intent in committing this guide to pen and ink.

Of course, the easiest way to destroy a vampire is to be sure that it never rises at all. When a person is killed by a vampire, as I have postulated, it is almost certain that that person will become a vampire as well. The best way to prevent a victim from rising as a vampire is to completely destroy the body rather than bury it. If the body *must* be buried for religious or other reasons, there are other ways that it can be prevented from becoming a vampire. The way most certain is to drive a stake through the heart of the body, fill its mouth with a consecrated substance, and cut off its head.



Remember: the vampire hunter who relies upon tradition is almost certainly doomed to become the thing he hunts!

Wooden Stakes

Folk tales make this means of destruction sound much simpler than it really is. In fact, there are several significant issues that must be addressed. First, the stake must be prepared from wood. Ash is normally the appropriate wood, but certain vampires may be immune to ash, and another wood must be used. The appropriate wood may vary depending upon the individual vampire, and will often be somehow related to the creature's personal history (how it became a vampire. etc.). For example, a vampire who lives in a graveyard might only be killed with a stake of yew wood.

In the night, when a vampire's power is at it's height, a wooden stake is largely ineffectual. For obvious reasons it is best to confront a vampire while it is unconscious in its sanctuary. Unfortunately, this is not always possible and the vampire hunter must be prepared to face a conscious and active vampire.

If attacking a conscious and unrestrained vampire, the stake must be manually driven through its heart. In other words, the stake must be used like a dagger or a short sword and driven into the chest of the monster, who will hardly remain still while someone positions the stake and prepares to strike it home with a mallet. Even this is harder than it sounds; as evidenced by

its inhuman strength, the muscles of a vampire are much more sturdy, perhaps more dense, than their mortal equivalents. Thus, the attacker must have great strength in order to drive the stake into the monster's chest cavity. In addition, it must be remembered that the heart is a relatively small target, and very difficult to hit if the vampire is moving. Even if the vampire is somehow restrained, it is far from a sure thing that the attacker can drive the stake manually through the heart.

If the vampire is unconscious or immobilized, success with a stake and mallet is still not guaranteed if the stake is ever removed from the vampire's body, the creature will rise again. To prevent the monster from ever rising again, the attacker must decapitate the vampire. Otherwise, the possibility of it rising to stalk the lands still exists.

A single attacker using the stake like a melee weapon must have a minimum Str of 17; otherwise the blow will not be strong enough to penetrate the heart. To strike the heart, the attacker must roll a successful hit against AC -1. If either condition is not met, the stake does not penetrate the heart, and does no damage to the vampire. Two people, but no more, can cooperate in wielding the stake in melee. The sum of their Str scores must exceed 17, and they make the attack at -3 to hit because of the difficulty involved in coordinating their movements.

If the monster is totally immobilized, no to-hit roll is required. Staking the creature takes 1 round.

Blessed Weapons

Weapons that have been *blessed* by a priest are a special case: for the duration of the bless spell, a blessed but otherwise nonmagical weapon can strike a vampire. It inflicts only minimal damage, however, unless wielded by a warrior of exceptional strength.

If a priest of a nonevil deity casts a *bless* spell on any weapon (or item that could be conceivably used as a weapon), for the duration of the spell that weapon is capable of striking a vampire. The blessed weapon gains no to-hit bonus, of course. A successful hit inflicts one point of damage, plus any applicable strength bonus.

Running Water

Many tales state that vampires are exceptionally vulnerable to running water. For most vampires this is at least partially true. A vampire that is totally immersed in rapidly flowing water should be involuntarily reduced to gaseous form in a matter of minutes. There are several vital considerations to keep in mind, however. First, the water in question *must* be rapidly flowing; oceans, creeks, slow streams, and the like will not suffice. Second, the word "immersed" has a specific meaning in this context: fully three-quarters of the vampire's body must be below the surface of the water, and this portion *must* include the entire chest, from the creature's waist to its neck. (In essence, the monster's heart must be immersed.) Vampires are as capable of floating or treading water as any humanoid creature. Thus, merely throwing a vampire into a river and waiting for it to expire will probably not work. The vampire must be so held that its entire chest is completely immersed for at least one minute in order to inflict any damage whatsoever upon the creature.

As is so often the case with vampires, this is much easier said than done. The creature is hideously strong and the panic engendered by even partial immersion seems to give the creature additional reserves of strength. Often the attacker becomes the attacked.

The monster can also use its many spell-like powers to destroy those who would try to hold it under. Luckily, as soon as the creature is even partially immersed in running water, it is incapable of *voluntarily* assuming gaseous form. It can, however, shapechange into another form.

If the attempt is successful, the results are quite extreme. Should the creature be kept suitably submerged for only three minutes, it is forced into gaseous form - which bubbles to the surface - and must flee to its sanctuary.

If a vampire is even partially immersed in running water, it temporarily gains the Str associated with the next highest age category. Thus, a Fledgling vampire dumped into a river will temporarily enjoy a Str of 18/91,

rather than its normal 18/76. This temporary Str bonus vanishes as soon as the creature is out of the water. In addition, if the monster's arms aren't somehow constrained, it gets a +4 bonus on all attacks against any characters physically trying to hold it underwater. (This bonus represents both proximity and the fact that its foes are concentrating on holding it under.)

At the end of each complete round that the vampire has been immersed, it loses one-third of its maximum hit-point score. As soon as it is driven to zero or fewer hit points, it assumes gaseous form.

Example: A vampire has a maximum hit-point total of 60 hit points. In combat with a group of adventurers, the creature suffers 25 points of damage from an enchanted sword, giving it a current score of 35 hit points. To add insult to injury, it is then unceremoniously dumped into a fast flowing river, with six burly warriors holding it down. At the end of the first round, the creature loses 20 hit points - one-third of its normal total of 60 - which drops it to a current total of 15 hit points. At the end of the second round, it loses another 20 points, dropping its total to -5. With a strangled curse, the creature reverts to gaseous form.

If a vampire is immersed in a large quantity of holy water, the creature loses one-half of its total hit points per melee round so immersed. All rules relating to immersion in running water - Str bonus, attack bonus, etc. - also apply. Even if the monster is not totally immersed, it suffers 2d6 + 2 points of damage on every round that it is even partially immersed.

Sunlight

For this discussion and the following paragraphs, the word "sunlight" refers to the direct rays of the sun or such rays reflected by a mirror.

Most vampires can be destroyed by exposure to sunlight, and even momentary exposures can be lethal to Fledglings. These creatures hate the sunlight with a passion that mortals can't begin to understand. If a vampire is up and about in the daylight hours, then it will always take great pains to shade itself from the sun. With very few exceptions, vampires will never willingly pass into the sunlight. If this means that they must fight a battle to the death, allow a mortal enemy to escape, or make any other such sacrifices, so be it.

As soon as a normal Fledgling vampire is totally exposed to sunlight, it is instantly incapable of using *any* of its magical abilities. All it can concentrate upon is trying to get into shelter. If at the end of one minute the creature has not escaped the rays of the sun, it is instantly and permanently annihilated.

As a vampire ages, however, it becomes able to sustain brief periods of time in the sun. Older vampires seem to be able to resist the lethal effects of exposure to sunlight for varying periods of time. A Mature vampire might withstand one minute of exposure, for example, while an Ancient might withstand one *hour* in the sun without being destroyed. During this "period of immunity", the creature is able to use all of its powers normally. The instant this period of immunity expires, however, the creature is stripped of its magical powers, and one minute later is annihilated.

A vampire that has existed for a millennium is no longer susceptible to the burning touch of the sun. A Patriarch can go forth during the daylight hours with the same freedom as a mortal. (There are also tales of vampires centuries too young to be a Patriarch, who are equally immune to sunlight - the possibility that such a creature can pass this immunity on to a line of vampires is too horrid to dwell upon.)

A vampire *could* stand in a room with sunlight streaming through the window and remain totally unharmed so long as it did not step into a sunbeam. It is important to here relate the nature of *reflected* sunlight that harms vampires. "Diffuse" reflection, such as that from the floors and walls of a room, is harmless to the vampire, albeit highly distasteful. "Focused" reflection, however, is dangerous. As a rule of thumb, the reflected sunlight is dangerous only if the vampire could conceivably see a recognizable image of the sun in the reflecting surface. The sun reflected in a mirror, a polished shield, or perhaps even a well-cleaned plate would harm a vampire.

Even *partial* exposure to sunlight can be dangerous to a vampire - "partial" in this case meaning that only a small portion of the vampire's body (such as a hand or arm) is exposed to the direct or mirror-reflected rays of the sun. The vampire's period of immunity comes into play again. If the partial exposure extends beyond this period of immunity, the exposed portion of

the vampire is burned as if by direct application of fire.

It cannot be stressed too often: most vampires hate sunlight. Even if a vampire is in the sunlight less than its period of immunity, it takes a massive effort of will for the creature to do anything other than seek shelter. Patriarchs or vampires innately immune to sunlight still dislike being exposed to the direct or reflected rays of the sun although the intensity of this dislike is infinitely less than that exhibited by their lesser kin. Such vampires will never show a tendency to flee from sunlight, but they might evidence other symptoms of distaste.

Vampires can sometimes be physically forced or tricked into the sun, but considering the great strength and intelligence of the creatures, this is never a minor undertaking. Usually a vampire destroyed by sunlight instantly crumbles into dust, if in any material form. Sunlight also affects vampires that are in gaseous form in the same ways as discussed above. If a gaseous vampire is destroyed by sunlight, the cloud of gas simply dissipates, never to reform.

At the end of every complete melee round that a vampire is partially exposed to sunlight, it suffers 3d6 points of damage. The exposed flesh will often burst into flame, emitting a foul smell.

A vampire exposed to sunlight must make a saving throw vs. petrification, with a -2 penalty to the die roll. If it fails this save, it can do nothing but seek shelter from the sun. If it saves, however, it can act freely during its period of immunity, and can suppress any obvious signs of its discomfort. As soon as its period of immunity ends, however, it *must* instantly seek shelter from the sun.

If a Patriarch or other sunlight-immune vampire is exposed to direct or reflected sunlight, it must save vs. spells, with a +2 bonus to the die roll. A successful save means that it totally suppresses its innate distaste for sunlight. A failed save, on the other hand, indicates that the creature shows some signs of discomfort, such as painful squinting, etc.

Stigmata

In three memorable cases, I have seen a fascinating phenomenon occur when a vampire was caught in sunlight, was struck by a holy symbol, or was splashed by holy water. In these cases, not only did the contact cause pain and inflict physical damage, but it also left a seemingly indelible mark on the vampire. In one case this took the form of a red discoloration, similar to a birth mark, the size and shape of the splash of holy water that struck the fiend. In the others, the mark was a blackened scorch where the sun struck the skin, and a brand in the exact form of the holy symbol.

Why is this interesting? Recall that the condition of a vampire's body normally tends toward the condition it was in when the creature died. Old scars, tattoos and the like will reform, while new scars and similar marks will quickly fade. The marks, which I choose to call "stigmata" (singular, stigma), did not fade until a period of months had transpired in the first case, and several years had passed in the others. Particularly in the case of the holy symbol, the vampire was effectively and visually identified for what it was, depriving it of a means to masquerade as a mortal. Therefore, it was easier to hunt down the fiend and destroy it.

I have no idea how common a susceptibility to stigmata is among vampires, and it is not the sort of thing easily established experimentally. Tales of stigmata are rare, and if vampire and foe come into such proximity that a stigma can be created, in most cases either foe or vampire ends up destroyed.

The duration of stigmata is up to the DM.

Magic and Vampires

Vampires are, by their nature, highly magical creatures. Thus it is only logical that their reactions and responses to magic might be quite different in their undead state from what they were while alive. There are two issues to consider: the use of magic on vampires and the use of magic by them. Vampiric spellcasting occurs most often among those creatures who had magic capabilities in life - I shall address that subject in Chapter Thirteen, "Retained Skills". Vampires in general can use magical items, and I shall discuss that briefly at the end of this chapter. First, allow me to consider the issue of the effects of spellcasting on the "typical" vampire.

The Effects of Magic on Vampires

There are a great many spells and spell-like powers available to (demi) human spellcasters, or possessed innately by other creatures. For this reason alone it would be impossible to discuss individually how each different power affects a vampire. Fortunately, the vast majority of these powers can be grouped into representative categories, with most members of a category having a similar effect (or lack thereof) on vampires. I have, therefore, chosen to organize this discussion along those categorical lines, pointing out unique exceptions where appropriate. Note that these categories generally do not equate to Schools of wizardly spellcasting or to Spheres of priestly magic. They are generally classified by effect.

Before continuing, please note that exceptionally powerful vampires may well prove immune to spells that are highly efficacious against their lesser brethren. Conversely, vampires with unique heritages might well be subject to dweomers that are totally useless against most of their kin. If the latter is the case, then such vulnerabilities are usually counterbalanced by some surprising immunity. For example, I have reason to believe that a vampire line exists whose members are all susceptible to illusions, but totally invulnerable to fire magic. Also, before discussing individual categories of magic, one thing must be made clear. Patriarch vampires are categorically immune to spells of low power. This means that the spells of priests and wizards of limited experience will be totally useless against such an ancient creature.

To be affected by magic, the vampire must fail *both* its basic magic resistance roll and its saving throw. Vampires suffer half damage (rounded up) from any magically damaging attacks. If a victim of the attack is normally entitled to a saving throw for half damage, a vampire would also be entitled to a saving throw. If the vampire saves successfully, however, it suffers *no* damage whatsoever from the attack.

Patriarch vampires are totally immune to all 1st- and 2nd-level spells - of the wizard variety only - regardless of the level of the character casting the spell.

This ruling might force the DM to make judgement calls regarding certain spells. The pertinent issue is whether the spell is intended to have an effect on the vampire itself. First, some obvious examples: spells like *magic missile* are totally ineffective against a Patriarch. Likewise, a Patriarch vampire can see through the effects of an alter self spell.

An *armor* spell will provide no protection against a Patriarch's melee attacks, but it will improve the subject's AC against a missile weapon hurled by a vampire. Likewise, a *shield* spell will provide a wizard with AC 2 against missiles hurled by a Patriarch vampire, and AC 3 against arrows fired by the same creature, but will provide no additional protection against a melee attack from the vampire.

Using these guidelines, DMs can adjudicate how this immunity will work in other situations.

Vampires may or may not be vulnerable to magical attacks while in gaseous form - it's up to the DM. Some vampires may be partially susceptible to magical attacks while in gaseous form, but suffer only half damage, or may enjoy bonuses to their saving throws, ranging from +2 to +4.

Illusion/Phantasm Spells

Illusions have a more powerful effect on mortals than vampires. Mortals exist inside the delicate walls of their own senses and thence are strongly subject to the effects of illusions. Even the slightest flow of phantasmal magic may be enough to disrupt their carefully-maintained mental picture of the world. Vampires, too, generally depend on external senses to learn about the world. These senses, however, are heightened to a literally superhuman degree. This makes the creatures unnaturally adept at perceiving flaws and tell-tale clues that identify an illusion as such.

Enchantment/Charm Spells

Most vampires are totally unaffected by magic that affects the mind - not only the classic *charm* or *hold* spells, but also more subtle magic such as *fear*, *taunt*, and *scare*. The mind of the vampire is subtly different from that of a mortal, and its mental processes are sufficiently changed to allow them to shrug off such dweomers.

There are certain spells from the enchantment/charm school, however, that do not directly affect the mind. *Enchanted weapon*, *shadow walk*, and *sink* are examples of such spells. Vampires are not innately immune to spells that do not directly affect the mental processes. This should not be taken to mean that such spells are guaranteed to affect a vampire.

Blindness and Deafness

Spells that cause blindness and deafness can affect vampires, but only while the creatures are in forms that use such senses. Thus, a vampire in the form of a human, a wolf, or something similar could be blinded and deafened. A bat, on the other hand, depends very little (if at all) upon vision, so a vampire in bat form will suffer few noticeable effects from a spell that causes blindness. That same bat, of course, would be virtually incapacitated by deafness because the creature uses echolocation in place of vision. In short, a wolf-form vampire affected by blindness could virtually ignore the affliction if it changed to the form of a bat.

A vampire in gaseous form uses arcane senses other than vision and hearing in their classical sense. A vampire in gaseous form cannot be affected by magical blindness or deafness because these spells actually target the physical sense organs. A vampire magically blinded or deafened could regain full use of visual and auditory senses by assuming gaseous form.

A gaseous vampire would still be affected by magical *silence*, of course, because this spell actually suppresses the physical characteristics of sound, vibrations in the air or another medium, and no sensory apparatus can detect vibrations that don't exist. The same argument holds for vampires within the area of a *darkness* spell.

Magical Imprisonment

Spells of magical imprisonment have varied effects on vampires. Some of these effects are related to the special supernatural powers of the vampire itself, and still others are results of the strange and evil magic at the heart of the land.

There are basically two types of magical imprisonment: those that physically impede movement and those that capture the life essence or soul of a being. The various *Otiluke's spheres* are examples of the former and *trap the soul*, *magic jar*, and *maze* are examples of the latter. Speaking generally, the former spells are effective against vampires (assuming the creature is affected by the spell at all). The latter, however, are much more problematic.

The "soul" or life force of a vampire seems to exist on both the Prime and Negative Material planes. Other creatures generally do not enjoy this duality; their life forces are on the same plane as their physical bodies. To trap or imprison the soul of a "dual-planar" creature like a vampire, a dweomer must trap that portion of the life force that is on the same plane as its physical body and then draw the remainder of that life force from the Negative Material Plane into the trap.

Even if the vampire's physical body is on another plane, this "double trapping" is an exceptionally difficult task. The chance that the spell will be effective is much less than normal, and the duration of the imprisonment is drastically curtailed.

On the demiplane of Ravenloft, this type of spell is totally useless. That portion of the vampire's "soul" that resides in the demiplane is protected by the magical nature of the demiplane itself. Thus, while within Ravenloft vampires are totally safe from having their souls trapped in any fashion whatsoever.

Bless Spells

As might be expected from the creatures' responses to holy symbols, vampires find a *bless* spell cast on them by a priest of a good deity to be highly disturbing, having the general effect of a *curse* spell cast upon the living. A *curse* (that is the reverse of *bless*) cast by a priest of a good deity has no effect.

A *bless* or *curse* spell cast by a priest of a neutral deity has no effect on a vampire, either positive or negative. A *bless* or *curse* cast by a priest of an evil deity seems to *benefit* the foul creature in some inexplicable way, however.

If *bless* is cast upon a vampire by a priest of a Good deity, the creature receives its normal magic resistance roll to resist the spell's effects. Should the creature fail this roll, it suffers a -2 penalty to hit for the duration of the spell. The creature also must save vs. spells or be held at bay for 1d3 rounds, and be unable to shapechange for the entire duration of the spell. The only exception to this is if the monster is reduced to zero or fewer hit points, at which time it is forced to assume gaseous form.

If *bless* or *curse* is cast on a vampire by a priest of an Evil deity, however, it automatically gives the creature a +1 *bonus* to hit for the duration of the spell, whether or not the priest wants to so benefit the monster.

Polymorph Magic

Because vampires have innate shapechanging abilities, it should come as little surprise that *polymorph* other and similar spells have abnormal effects on the fiends. If such a spell even affects the creature, it will involuntarily remain in its new form for no more than a minute. Then it will revert either to the form it was in when the spell took effect, or into any other form that the monster is able to assume. Spellcasting vampires can cast *polymorph self*, *shape change*, or similar spells on themselves - these spells operate normally.

If the vampire fails both magic resistance and saving throw rolls, it is polymorphed into the form desired by the caster, but retains this form for only 1 round. When the round is up, the creature can choose which of its normal selection of forms it will assume.

Necromantic Magic

The use of necromantic magic against vampires can be highly dangerous. The vampire's connection with the Negative Material plane affords it an advantage over mortals that is difficult to overcome. Casting a necromantic spell upon a vampire is like to attempting to break a stone with a pitcher. For instance, I have seen a wizard attempt to drain life energy from a vampire, only to feel the effects of his spell rebound upon him, wither him to decrepitude, and invigorate the fiend in return. Therefore, I advise against the use of necromantic magic on vampires.

I must add, against my better judgement, that I have also seen a very effective use of this particular brand of magic against the lords of the undead: a spell that would reincarnate or otherwise bring life back to a mortal can destroy a vampire outright! However, if one attempts a spell of this nature and fails, the consequences can be tragic.

The use of *energy drain* opens a channel to the Negative Material plane, which is home to at least part of the vampire's life force. If this spell is used against a vampire in Ravenloft, the caster immediately loses 1d4+1 experience levels, and is stunned for 1d4 rounds. In addition, the vampire gains 1 HD, plus concomitant combat benefits, etc., for 2d4 rounds; during this time, all damage to the vampire is taken from these "temporary" hit points. Outside the lands of Ravenloft, the vampire does not gain the additional Hit Dice. The caster's loss is permanent, until regained through adventuring.

Raise dead, *reincarnate*, and *resurrection* can have a devastating effect on vampires. If one of these spells is cast on a Fledgling or Mature vampire, and the creature fails its magic resistance roll and saving throw, it is instantly destroyed. If it makes its saving throw only, it suffers 3d12 hit points of damage; if it makes its magic resistance roll, it is totally unaffected. If the spell is cast on a vampire of Old or greater age, the possible results

are as follows: 3d12 hit points of damage (magic resistance and saving throw failed); 1d12 hit points of damage (only saving throw made); or no effect (magic resistance roll made). At the DM's option, a *resurrection* or similar spell cast upon a vampire (who makes both a successful saving throw and magic resistance roll) may reverse and rebound upon the caster.

Effects of Magical Items Used by Vampires

As horrible as the concept may be, it must be accepted that vampires can use magic items often more readily than they can be affected by them. The vast majority of vampires can use only those items that are usable by most mortals. Happily, if these vampires touch or attempt to use items that are specifically attuned to particular professions or nonevil persons, they generally suffer *twice* as much damage as mortals.

Vampires who retain magical skills from their former lives can use items specific to the professions they practiced while alive, as well as those nonspecific items discussed above, so long as those items are not protected by Goodness.

If the penalty for touching or using a certain Item is loss of experience points or experience levels, then a vampire is unaffected, but is totally incapable of using the item in question. Unless otherwise specified, vampires suffer normal (not double) damage from touching or attempting to use items that are inappropriate to their class. They still suffer double damage from items that are specific to certain alignments.

The fiend had its arm casually draped around the shoulder of the unfortunate woman, who was looking into its face with an expression of what could only be called lustful desire. I screamed my frustration at the sky, but was unable to break the arcane bonds in which the fiend had bound me. It lowered its lips to touch the woman's alabaster throat, its eyes all the time fixed on mine and sparkling with inhuman enjoyment.

The woman's eyes turned up in her head, and she moaned with pleasure. As the creature bestowed its kiss, I saw the woman's youthful beauty begin to fade. Her skin dried and stretched over the bone structure of her face, wrinkles deepened around her eyes, and her lustrous black hair began to grey. I closed my eyes in soul-sick horror.

- From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

Life-blood: Vampiric Feeding Habits

For obvious reasons, the aspect of vampirism most important to mortals is that of their feeding habits. Vampires must gain sustenance by feeding upon the living. If they do not do this, they suffer terribly and will eventually die.

Mechanics

Vampires prefer to drink blood directly from the living body of a victim, preferably one of their former race. The most efficient method of doing this is to use their prominent eye teeth to open a wound in a major blood vessel of their victim. In (demi)humans, major vessels are closest to the surface in the throat. Because the neck is also one of the least protected parts of the body (even when the victim wears armor), this adds to the desirability of this target area. Sometimes vampires will choose another major blood vessel such as the femoral artery, on the inside of the thigh near the groin, if circumstances make this possible. One advantage of tapping this artery is that the marks left by the feeding are rarely seen by others.



Some tales describe the eye teeth of the vampire as hollow, and claim that the creature drinks blood through them as through a straw. In no case that I have studied, however, has this ever been the case. The teeth of a vampire are identical in structure to normal human teeth, albeit somewhat enlarged and often angled almost imperceptibly outward. My observation is that the vampire simply uses its teeth as implements to open a wound in the victim. It then sucks or laps up the blood using its lips and tongue, much as a babe drinks its mother's milk.

In the vast majority of cases a vampire will open only a small wound that will quickly heal, through which it can drain only a small amount of blood. "Small" is a relative term here; the debilitating effect is related to the robustness of the victim - while a battle-hardened warrior might shrug off a single feeding with no ill effects, the same blood loss might kill a weaker victim through shock.

Vampires usually feed through such small survivable wounds because they do not want to kill their victim. Any (demi)human killed through blood lost to a vampire will of course rise as a vampire itself, subservient to the creature that killed it, unless the body is decapitated or destroyed. In most cases, vampires do not want to create subservient vampires, for reasons that will be discussed later.

If a vampire does not care whether or not its victim survives, it can open a massive wound in the throat. This wound will kill its victim as would a dagger drawn across the throat. So fast is the blood flow from such a wound that the creature probably

cannot drink it all. It can usually ingest enough to sate its hunger, however. Such a victim is not necessarily raised as a vampire, unless the vampire is somehow able to drink all of his blood.

Vampires usually feed only from unresisting victims, which includes victims that have been gaze-charmed or victims that are immobilized in some manner. In order to drink the blood of its victim, the vampire must be undisturbed for a period of at least one minute. Thus, a vampire in the heat of combat cannot feed.

Generally, a vampire will drain enough blood to inflict 1d4 hit points of damage to a victim per round of feeding. If the victim's throat is torn open, a vampire can drink up to 12 hit points worth of blood from such a wound. If the victim has fewer than 12 hit points, however, the vampire can drink only as many hit points of blood as the victim possesses, remembering that -10 hit points is dead. For example, if a mortally wounded, comatose character is at -8 hit points, a vampire could drain only 2 hit points worth of blood, and this drain would immediately kill the victim.

The maximum amount of blood that can be drained from a corpse is the equivalent of 4 hit points. This decreases by 1 hit point per hour that the subject has been dead. Thus, a vampire cannot feed from a corpse that has been dead for more than 4 hours.

If the victim is willing, charmed, or otherwise completely immobilized, the vampire does not have to make an attack roll. It can automatically open the type of wound it wants, small or catastrophic, and drink for as many rounds as it wishes, provided it is left undisturbed.

The sensation created as the vampire opens the wound is often enough to cause a sleeping victim to wake. A sleeping victim is entitled to a saving throw vs. poison. A successful save means the victim has awakened; a failed save means the victim remains asleep and the vampire is free to feed for as long as it likes.

A victim will feel weak after the vampire has fed only if the vampire has drained one-quarter or more of the victim's current hit-point total. The damage caused by blood loss heals normally; the lost hit points can be restored through curative magic.

Signs of Feeding

Even a relatively small and survivable wound left by a vampire causes notable trauma to the flesh of the victim. There is not only the wound itself, which is often less than half an inch in length, but also discoloration caused by bleeding below the skin. This appears as a bruise that is usually an inch or so in diameter. The wound is easy to spot.

It causes no pain to the victim, however, and is not sensitive to the touch. This may be the result of some unknown component of a vampire's saliva, or could arise from some other cause entirely; I have no way of knowing. Thus, victims might be totally unaware of the wound until they see their image in a mirror, or until someone else brings it to their attention. The victim may feel some weakness that arises from blood loss, and may appear somewhat pale.

Sources of Blood

Vampires almost exclusively insist on the blood of living creatures: (demi)humans are preferred as victims, and members of the same species as the vampire above all. Why is this? It could be a physiological issue whereby, for example, blood from a human is most restorative to a once-human vampire. Or it could simply be symbolic: the evil creature holds within its heart a great hatred for the species to which it once belonged, and wishes to wreak the maximum amount of havoc on its erstwhile fellows.

Vampires prefer healthy victims, but can also draw blood from those who are mortally wounded and sinking into the final coma, i.e., characters who are below 0 hit points, assuming the optional "Hovering on Death's Door" rule is in effect (see the DMG Index under "Combat, death"). The amount of blood that can be drained from such a victim is usually limited because generally it was severe physical damage (hence blood loss) that put the character into that condition in the first place.

Vampires can also feed from the corpses of freshly-slain characters. Blood spoils rapidly in regards to serving it as a

foodstuff for vampires, so the corpse must have been killed within four hours of the vampire's attempt to feed. Because the heart of the corpse is not pumping, the vampire is drastically limited in the amount of blood it can drink from the body, and this amount decreases with time.

In time of dire need, I believe that a vampire can feed on the blood of animals, although the creature will find this foodstuff bland and unsatisfying, and it will leave the vampire ill. (When drinking from a rancid pool becomes a question of survival, then tainted water is better than none.) Because vampires are masters of all creatures whose form they can assume (generally wolves and bats), in regions where such creatures dwell a vampire will never starve. The subservient creatures will obey the commands of their undead master even to the death, and so will offer their lifeblood to preserve their master's unlife.

Within Ravenloft, vampires cannot take sustenance from any creature other than a demihuman. Outside of the demiplane, such emergency feeding is possible.

If the vampire feeds from creatures that are roughly man-sized or larger, the rules for vampiric feeding remain unchanged. It can drink 1d4 hit points of blood per round from a small wound (up to the victim's hit-point total, of course), or up to 12 hit points of blood from a catastrophic and immediately lethal wound.

Smaller victims are more problematic. If the victim has fewer than 1 HD, a survivable wound is impossible and the vampire has no option but to kill the creature. It can then drink as many hit points worth of blood as the creature possesses.

The Experience of the Victim

I shake in horror to think about it now. But at the time, as the fiend spoke, I felt its velvet voice thrilling through my body. So seductive were its words that I gladly opened the collar of my coat and bared the skin of my neck, and then stood trembling as I awaited the approach of the dark figure.

I gasped aloud with pleasure as its tips touched my flesh, and its hands grasped my shoulders. Then came an instant of pleasure so piercing it was like pain - or pain so sweet it was like pleasure. I could hear the throbbing of my heartbeat in my ears, and also a deep and distant thudding that must have been the beating of the vampire's heart. The drumbeats synchronized until the sounds were one. I cried out from the ecstasy of it...

- From the journal of Alatheia Greenbough

How can a vampire charm a victim into submitting to having his or her blood drunk? Surely the very nature of a *charm*, which cannot force its recipient to put itself in imminent danger, prevents the subject from accepting a command so obviously self-destructive. Then again, the vampiric charm-gaze is not the *charm* spell.

This is one of the most insidious factors in the nature of vampirism. It would seem that there is some deep and dark desire within the psychology of (demi)humans that makes submitting to a vampire's "kiss" somehow attractive. Vampires are often portrayed as creatures with an intense sensual appeal. This, it seems, allows charmed victims to believe that offering their throat to a vampire is *not* the self-destructive nor even suicidal act that it is.

In addition, some victims who have survived the attentions of a vampire report that the experience was highly pleasurable, much as this may fly in the face of reason. They felt no pain as the beast opened the wound in their flesh, and described the actual sensation of the feeding as one of "voluptuous pleasure". (I find my gorge rises when I consider this, but I have heard it from so many sources that I cannot disregard it.)

I have also heard the words used by a vampire while attempting to charm a victim into allowing it to feed. The monster seems to instinctively perceive a desire to submit that lies in the dark recesses of the human mind. It plays upon this desire, talking about "the gentle joy of surrendering", of "opening oneself". and of "experiencing the unequalled bliss of total sharing".

Vampires will often feed from sleeping victims. If the victim is not awakened when the vampire makes the wound, he or she

will remember nothing of the experience when they awaken normally. At the very most, the victim will recall that he or she experienced a dream of intense and sensual pleasure.

Unless the subject of the charm-gaze has some concrete reason to believe that the vampire will kill him or her out of hand, submitting to feeding is not a self-destructive act within the parameters of the *charm* spell effect.

Drained attribute points will typically regenerate at a rate of 1d3 points per day of rest. Hit points drained by a vampire heal at the same rate as normal damage. The effect of having a spell drained is just the same as if the spellcaster attempted to cast the spell, but failed. He or she is free to rememorize the spell the next day.

Philosophical Considerations - Why Blood?

Why must vampires drink blood? Even those few "atypical" individuals who do not drink it require sustenance that is in some way an equivalent to blood. (Note: "atypical" is certainly as subjective a term as "typical" when referring to vampires.) As with so many facets of vampirism, the answer is likely symbolic. Generally speaking, vampires are creatures of undying evil who hold an implacable hatred for the living. Even those who do not actively hate the living consider them to be somehow meager reflections of vampires, and "cattle" whose sole purpose is to act as victims and tools for the vampiric "elite". This belief system carries with it the implication that vampires feed upon the living in both a spiritual and metaphorical sense, it would be appropriate, then, that vampires should also feed on the living in a physical sense as well.

Where does this symbolic equivalency arise from? Some sages believe that it is a jest of the ancient and evil deities who originally set vampires loose upon the worlds of the universe. Others hold that a parallel arises from the very nature of reality; in other words, we know that evil preys upon good, and vampires vindicate this axiom on the supernatural level.

Alternative Forms of Sustenance

The variety of "foods" on which "atypical" vampires may subsist is staggering, and usually particularly disgusting. I personally know of some vampire-like creatures who feed on cerebrospinal fluid, draining this clear liquid through holes that they punch in their mortal victims' skulls or spines. Obviously, such wounds are much more immediately debilitating to the victims, and much slower to heal. Similarly, there is reputed to be a line of vampires that subsists on lymphatic fluids drained from the glands of their victims. Recurring but unsubstantiated rumors also tell of creatures who drain the aqueous and vitreous humors from the eyes of (demi)humans, rarely if ever killing their victims through this feeding, but always leaving them blind.

There are also known to be vampires that "feed" upon life energy directly from their victims via touch, without the intermediary of blood. These creatures feed upon the actual life experience levels of victims, who will eventually perish if they are completely depleted of their acquired memories and skills. Other creatures feed in ways that are more arcane or symbolic, tapping their victims' intelligence, will power (Wis), strength, dexterity, force of personality (Cha), even physical vigor (Con). Some can drain these characteristics simply by striking a target in melee; others, and thankfully, the more common monsters, can feed only from willing or immobilized victims, and do so through a "kiss". Still others drain vigor from their victims by inflicting physical damage, seeming to draw their sustenance from the pain they cause to their prey (i.e., they absorb hit points directly when they strike a victim in combat).

Most feared by spellcasters, there are even some who seem to feed on the magical power that flows through the body of a wizard, or even a priest. A touch from such a creature causes the victim to forget spells that have been memorized, and - in one extreme case of which I know - allows the vampire to cast the forgotten spell at the level of ability possessed by the victim!

Being of extremely high Intelligence, a few vampires are sensitive to natural balances, albeit in a sense warped by their undead state. Thus, they may occasionally depart from their usual diet of blood in order to avoid depleting the neighboring village of all life.

Here allow me to summarize some of the possible dietary items:

 Blood

- ☼ Spinal fluid
- ☼ Heart (eaten)
- ☼ Brain (eaten)
- ☼ Bone marrow
- ☼ Body water
- ☼ Body salt
- ☼ Life energy levels
- ☼ Abilities (Con, Int. etc.)
- ☼ Memories (spells or proficiencies)
- ☼ Bodily health (hit points)
- ☼ Mental disciplines psionic strength points (if used)

Psychical Effects of Feeding

When a vampire feeds, its body shows various physical signs. Its skin, normally cool and pale, becomes warmer and takes on a healthy, almost ruddy tinge. In addition, the creature's levels of energy and activity seem higher.

In contrast, when a vampire has gone without feeding for a period of time, the reverse effects occur. Its skin becomes colder and paler, sometimes inhumanly so. The creature also becomes more sluggish. (Do not misunderstand this: the monster is still capable of incredible feats of exertion when necessary. The "sluggishness" relates more to its preferred level of activity than to its capabilities. A sluggish vampire is very much like a sluggish shark: to consider either of them to be weak is a dangerous error.) These symptoms become even more pronounced if the creature has been unable to feed sufficiently, as discussed in the following section.

Note that the above comments refer to "typical", blood-drinking vampires. Vampires that depend on other sources of sustenance *may* exhibit similar changes, but it is foolish to depend on these signals in any way.

Frequency

How often must a vampire feed? This question has been debated for years, perhaps centuries, by sages everywhere. The following comments are based on my own research, and are not guaranteed to be true. Other reputable researchers might have different answers.

Generally speaking, a "typical" vampire must feed once in any 24-hour period. Not doing so causes the vampire to grow weaker until, with prolonged denial of sustenance, the creature is destroyed. It may be surprising, but it seems to be the case that a vampire's need for food decreases as it ages. Perhaps this is a result of its growing connection with the Negative Material Plane, from which it draws much of its unnatural energy. The vampire's hunger for blood *increases* with age, however. A Patriarch can subsist on much less blood than can a Fledgling, but the ancient creature has the *desire* to drink much more blood than its youthful kin. Should its source "dry up", so to speak, it can subsist on "starvation rations" much better than can the Fledgling creature, however.

A typical Fledgling vampire must drink 12 hit points worth of blood in every 24-hour period. The source of this blood is immaterial; it can come from living victims, fresh corpses, animals, or even scaled "caches" of chilled blood. This requirement is decreased by 1 hit point for every age category beyond Fledgling. Thus a Patriarch could subsist on only 6 hit points worth of blood every day, but would be unwilling to do so without good cause.

For each day that a vampire does not feed sufficiently it loses 1 HD, with all concomitant losses of THAC0, saving throws, etc. In addition, it "regresses" in power with regard to Str, magic resistance, and period of sunlight tolerance as if it had lost one age category for each day it fed insufficiently. As an example, a Patriarch on the first day of starvation loses 1 HD (decreasing to 13). In addition, its Str drops to 19, Its magic resistance to 25%, and its period of sunlight tolerance drops to 1 hour. If it doesn't feed enough the next day, it loses

another Hit Die (decreasing to 12). Its Str remains at 19, but its magic resistance drops to 20% and its period of sunlight tolerance to 3 turns.

A vampire cannot "regress" below Fledgling with regard to Str, magic resistance, or period of sunlight tolerance. It does continue to lose 1 HD for every day on which it does not feed adequately.

Vampires quickly regain the HD and abilities they have lost. On each successive day that a vampire feeds sufficiently, it regains 1 lost HD and one age category.

If a vampire is ever reduced to 1 HD, the creature becomes a raging beast, incapable of doing anything but attacking any source of blood.

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It was the closest of close-run things. We knew that, outside the old castle, the blood-red sun was less than a finger's span above the western horizon, and that we had but minutes to do what was necessary. The vampire's resting chamber was cunningly trapped, as we expected, but my nimble-fingered colleagues were able to disarm the devices without mishap. I held the stake and the mallet as we approached the ornately-carved coffin that must have been the fiend's resting place. My companions threw back the lid..

The coffin was empty!

That was when the hissing laughter - from nowhere and from everywhere around us - filled our ears. "Unfortunate, chided the harsh voice. So close. But the day has ended, my friends, and now so do your lives.

- From the journal of Mordent Zachariah

The Sleep of the Dead

Vampires can instinctively sense when dawn is approaching, and feel an overriding urgency to retire to a safe place to sleep. As sunrise draws near they feel a growing panic if they are not within their sanctuary. Once they are safely sequestered away, they can feel, deep in their bones, the moment at which the sun first appears over the horizon. Their reaction at this moment varies from creature to creature.

Depth of Sleep

There are basically two groups of resting vampires: those who truly sleep, that is, become fully unconscious, and those who merely become partially dormant. In human terms the difference is between a deep sleep, where the sleeper is totally oblivious to his surroundings, and a light doze where he is at least partially aware at all times. I will first discuss those vampires who fall into a deep sleep. At the moment of dawn, such a creature sinks into a state of complete oblivion, and cannot be roused by any means before the moment that the sun touches the western horizon. These creatures are obviously highly vulnerable because they have no way of sensing the approach of a hunter or the touch of the stake's point before the first blow of the mallet. However, at the instant that the sun sinks below the horizon, these creatures awaken and are instantly in full command of all their powers. This means there is none of the disorientation felt by many (demi)humans upon first awakening.



Vampires who only "doze" are much more dangerous quarry. They are always peripherally aware of what is going on around them. Depending on the circumstances, it may not be possible for hunters to sneak up on a dozing vampire without rousing it. Loud noises or bright lights will definitely wake the creature. If the creature is within a coffin or sarcophagus, it will awaken the instant that this vessel is opened (if it has not already been roused).

It is important to remember that vampires are incredibly cunning. Just because the dozing creature has been awakened by the approach of hunters does not necessarily mean that it will immediately leap to the attack. If circumstances warrant, it may prefer to "play dead", and lure its would-be killers to their doom. Vampires that doze also wake instantly and without disorientation at the instant the sun sinks below the western horizon. If such a creature is awakened while the sun is still above the horizon, however, it does suffer some moments of disorientation and is unable to use some of its abilities for some time.

Note that the depth at which a vampire sleeps will have a great effect on the sanctuary it chooses, and how it protects its resting place. Vampires that sink into deepest oblivion at the moment of dawn recognize their immense vulnerability and will, thus, go to the greatest lengths to hide their sanctuaries and attempt to make them totally impenetrable to mortals who might be hunting them. Any traps that they place will be as lethal as the creature can possibly make them because it knows any hunter who gets through the traps will almost certainly end the vampire's existence.

Vampires who doze, however, might make different decisions. They, too, are vulnerable during daylight hours, but nowhere near as much as their deep-sleeping kin. While they will generally be as careful about hiding and warding their sanctuaries (why take chances, after all?), they will be less concerned if circumstances prevent them from taking all the precautions they might want. They will probably set lethal traps, but also tripwires and other warning devices to alert them to the approach of attackers.

Soil from the Homeland?

Many tales pertaining to vampires claim that the creatures must sleep in vessels that contain soil from their homeland, or even soil taken from their own graves. If they do not do so, these tales tell, they are destroyed. As with so many such tales, the truth varies from individual to individual, and from place to place. And, of course, with vampires there are always exceptions to the rules. However, these creatures at least believe the presence of such an item to be an absolute requirement, and will go to any lengths to ensure that it is present. I use the word "believe", simply because I have never heard any substantiated report of a vampire being destroyed through not having the required item present during sleep. Vampires believe they will be destroyed if an appropriate element is not present, and so will make sure that it is present. But is this belief based in fact?

Personally, I find myself drawn to the idea that this "requirement" is actually a baseless superstition, perpetuated and believed by vampires as well as mortals over the centuries. I am convinced that a vampire forced to sleep without a symbolic tie to its mortal life will not be destroyed. Of course, proving this experimentally is somewhat problematical. Vampires will obviously not test my hypothesis because, if I am wrong, they will be destroyed. And vampire hunters are understandably more interested in destroying the creatures than in experimentally examining their limitations. Still, it is an interesting concept to consider.

Vampires Without Sanctuary

What happens to a vampire that is prevented from reaching its sanctuary before the moment of sunrise? The consequences vary widely.

Some creatures - particularly, it seems, those individuals that sleep deeply - fall unconscious the instant the sun appears above the horizon. They are totally insensate, and totally vulnerable. If the light of the sun falls upon their bodies, they are destroyed (although not always instantly, as in the case of older vampires). They are also vulnerable to anyone with a stake and mallet. It seems that Fledgling and Mature vampires most likely fall into this category.

Others can remain conscious past sunrise, but their first and only priority is to reach their sanctuary so they can fall asleep. Most of these creatures lose their ability to shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form as soon as the sun appears above the horizon, whether or not the rays of the sun actually fall on the creatures' bodies. (It is knowledge of this weakness that adds to their panic as dawn approaches.) These creatures have only a few (1d3) hours in which to reach sanctuary and sleep, or they are irrevocably destroyed. Old, Very Old and Ancient vampires most likely fall into this category.

Finally there are those creatures who retain all their powers after sunrise so long as they are not exposed to the direct rays of the sun. Sleeping is still of the highest priority to these creatures. However, they have hours in which to reach their sanctuary and fall asleep. In fact, these creatures can remain active - if so forced - almost the whole day. If, however, they have not yet reached sanctuary and fallen asleep by the moment of sunset, they are irrevocably destroyed. Such vampires that have been kept from sleep for several hours do not wake instantly at the moment of sunset. Instead, they continue to sleep for a number of additional hours equal to the time they were kept awake. This could well make it impossible for a vampire to feed sufficiently, and hence weaken the creature. Eminent and Patriarch vampires are most likely to fall into this category.

It is virtually impossible to predict beforehand how an individual vampire will react to being prevented from reaching its

sanctuary. I have faced a Fledgling vampire, no more than two years undead, that was virtually undismayed at being prevented from sleeping for several hours. Conversely, I have heard tales of an Eminent vampire that fell unconscious at the instant of sunrise, no matter what danger it faced in doing so.

Exceptions

Predictably, there are exceptions. There are some vampires that seem not to need sleep at all. Or if they do, they are more like mortals in that they can delay sleeping for hours or days, should it be necessary, and suffer relatively little as a consequence. When these creatures are also immune to the rays of the sun, they become hideously dangerous foes. They can easily blend with human society, moving equally freely by day or by night. It is lucky that these creatures are very rare!

When Travelling

The dual requirements of sleeping and avoiding the rays of the sun make traveling long distances somewhat problematic for vampires. Short trips are relatively simple because the creatures can travel by night - on horseback or via other normal transportation, or in animal form - and hide out in makeshift sanctuaries during daylight hours. Vampires that must sleep on soil from their homeland or with some item symbolic of their mortal life are more limited than others, of course. They must find some way of carrying the soil or suitable item with them. This usually precludes travel in animal form unless minions have previously arranged suitable sanctuaries along the way and at the final destination. For vampires masquerading as mortals in civilized lands, this is relatively easy to arrange, of course. Representatives of the vampire can purchase or rent suitable buildings and furnish them with art and objects that have symbolic significance to the vampire. Who, after all, would suspect vampiric activity if a wealthy businessman were to send ahead and have a country manor decorated in a style reminiscent of his childhood home?

Vampires will sometimes arrange to have suitable sanctuaries carried with them. (This is usually required if the vampire plans an extended voyage.) For example, a creature could travel in a coffin that is supposedly carrying a dead body "home" to its final burial place. The people charged with transporting the coffin could be servitors of the vampire or could be simple tradespersons hired to do the job. The vampire could stay within the coffin, never emerging, and suffer the effects of starvation. Alternatively, the creature could sneak out of its coffin at night to hunt. (Obviously, this second option represents a grave risk, particularly in a closed environment such as a ship at sea.) The smartest alternative would be to arrange for a cache of blood, if the requirement for low temperature could somehow be met.

While a coffin is almost traditional as the portable sanctuary of a vampire, virtually anything else large enough could serve. The major advantage of a coffin, from a vampire's point of view, is that most people are somewhat unwilling to open it up to confirm its contents. This is particularly the case if the body within is said to have died of some contagious disease.

Vampires are exceedingly cunning, and will show great creativity in the precautions they take. When hunting the travelling vampire, I suggest that you attempt to eliminate places that it *could not* hide, and consider every other possibility a good one.

With very few exceptions, all vampires have to sleep sometime. The exceptional, sleepless vampires that Van Richten describes still lose 1 HD for every day that they do not sleep. They regain all lost Hit Dice the first time they sleep for a whole day (i.e., from sunrise to sunset).

If awakened during daylight hours, a "dozing" vampire is stunned and unable to take any action for 1 round. Thereafter, it can't shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form for an additional 1d4 rounds, although it can cast any spells it has previously memorized.

With few exceptions (DM's choice), all vampires require dirt from their graves to be in their resting places. Within Ravenloft, vampires do not necessarily need to sleep on soil from their homeland or from their grave because of the demiplane's proximity to the Negative Material Plane. There remains some symbolic truth to the tale, however, in the case of numerous vampires. These creatures often must have within their sanctuaries, and in contact with their bodies while they sleep, some item that is symbolic of either their origin or their mortal life. This item can be virtually anything, from a piece of clothing, to a gift from a relative or friend, to an object that is somehow related to their homeland.

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I once interrogated a vampire as to how it felt to hibernate. The creature described a condition of "sleep but not sleep", where thoughts are sluggish as thick honey and take months or years to flow. Where dream images interfere with true memories. Where sounds and sometimes smells from the surface find their way into the sanctuary, but disturb the mind no more than a rose petal falling on a still pool of water. Time has no meaning, hunger has no meaning. There is no future, there is no past. There is just the endless now.

- From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

Hibernation

Vampires are by nature immortal. Why then are there so few vampires of advanced years in existence? In any given year, there are probably dozens if not scores of new vampires created within the lands. Logically, then, there should be a considerable number of Very Old and Ancient vampires.

In fact, there appears to be surprisingly few of these creatures. Why? What is it that limits the practical longevity of these creatures?

It seems that after a century, or maybe several centuries, insanity sometimes takes them (see Chapter Eleven, "The Mind of the Vampire"). Also, vampire hunters may destroy them. Or perhaps the creature, in a despair that mortals can never know, ends its own wretched existence.

With so much going against them, the longevity question turns upon itself and we ask, "How do any vampires reach Patriarch age?" I conclude that this is the main purpose of "going into the ground", or *hibernation*. When the weight of the years grows too much for a vampire, when fatalism and bleakness set in and the creature starts to fear for its sanity, the creature is advised to go into the ground. As do mortals after a good sleep, I suspect that vampires usually arise from hibernation with their minds clear of worries.

Vampires have the unique ability to hibernate for periods which may exceed a century. In addition to combating despair, the creatures may do this if circumstances are such that they are currently unable to feed sufficiently, or if they believe that they are in imminent danger from vampire hunters.

Entering Hibernation

A vampire must consciously decide to go into the ground; hibernation cannot be forced upon an unwilling vampire. The vampire does not have to "fatten itself up" for hibernation as other creatures do, but the monster *must* feed twelve or fewer hours before it actually goes into the ground. The location in which a vampire chooses to hibernate is very important. First, it must be exceptionally secure because a hibernating vampire is exceedingly vulnerable. Obviously, it must be where sunlight can never reach. Second, the site must be surrounded on all sides by rock or earth to at least several feet of thickness. A catacomb beneath a deserted temple would serve, or a cave, as would a common grave (hence the phrase, "going into the ground"). Some vampires will excavate a resting and hiding place for themselves several feet *below* the occupant of a grave.

Hibernation differs from normal vampiric sleep. Once the vampire has made the decision to hibernate and has sequestered itself away in its sanctuary, it slips into a state in which it is nominally and intermittently aware of its circumstances and of the passing of the years around it. It is difficult for the creature to rouse itself from this condition at will. Only in the fullness of time, when the cycle of hibernation draws to its close, can the vampire rise from this state of "sleep but not sleep". A hibernating vampire exercises little control over how long it stays in this dormant condition, cannot "preset" a time or date to revive, cannot predict beforehand how long the hibernation will last. Left unmolested, a vampire generally will not awaken until forty years or more have passed, and there are tales describing vampires that have hibernated for more than one and a half centuries.

Hibernating vampires are not absolutely oblivious to their surroundings while dormant. They can sense danger, should anyone break open or enter their sanctuary, and will struggle to rouse themselves. This enforced arousal is quite damaging;

in fact, there is a chance that the trauma of the awakening will instantly destroy the vampire.

Effects of Hibernation

The time that passes during hibernation is not physically kind to a vampire. Its condition deteriorates steadily; the monster loses strength and stamina while in the dormant state. Vampires that were weakened through starvation before going into the ground sometimes never emerge from dormancy, instead just fading away into oblivion. The physical appearance of a vampire is horribly changed as well. The creature's flesh and muscle mass atrophies, its skin dries and tightens, and sometimes its skeleton even shrinks marginally. A vampire that has been in hibernation for more than fifty years looks very much like a mummified corpse: wizened, dry, and very brittle. The creature's fragility is very much an illusion, of course. The overconfident vampire hunter may find himself at a distinct disadvantage against a newly awakened hibernator.

If a vampire has "atrophied" to the point where it has 6 HD or fewer remaining, the creature cannot hibernate. If it attempts to do so, it will continue to lose 1 HD per day and will eventually be destroyed. A vampire that wishes to "go into the ground" must drink at least 4 hit points worth of blood no more than 12 hours before it begins to hibernate. This blood can be from any source.

The length of time that a vampire will remain in hibernation is determined randomly. Hibernation lasts 40 + 6d20 years. For every 20 years (or portion thereof) that a vampire remains in hibernation, it loses 1 HD, and temporarily regresses one age category in terms of Str, magic resistance, and period of sunlight tolerance. A vampire cannot regress below Fledgling, although it will continue to lose 1 HD every 20 years. If the creature is reduced to 0 HD, it is irrevocably destroyed and its body crumbles to dust.

It takes 2d8 days to shift from hibernation to full wakefulness. The creature regains 1 HD and one age category (with respect to powers) for each day that it is able to feed sufficiently (12 hp worth of blood). Also, for a period of 2d4 days after awakening, it can't shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form (although it can be forced into gaseous form if reduced to zero or fewer hit points), and it suffers a -3 penalty to any and all saving throws.

Rising from Hibernation

When the cycle of hibernation comes to a close, waking from dormancy is not instantaneous. It takes the vampire days, sometimes *many* days, to rise from the depths of semiconsciousness. The condition of the creature is dependent both upon its condition before it went into the ground and upon the amount of time it has hibernated. A vampire that was weakened by starvation and then has spent a century in the ground is a vulnerable creature, indeed, and is unable to shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form for several days after waking. It is also much more susceptible to magical attacks. The creature quickly regains most of its normal powers as soon as it feeds sufficiently during the days after its arousal. Thus, the highest and often only priority for a newly-awakened vampire is to hunt and to feed. Needless to say, the monster will be ravenous to the point of recklessness.

If a vampire is awakened prematurely - by someone opening its crypt, for example - there are several issues to consider. First is the length of time the creature has been in the ground. In addition to lost HD from hibernation, it loses 1 HD for the trauma of being awakened prematurely. If this reduces the monster to 0 HD, it is instantly destroyed and crumbles to dust. If the monster survives the shock of being awakened, it is still stunned and unable to take any action for 1d4 rounds. In addition, the monster is unable to cast any spells for 2d6 hours after awakening. Finally, it suffers the inability to voluntarily shapechange and a -3 penalty to saving throws for 2d4 days.

"I lie to my offspring", the vampire told me with a smile. "It is really that simple. A new fledgling knows little about the world, about itself. In general the only information it has is what it remembers from folk isles and legends, often pure falsehood".

The vampire chuckled and settled itself more comfortably. "So I tell my offspring that their existence is inextricably linked with mine", it continued. If I am destroyed, I tell them, then so are you. Your existence is as long as mine, no longer.

They usually believe me, it added complacently. Or, at least, they fear to test the truth of what I tell them. This is a kind of loyalty; they will do whatever is in their power to protect me from harm, believing that the moment of my destruction is also the moment of theirs".

"Do they not learn otherwise?" I asked. They would", the creature admitted, "in time. But I always destroy them before that time comes. After all, I gave them unlife, so I am entitled to rescind my gift. Is that not true?"

- From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

Relations between Vampires

By nature most vampires are solitary and territorial predators, whether competitively building their power and amassing influence or just jealously defending a personal hunting ground. This rapacious, ruthless, and competitive nature sometimes brings vampires into conflict with each other.

Although vampires generally much prefer to compete through minions and champions, or even through more intangible means such as influence-peddling and rumor-mongering, the creatures do sometimes come into physical contact. Unsurprisingly, physical contact often leads to physical combat.

A few individuals apparently enjoy interacting with others of their kind, and form social microcosms of their own. This usually occurs only with vampires of considerable power and maturity that have existed long enough to pass beyond a stage of blind competition and jealousy. When such vampire "societies" form, they can become frighteningly powerful, frighteningly fast, and there is virtually nothing that can stand in their way.

It is lucky, then, that these societies are usually relatively short-lived (although in this context that may mean they last as long as a century or two). Over the centuries vampires may learn patience and cooperation, but only to a degree. At their core they are still selfish and evil monsters, and this nature will almost inevitably resurface. Initially a society of vampires may appear stable and united, but soon enough one vampire and then the others will develop their own hidden agendas. What may begin as solidarity will eventually degrade into the mere semblance of cooperation, with each vampire conniving to gain power, prestige, or wealth, to the detriment of its "colleagues". Societies sometimes break up when the participants finally choose to go their separate ways, but most societies are torn apart by infighting, both figurative and literal.

Some vampires know better than to form societies with others of their kind. Instead, they form shifting and temporary alliances with other vampires in positions of power. Vampires that choose this route will be as careful in their dealings with their kin as thieves are with their fences: the deals will be so constructed that both sides gain and neither party comes under the sway of the others.

Younger vampires - those below the age category of Ancient - will almost never reach any level of cooperation. They are almost exclusively loners, and the only other vampires they will consider coming in contact with are the slave creatures that they, themselves, have made. Some of these "master" vampires use their slaves as food gatherers, sending the servant creatures forth to feed in the world, take the concomitant risks, and then return to offer their necks to their controller. But this is a significant risk: should the master vampire's care and control slip even in the slightest degree, the servant creatures could accidentally or purposely lead hunters to the master's lair.

Of course, vampires well know the bitterness and the hatred that their servant creatures feel toward them, and so are aware that their servants will turn on them and destroy them should the chance ever arise. For this reason, master vampires usually destroy their servants long before they become powerful enough to challenge for their own dominance.

Combat Between Vampires

How can one vampire harm another? First, so great is the enchantment that surrounds a vampire that one creature is able to strike and physically damage one of its own kind. The one exception is in the case of Patriarchs: a Patriarch can only be struck by another of its own age category.

Second, there is always the possibility of spell usage. Spellcasting vampires might well have powers capable of harming, even destroying their kin. (Note that one vampire is incapable of charming another, however, due to the monsters' innate resistance to "charm attacks".)

Although a blow in melee from one vampire can inflict physical damage on another, it should be noted that one beast is unable to drain energy experience levels from another. Why? The likelihood is that the creatures are not alive, and have no life energy to drain.

Vampires that drain other attributes through a strike in combat can drain them from another vampire, however. I, myself, have seen two of the creatures locked in mortal combat - hands locked like vices around each other's throats, hissing and spitting like cats! As they struggled, horrible wounds opened in the flesh of one vampire. Meanwhile, the other grew progressively more feeble until it finally collapsed to the ground, whereupon the victor tore the defeated's head from its body. As the victor stood above its vanquished foe, howling its elation, the wounds on its face and body closed with the unnatural speed typical of vampires. I speculate that the conqueror was actually sapping the fundamental strength (Str) of the conquered, while the conquered was only able to drain the health (hit points) from his better.

Kin-Nectar

The majority of vampires can feed only from a willing, charmed, or otherwise immobilized but living victim. Can one of these creatures feed from another vampire? Apparently, yes. The following discussion will concentrate on those creatures that drink blood, because these are the most common. Similar conditions apply for other types of feeders.

One vampire can drink the blood of another. In fact, vampiric blood, described by one vampire as "kin-nectar", is a better source of sustenance than the blood of mortals at least in one sense. Vampires need to drink much less kin-nectar than they would mortal blood in order to meet their food requirements.

Yet few vampires enjoy drinking kin-nectar, it seems; they vastly prefer the taste of blood, supped from the vessel of a living (demi)human. It may be that there are some vampires that prefer kin-nectar, and perhaps one or two who requires it. These creatures are in the unenviable position of depending upon other vampires for their survival - not a particularly secure position in which to be.

If one vampire drinks the blood of another, the creatures enter into a close relationship: for several (1d3) hours following the feeding, the two creatures' minds are so intimately linked that they can communicate telepathically as easily as by speaking. This telepathy persists regardless of distance or intervening matter as long as both vampires are on the same plane. One vampire cannot "overhear" thoughts not intended as communication, however.

In addition, the vampire who drank the blood has a significant level of control over the vampire who provided the blood for as long as the telepathic link exists. The creature who fed can issue orders telepathically and the second creature must obey them, within reason. Most vampires will find this interconnection distasteful and, in the case of the creature who was fed upon, downright dangerous, so the monsters usually shun kin-nectar. Most will only participate in this kind of feeding on either side if they totally trust the other participant (which is very rare) or if they simply have no choice in the matter.

It is nearly impossible for two vampires to feed exclusively from each other for a protracted period of time. They can do it for the short term, but it will become debilitating to both creatures in the long term. Such "mutual" arrangements would be incredibly rare in any case, because both vampires would in turn make themselves vulnerable to the telepathic orders of the other.

The restrictions on orders given by one vampire who has drunk the kin-nectar of another are the same as for a *suggestion* spell. The vampire gets no saving throw to resist the orders, and its magic resistance does not apply.

A vampire feeding from another requires only half as many hit points worth of blood (rounded up) as it usually does to meet its food requirements. On the other hand, the vampire fed from loses twice as many hit points as the other vampire drinks. For example, a Fledgling need drink only 6 hit pints worth of blood, but the donor vampire loses 12 hit points. These lost points represent a special case; the creature cannot regenerate these points normally. To regenerate hit points lost to feeding, the vampire must feed sufficiently to meet its daily requirement, and must do so upon mortal blood (whether from an animal, a demihuman, or from a cache of stored blood). Immediately after the feeding is complete, the donor vampire can begin to regenerate the hit points lost to feeding. (If the vampire feeds in turn from another vampire, it cannot regenerate those lost hit points.)

Progenitor and Offspring

Conventional wisdom is categorical on one point: newly-formed vampires are slaves of the creatures that created them, with no free will of their own. Even one of the most reputable tomes on the subject repeats this: "Once they become undead, the new vampire is under the complete control of its killer".

But how true is this? And what constraints are there on the control that does exist? For the first days or weeks of a Fledgling vampire's existence, it is highly susceptible to the orders of its creator - so I have discovered from my research. If there is no telepathic bond between creator and created, then the master vampire must be in the vicinity, and must be willing to communicate with its offspring.

How, then, do vampires keep their slaves under their control beyond this period? They do so in much the same way that mortals dominate others: through intimidation. The fledgling is new to the vampiric world, and at least partially ignorant of its own abilities. Its creator can, if it is careful, create the perception in its offspring that the master is immensely more powerful and knowledgeable than the newly-created vampire, which it may in fact be. Through simple intimidation and by playing on the offspring's natural doubts and fears, the master can create a situation enabling it to "rule" for decades.

The reader may realize that this situation is totally different and much more unstable than the "traditional" picture of the master and its unquestioning slaves. Offspring vampires may have considerable free will from the moment of their creation, although they do have an "inborn" propensity to bow to the will of their creator. After several years have passed, however, this propensity wears off.

The journal entry that opened this chapter indicates the risks that accompany creating an offspring vampire. The "master" must keep the intimidation level high and discipline tight. If the offspring senses weakness in its master, it may consider challenging for dominance or simply fleeing. As time passes the offspring vampire will learn more about its own strengths, and probably more about its master's weaknesses. As soon as the offspring believes that it may be able to defeat its master, the two creatures will almost certainly come into conflict. Of course, the majority of vampires will destroy their offspring before this point is reached. Some, however, will send them away, officially granting them their freedom. (This is merely another psychological trick, if an offspring vampire is "freed" before it realizes it can depose its "master", it may feel some gratitude toward its creator.)

The vast majority of vampires view their offspring simply as disposable tools, to be used and then discarded. Yet there are some, it seems, that feel some kind of empathy for their "children". These rare creatures will "raise" their offspring, teaching them all they need to know to survive in the world, and then send them forth to "live their own lives". Gratitude is an uncommon thing among vampires, however, and offspring of such sentimental creatures generally view this "care" as weakness. Vampires who care for their offspring are most often destroyed by those very offspring.

Vampires differ in their motivations when creating offspring. Some fledglings do it accidentally, not yet understanding the consequences of killing a foe. Others do it to create slaves for themselves. Some few seem to need contact with members of their own kind, and create companions. This latter group are more likely to become the sentimental "parents" described above, and are hence most likely to meet destruction at the hands of their offspring.

When a vampire is destroyed, all semblance of control over its offspring immediately vanishes. Most offspring will immediately go about their own business. I have heard of some rare creatures who have sought the destroyers of their creator and wreaked vengeance on them. I find this somewhat hard to believe because it implies a sense of loyalty, even love

of a kind, between vampires. Still, stranger things have proved to be true.

For the first 4d4 days of the Fledgling vampire's unlife, any order given to it by its creator has the effect of a *suggestion*, against which the Fledgling receives neither saving throw nor magic resistance rolls. After this initial period the automatic susceptibility of the Fledgling to its creator diminishes. The offspring still has some propensity toward following the instructions of its master, but this propensity is considerably less than it was initially. This state lasts for several years.

For the first 1d4 years of its unlife, the offspring vampire will react to its master as though under a *charm* spell. This isn't strictly a spell effect, however, so the offspring doesn't receive regular saving throws to shake off the effect. If the master instructs it to do something that is dangerous to the offspring, but not suicidal, the offspring receives a saving throw vs. spell. If it successfully saves, it refuses to follow that order, although in general the charm stays in effect.

Vampire Brides and Grooms

"I truly loved her", the vampire admitted quietly, pain showing on its normally stoic face. "Would you believe that? I loved her. I would have given anything, anything - even the rest of eternity - if she had loved me in return".

It paused, and I thought for an incredible moment that the monster might cry. But then it seemed to rally its strength, and its chill gaze nailed me to my chair.

I misjudged her totally", the vampire continued, its voice now virtually emotionless, "I thought she would retain the innocence I so loved in her as a mortal, but no. I misjudged her, and it was my greatest mistake. She saw me not as a protector, but as a rival, as a slave master. And she dedicated herself to freeing herself from my yoke". It chuckled mirthlessly. "It is so obvious now, but for all those decades I fooled myself. I suppose - " and its voice almost broke, for all the creature's superhuman control. "I suppose I had the love in my eyes, so that I was unable to see what was right in front of me.

"The first clue I actually paid attention to", it continued after a moment, "was when the hunters arrived in my sanctuary. Can you imagine my horror, my humiliation, my degradation? The only way they could have found me was through my bride, my love", and it spat the last word with undying hatred.

"I killed them all, of course", it went on. "My beloved did not know all my strengths. And then I hunted her down. Not difficult, really. Then I dissolved the bond". It bowed its head in remembered pain. "I dissolved the bond and tore her traitorous body apart. And do you know? I think the pain that I felt was greater than hers..."

- From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

An especially rare and unique relationship between vampires is in that of the "Bride" or "Groom". Actually, considering that the fact all vampires were once mortal, it is almost surprising that this phenomenon is not more prevalent. No matter what changes undeath has wrought, some vestiges of mortal thoughts and aspirations still survive, I am sure. Eternity can weigh heavily on the spirit - even the spirit of a vampire. Of all the burdens of immortality, perhaps the greatest is loneliness. To whom can a vampire bare its soul and admit its fears? With whom can the vampire vent some of the intense sensuality which seems to pervade its breed? From whom can it receive consolation for the past, comfort for the present, and hope for the future? An eternity of solitude can be an eternity of pain.

It is no wonder, then, that vampires sometimes long for a special companion. Fortunately for these tortured souls - and unfortunately for their mortal victims - vampires are capable of creating such companions. These special minions, if such a term truly applies, are known as "Brides" and "Grooms". These terms may seem inappropriate, carrying with them as they do the emotional "baggage" of love and marriage. While marriage is not an issue, a form of love - or at least of emotional bonding - is involved, so the terms are not as inappropriate as they may, at first, seem.

Creating a Bride or Groom

Creating a bride or groom, although seemingly a simple process, requires an exhausting exercise of much power by the creating vampire. For this reason, only vampires of advanced age and capability can even assay this procedure. A bride or groom can be created only by a vampire of age category Ancient or greater, and not even all of those are capable of doing so.

The first step requires that the vampire find an appropriate mortal to be the bride. (Note: With apologies to the feminine gender, I shall use the term "bride" and the pronouns "she" and "her" to refer to both brides and grooms. Unless otherwise specified, there are no restrictions or differences in the procedure based on the sex of either vampire or victim.) Usually this problem solves itself. Very rare is the vampire who decides in isolation, "I will make a bride", and then seeks out a mortal to fill the bill. In the vast majority of cases, the process occurs in the reverse order. The vampire is drawn emotionally to a mortal and decides, because of the strength of this emotion, to make her his bride.

The nature of this emotion can vary widely. It may simply be hormonal lust (after all, the physiological systems related to such effects in mortals are still present, and sometimes still functional, in vampires). It may be an obsession dating from the days before the vampire became what he now is, as is the case with Strahd Von Zarovich's obsession with women who resemble his lost Tatyana. In these cases, the vampire creates its bride in cold blood, for the sole purpose of satisfying its own desires.

Sometimes, however, the emotion may be close to what mortals classify as love. The happiness of the vampire becomes tied up with the prospective bride, and its well-being depends on hers. In these cases, the vampire might actually believe it is bestowing a gift when it turns the mortal into its bride - the gift of freedom from aging and death.

To actually create the bride, the vampire bestows what is known as the "Dark Kiss. It samples the blood of its mortal paramour - once, twice, thrice - draining her almost to the point of death. This process causes the subject no pain; in fact, it has been described as the most euphoric, ecstatic experience, in comparison to which all other pleasures fade into insignificance. Just as the subject is about to slip into the terminal coma from which there is no awakening, the vampire opens a gash in its own flesh - often in its throat - and holds the subject's mouth to the wound. As the burning draught that is the vampire's blood gushes into the subject's mouth, the primitive feeding instinct is triggered, and she sucks hungrily at the wound, enraptured. With the first taste of the blood, the subject is possessed of great and frenzied strength (Str 18, if the character's Str isn't already higher), and will use it to prevent the vampire from separating her from the fountain of wonder that is its bleeding wound. It is at this point that the creator-vampire's strength is most sorely tested. He is weakened by his own blood loss, and also by his own rapture as the "victim" of a dark kiss. Overcoming the sudden loss of strength and the inclinations of lust, the vampire must pull her away from its own throat, hopefully without harming her, before she has overfed. Should the subject be allowed to feed for too long (more than 2 rounds), she is driven totally and incurably insane, and will die in agony within 24 hours.

Once the subject has stopped feeding, she falls into a coma that lasts minutes or hours, (2d12 turns), at the end of which time she dies. Several (1d3) hours later, she arises as a Fledgling vampire - and her creator's bride! Her vampire creator must be present to teach her the requirements and limitations of her vampiric existence. Otherwise, she might not understand the necessity of feeding, and might even wander out into the sunlight and be destroyed.

The first moment that the bride realizes the ugly truth about her new nature can be highly traumatic, unless her creator takes steps to ease her acceptance. Even if her creator is sensitive to her emotional pain and gentles her into realization, only the most strong-willed person can come through that moment of understanding with sanity totally unshaken. The simultaneous acts of love and hatred, or taking a bride by murdering her, create an emotional paradox which is often impossible to resolve. In some cases, perhaps a majority, the knowledge of her fate totally unseats the bride's reason, and she becomes wildly and irrevocably mad. If this occurs, most creator vampires will be forced to mercifully destroy their brides - in the prescribed manner, as described later - and end their suffering. Of course, some cruel creatures will simply allow her wander off to meet her own fate, even though doing so will cause the creator vampire some damage.

The actual process of creating a bride inflicts some limited damage on the vampire. Even the small amount of blood the bride drinks weakens it for some time.

Any vampire can have only one bride or groom at a time. A vampire is physically incapable of creating another bride or groom while it has a companion already bound to it in this relationship. If the vampire wishes to create another bride or

groom, it must either destroy its current bride or groom or follow the ritual described later to dissolve the bond between them.

The Relationship

Although there are some folk tales that describe the bride of a vampire as its slave, in much the same way that offspring are slaves, a bride is free-willed from the moment of her creation. The creator vampire does have great influence over the bride, however, although this control is totally nonmagical. When a vampire is created in the traditional manner - that is, when a victim's life energy is completely drained away - the new fledgling instinctively understands much about the vampiric way of unlife, and about its own strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Not so the bride. Newly-created brides are generally ignorant of their own capabilities. If in life they heard folk tales and myths about vampires, they might have some vague conception, but often these tales are totally wrong. The bride is effectively dependent - totally dependent - on her creator, to learn how to survive as a vampire. This obviously gives the creator great power over the bride. By lying to her or bending the truth, he can convince her that she must obey his every order or suffer horrible consequences. With time, and through experimentation, the bride might find out the true level of control her creator has over her - that is, none. She is still in a very inferior position, of course, because she is a Fledgling and her creator is at least an Ancient. Some creator vampires - particularly those who created the bride out of love - will be totally honest with their creation, depending on loyalty, friendship and even reciprocated love, to stop the bride from trying to bring about their destruction. This is probably the most beneficial situation for both vampires, because two creatures cooperating are much more effective than two creatures involved in machinations against each other. A vampire and bride who truly love and trust each other make a team that is exceptionally difficult to defeat!

Communication

One of the reasons "married vampires" are so difficult to defeat is that a vampire and its bride share a telepathic communication that has a range measured in miles. Regardless of intervening terrain or obstacles, the two vampires can communicate instantly and silently as if they were speaking together. It is important to note that this communication is very much like silent speech. One vampire cannot read the other's mind against the subject's will, so the bride cannot pilfer secrets from the mind of her creator. As the sole exception to this statement, one member of the pair can sense incredibly strong emotion in the other's mind. (This could be equated to hearing a vocalized gasp of surprise or fear.) Only extreme fear, pain, surprise, sadness or exaltation can be sensed in this manner.

Love and Jealousy

No matter how close and honest the relationship between a vampire and its bride, the bride is still a vampire, with the selfish, ruthless, and rapacious characteristics which that implies. Relationships between a vampire and its bride are rarely idyllic, and are often stormy enough to make a civil war seem like a garden party in comparison. As the bride grows in power and knowledge she will probably start acting in her own best interests, rather than in those of her creator, and begin to gratify her own desires. Her creator will frequently respond to this selfish behavior with intense and raging jealousy. Many of these relationships have ended with the two vampires at each other's throats, tearing each other apart. (The bride will usually lose such a conflict, of course.)

Negative Consequences of the Bond

While the bond is in existence, there is a strong metaphysical link between the two vampires' unlife forces. (No doubt this link explains the telepathic communication the creatures share.) So close is this link that the destruction of one member of the bond inflicts grave damage to the other member.

Dissolving the Bond

The bond that joins the bride and her creator is eternal, unless the creator takes measures to break the bond. Although the bride must participate in this ritual - either voluntarily or otherwise - she cannot instigate it. The ritual *must* be performed at the will of the creator. To break the bond, the creator vampire must first open a wound in its own body and allow a quantity of its blood to spill on the ground. It must then open a similar wound in its bride, and allow her blood to mix with its own in a puddle on the ground. At this point, the bond between the two vampires is terminated and can never be re established. The

telepathic link between the vampires is also ended. Perhaps most importantly, the consequences of one vampire suffering upon the destruction of the other will now not take place. One of the two vampires is free to destroy the other - if it so wishes, and if it can do so - without any repercussions.

Other Remarks

Traditionally, a female vampire will create a male groom, while a male vampire will create a female bride. This is not always the case, however. There have been cases reported where male vampires have created male grooms, while female vampires have created female companions. There are no restrictions whatsoever concerning this, apart from the vampire's own tastes and proclivities. (It horrifies me to dwell on it, but I believe to this day that my son Erasmus was not transformed into a vampire in the traditional way. I surmise that Baron Metus - may his soul rot forever in the deepest pits of the Nine Hells - turned my only son into a vampire's groom...)

Donating blood to the prospective bride or groom inflicts 3d8 hit points of damage on the creating vampire. This damage - and only this damage - does not begin to regenerate until the first sunset after the bride is created. All damage inflicted on the vampire by other means regenerates normally.

If one vampire in a bride/creator relationship is destroyed, the other vampire instantly suffers 6d6 hit points of damage. There is no limitation in range to this effect, because the psychic shock propagates through the Negative Material Plane, to which all vampires have a strong connection. Even if the two vampires are on different planes, the survivor will sense and suffer from the other's destruction. The creature is unable to begin regenerating this damage - and only this damage - until the next sunset. In addition, it cannot shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form for 24 hours, and is unable to create another bride or groom for 3d6 years thereafter.

The range of telepathic communication created by this union is 1 mile for each age category of the bride or groom. The age category of the creating vampire is immaterial.

To dissolve the bond, the amount of blood that both vampires must spill is enough to inflict 2d8 hit points of damage on each creature. They cannot begin to regenerate this damage - and only this damage - until the next sunset after the ritual is complete.

Do vampires fear death? The fiend echoed my question with a laugh. Death? No, we have already died. Then its expression sobered. "Nonexistence? Yes, that we fear above all.

"Think of it from our point of view", the creature proposed in the most reasonable of tones. You, as a human, fear death. But you are - what - fifty? If you were to die today, what would you lose? Twenty years of life, perhaps thirty at the most, and the last decade or more racked with pain and tortured with the humiliation of failing faculties. Bah! Nothing.

The vampire leaned forward, intense, as though it mattered vitally that I understand, that I be convinced. "I, as a vampire, fear nonexistence", it said quietly. "I have lived ten years for every one of yours. And if I were to be destroyed today, what would I lose? Eternity!"

It slammed an iron-hard fist onto the table. "Thirty years? I could spend thirty years studying a well-written book or a finely-wrought painting. I have time enough to think, to experience the changing of the world".

The monster sat back and viewed me from beneath hooded eyes. "Now", it purred, "do you understand why your deaths" - and I knew it meant the death of mortals - "mean nothing to me?" It paused. "... And mine means everything?"

- From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

The Mind of the Vampire

The logical first step to eliminating a vampire is understanding it, which is probably why you are reading this guide now. Of course it is vital for the successful vampire hunter to acquaint himself with the strengths and weaknesses of the monster in question, and to consider the variations of the theme. Understanding what their mortal vulnerabilities are is obviously prerequisite, as well. But I am of the opinion that understanding the psychology of the vampire is your greatest weapon. Knowing how the creature thinks may give you critical clues as to how and where it will be at its most vulnerable state. It can also save your life if you know what to say (and not to say) in the presence of a vampire.

The Psychology of Immortality

Philosophically speaking, immortality is probably the greatest difference between mortals and vampires. Mortals know that their time in the world is tightly bound: no matter how long the road may be - and for elves and other such creatures it can be long, indeed - death inescapably waits at the other end. This, of necessity, affects the way mortals view life. "Time is precious", "time is slipping away", "time is fleeting". "time, the subtle thief of youth": these are the proverbs and truisms of mortality. So many facets of (demi)human psychology and philosophy can be understood when viewed through this lens.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the psychology of vampires is very different, in some very profound ways, from that of the mortal races. Having already died, vampires little consider the specter of death as mortal do. Provided that they can avoid accidental destruction or annihilation at the hands of foes, these fiends could theoretically continue to exist to the (hypothetical) end of time!

One must not forget, however, that vampires were once mortal creatures. Although the transition to undeath drastically affects the body, its effects on the mind and on thoughts, beliefs, and philosophies are much less predictable and generally more subtle.

Before discussing the psychology of immortality in more detail, it is necessary to distinguish between the three "classifications" of vampires, based on their origins. The first classification includes those who became vampires because of "deadly desire", like Strahd Von Zarovich. The second comprises those who became vampires as the result of a curse, whether laid by a mortal or by an evil deity. The third and final category is the most numerous: those unfortunates who became vampires as a result of the attack of another vampire.

The first two categories have one major factor in common: in almost all cases, these vampires were evil while they were alive. The transition to undeath never affects this except, in some cases, to intensify their evil.

The final category is a totally different case. Victims of vampires have no commonality with regard to ethos, moral strictures, philosophy of life, care toward others, or any other factor. The victim of a vampire could be a saint or a sinner, a paladin or an assassin, a compassionate healer or a ruthless alley-basher.

The fact is that the vast majority of vampires are chaotic and evil in the extreme. How does this come about? In most cases, it seems, the transition to undeath itself works this grim change on the mentality of a vampire's victim; the Fledgling's previous world view is largely irrelevant.

There are some fascinating exceptions, however, some documented cases of Fledgling vampires that managed to cling to some of the attitudes and beliefs they had while alive - for a time, at least. What set these exceptions apart? Was it, as some sages suggest, a characteristic of the vampire that created them? Or was it something within them? My own theory is this: the victim must have an immense strength of will, and the vampire that killed the victim be prevented in some way from implementing the innate control that such creatures have over "secondary" vampires. (This can happen if the creating vampire leaves the area, or is destroyed, between the time of the victim's death and the night the victim first rises as a vampire.)

Some of the most fascinating examples of this sort of "carry over" were recorded by a sage, whose name has been tragically lost, in a treatise whose title I have borrowed (with thanks) for this chapter: *The Mind of the Vampire*. Two samples follow:

A young, naive man, raised in a sheltered and privileged family, was slain by a vampire passing through the neighborhood. At first, he was unaware of his true nature (or unwilling to accept it), believing that his death had been only profound sickness and that his "premature" burial had been a mistake by his overzealous family. Evidence of his vampiric nature soon became apparent, however, but the poor wretch was unable to fully renounce the life he left behind. He took to haunting his old home, watching from the darkness and trying to pretend he was at least peripherally part of mortal life. He would seem a totally pathetic figure had it not been for his vicious attacks against anyone who tried to take away from him the semblance of his former life. An intrepid vampire hunter was slain by one of the creatures she so tenaciously hunted: the monster that killed her was immediately destroyed by her colleagues. For whatever reason, these colleagues neglected to take the precautions to prevent the woman from rising as a vampire. The trauma the woman suffered when she realized her vampiric condition was almost - but not quite - enough to drive her mad. She had taken up her life's pursuit as a moral duty, to rid the world of the scourge of vampirism, and now she had become what she had always hated! She set the trauma aside, however, and decided to play out the hand that Fate had dealt her. She dedicated her unlife to continuing the work she had started as a mortal: to use her newfound powers to help her track down and destroy others of her kind. Unfortunately, she soon confused her mission with a quest for power, and was destroyed by Strahd Von Zarovich.

A Question of Alignment

The "typical" vampire is described as having an alignment of Chaotic Evil. There are some philosophers who believe this fact says more about (demi)human perceptions than it does about vampires. Chaotic, holders of this theory point out, means simply that vampires consider their personal interests over those of others, or of the many. While they do not go so far as to condone this stance, they do consider it to be understandable because vampires are immortal. Evil, strictly speaking, is defined as "holding life in low regard. How, these philosophers ask, could a creature be classed otherwise, that must feed on living victims to survive? The point that these philosophers proceed to make in their heavy-handed and pedantic fashion, which I have abbreviated here, is that describing vampires as Chaotic Evil actually conveys very little information about the creatures' behaviors and attitudes.

But this thesis raises a fascinating question: if I set aside the matter of feeding habits, could a vampire exhibit other behavior patterns that could be described as "good"? The answer is "theoretically yes", and I can even cite one short-lived example. A man of good alignment was killed by a vampire, and became a vampire himself under the control of his dark master. When the master vampire was destroyed, the "minion" vampire became free-willed. Even though undead, he still held the beliefs and attitudes that, while alive, had categorized him as Good. Now, in secret, he decided to use his powers to at least partially set right the damage that he and his master had done. In fact, for some decades he was a secret benefactor to his home town.

Unfortunately, things changed with the passage of time. At first, the undead benefactor wanted no thanks, and kept his identity and nature inviolably secret. He lived in a cave on the outskirts of town and saw no living soul. After a decade, however, it seems that he began to resent the fact that the townsfolk showed no signs of gratitude for his largesse. He began to leave behind notes, asking for some kind of "concrete appreciation", generally money, in return for his efforts. (He had no

need for the-money, of course: the coins were purely symbolic of the thanks he thought he deserved.) His demands became progressively higher until the townsfolk decided the requests from their secret benefactor were too great. When they ceased to pay, the vampire's feelings towards the townsfolk turned to hatred and he fell upon them like a scourge until some intrepid adventurers destroyed him.

I have a theory that explains what happened in this example. Eternity is a long time. As the years passed, the vampire's feelings began to change. Slowly he lost his sense of kinship with the living, and put his own desires, even when those desires were somewhat irrational, before theirs. Finally, he came to believe that their very fates were petty things, unworthy of his consideration.

I strongly believe that this attitude shift happens, in time, to all vampires. With some individuals, it occurs almost instantly, while with others it may take decades. Although I have no firm evidence on which to base this conjecture, I would guess that no vampire can retain a nature other than one of Chaotic Evil beyond the Fledgling age category.

Psychological Progression

Most vampires are unique personalities, as are mortal (demi)humans. Individual (demi)humans may go through a "psychological progression", themselves. Commonly, the young of all (demi)human races are rather foolhardy, simply because the concept of death has yet to become real to them. They then enter a stage of experimentation, but usually temper their curiosity with at least some caution. This is followed by a period of more conservative activity, particularly if they are starting a family.

Then, as the first chill winds of mortality begin to blow through the soul, they will often temporarily relive the wild and joyous exuberance of youth. When this phase has passed, they frequently return to conservative pursuits. And finally, in the twilight of their years, they become introspective, trying to extract the underlying meaning of their lives. Certainly (demi)humans are individuals, but still a substantial number of them pass through most if not all of these stages.

Why, then, should it be surprising that vampires also show a psychological progression? Certainly, the stages are somewhat different and the time scale involved is vastly changed, but in the "life" of even the most individualistic vampire, at the very least an echo of this progression can be detected.

The first stage is usually characterized by the creature feeling a dark joy in its new powers. It is overwhelmed by the sense of power engendered by its strength and its supernatural resilience. Newly-formed vampires will often assume animal form for the pure and simple-minded joy of flitting as bat over the forests of the night or running, seeming tireless, with a pack of wolves. Some of the creatures gain great satisfaction from testing the limits of their powers, often for the sheer joy of the experience, even if its actual exploits are basically meaningless in the grand scheme of things. (There are recurring rumors that could be interpreted as examples of vampiric "pranks" - trivial events that nevertheless required great strength or other supernormal abilities.) This experimental stage of a vampire's unlife is usually over quite quickly. Some vampires go through this phase in a few weeks or months while others continue for more than a year.

The first attitude shift usually begins when a vampire comes to recognize it is not in fact invulnerable. This can occur through stupidity, as when a Fledgling chooses an inappropriate sanctuary and is burned by the sunlight. More frequently it comes when a vampire in its foolish revels has attracted unwanted attention, and the first vampire hunters come after it.

The first party of hunters represents a turning point for the vampire. For the first time it cannot ignore the fact that there are those in the world who would like nothing more than to destroy the "blood-sucking fiend". It hardly seems to matter whether this first group of attackers actually manages to harm the vampire or not. The simple fact of their assault triggers the change because it forces the vampire to fight to defend itself, in many cases this is the first time the new vampire kills (demi)humans. The vampire will usually draw two conclusions from this event. The first is that some (demi)humans wanted to destroy it, and thus all (demi)humans are potential foes. The second is that the vampire is a phenomenal fighter, a virtual killing machine.

These two conclusions generally trigger the next phase. During this stage, many vampires become rampaging fiends, killing for the pure joy of it, sometimes feeding from several victims in one night, even after they are totally sated. Vampires will often create their first "servitor" vampires during this phase, before they realize the consequences of their actions. This phase can last for several years, and in some vampires it never ends until the creature is destroyed. For most creatures, however, this stage will last no more than twenty years.

Usually the next stage is one of boredom. The "innocent" joy the creature derived from exercising its powers is gone as the monster becomes accustomed to those powers. Even the thrill of the hunt frequently begins to pall after a decade or two. In short, the prospect of an eternity of unlife becomes bleak when all the creature has to look forward to is its next kill. There is also a great sense of loneliness.

At this point, vampires typically diverge into two groups. There are some who try to interact once more with (demi)human society in one way or another. With varying degrees of success, these creatures will try to take on the mask of mortality, to "play the grand facade", to borrow a phrase once used by a vampire (I will discuss this concept at length, later). If the creature fails in its first attempt to "assimilate", it will rarely try again. If it enjoys some measure of success, however, this is usually the path the monster will follow for the rest of its existence. It will become one of the "shadow people" (to use another vampire term), always existing more or less on the periphery of (demi)human society, moving through it when necessary, and secretly preying upon it.

Vampires who decide against dabbling in society, or those who fail in their first attempt, usually deal with the boredom and loneliness in a more destructive way. To add interest to their bleak existence, they often escalate in cruelty. Rather than killing one person, they kill a caravan of merchants. Rather than terrorizing a small village, they bully an entire county. Creatures in this phase often put much energy and imagination into new ways to spread destruction over the land. Obviously this phase is most likely to attract the attention of vampire hunters. Conspicuous behavior coupled with relative weakness has spelled the destruction of many vampires during this stage. For one reason or another, vampires rarely continue in this mode of mass destruction beyond the transition to the Mature age category (Either they "grow out of it", or are destroyed.)

One definition of "maturity" in (demi)humans is the ability to emotionally accept one's mortality. Conversely, in vampires, one definition of maturity might be to emotionally understand the consequences of immortality. Usually after about 100 years of existence, vampires will come to realize that they could truly never cease to exist... if they are careful. At this stage vampires come to realize, sometimes for the first time, just what they have to lose.

This brings about several changes. The most noticeable is that the conspicuous destruction of the preceding phase comes to an end. The creature recognizes how much of a risk this behavior represents. Not only will it eventually bring down upon it the vengeance of an individual or group powerful enough to destroy it, but it might also stumble upon such a group or individual in one of its violent forays, and thus hasten its doom.

The second change is that the vampire will start to take more precautions to protect itself. It is usually at this stage that vampires begin to set up multiple sanctuaries for themselves, all hidden and warded to the best of the creature's (considerable) abilities. If it lives in the wilderness it will seek out and summon animals and monsters to serve as guardians (and food sources in times of dearth). If it is "playing the facade" it will hire and charm guardians, and begin to establish layers of protection around itself. Vampires at this stage may consider creating servitor vampires, but will be very careful to keep them under complete control to ensure that the servitors do not attract unwanted attention, and to destroy them before they grow powerful enough to challenge their master.

Security, to be worth anything, must be security against all dangers, and perhaps the greatest danger to a vampire is boredom. Thus at this stage, vampires will often go to great lengths to ensure that they have diversions open to them. They may engage in physical activities, either in human or animal form, such as hunting purely for pleasure. They may surround themselves with things of beauty. As their intelligence grows sharper with age, they may entertain themselves by learning new languages, and by working their way through the libraries of humanity. So great may be their need for company and companionship that they create a "groom" or "bride" - a vampire with which they have an intense bond and kinship ("Grooms" and "brides" are discussed in Chapter Ten, Relationships Between Vampires.)

This stage of maturity can last for several centuries, indeed, many vampires never progress beyond it. For them, security and sources of diversion are all they need.

For other vampires, however, these two factors are required, but not sufficient. They need something more. This 'something more' is often found in a hunger for power. This is something of an echo of the earlier stage where they tried to spread their range of destruction over larger and larger areas. Now, however, it is their sphere of influence that they wish to expand.

The nature of this sphere of influence depends on the personality of the vampire. The most obvious manifestation of power hunger is the desire to rule, but a vampire king is soon faced with a quandary: what do the people of the land think when their king has ruled for fifty years? One hundred? One thousand? Sooner or later, the vampire's true nature will be revealed.

Therefore, I surmise that most vampires in this ambitious psychological stage either put a mortal "figurehead" on the throne while they rule from behind the scene, or they participate in a more insidious manifestation of power hunger: in the vast majority of societies, rulers can come and go - even despots and tyrants - and "power brokers", the buyers and sellers of information and favors, retain their places of power (and their heads) regardless of law or morality. I am sure it is in this shadowy stratum of society that those vampires prefer to operate.

Still other vampires display their hunger for power through a fixation with the magical arts. Those that were wizards (or even priests) in life will sometimes pursue their magical endeavors in unlife. With immortality, a vampire can amass a treasure trove of old tomes, laboratory equipment, and magical items. But even more valuable is the time they can dedicate to their studies. If a particularly powerful spell will take ninety years of research, what of it? A vampire has eternity to invest in the results that it desires.

I believe this cannot be over-stressed! Vampires capable of casting spells have literally unlimited time in which to research and develop new or "customized" versions of familiar spells. The nature of these idiosyncratic abilities depends on the vampire's personality. One thing is certain, however: those who would hunt a spellcasting vampire - even one "only" several centuries of age - should be prepared to face magic of a nature and lethality that can hardly be imagined by mortal mages.

Many humans and demihumans become "arrested" at particular stages of their psychological development - so, too, do vampires. Other events can later reverse this "arrested development". For this reason, there is no direct correlation between the psychological stages discussed above and age category. Particularly intuitive vampires might progress to the stage of power hunger within a mere century or two; others might never even reach this phase. As a general statement, however, a vampire who manages to achieve the age of Patriarch will have reached the pinnacle of psychological development.

Ego

"Mortals are cattle", the vampire said without animosity. "You supply us with food, primarily, but with much more as well. You are our tools, you ephemeral, posturing fools. We use you as pawns in our ongoing plans". The creature leaned forward to fix me with its icy stare. "That is the only significance to your existence: you serve us".

- From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

One consideration that does not seem to correlate with a particular phase of a vampire's psychological development is ego. Virtually from the outset, a vampire will have an exceptionally strong ego and sense of self-importance. A major consequence of this is the belief that mortals are basically unimportant. Should a mortal - hence, an "insignificant creature" - challenge it in any meaningful way, a vampire is very likely to respond with disbelieving fury and overwhelming vengeance. For this reason, among others, injuring a vampire is a dangerous thing. One should destroy the creature or not challenge it at all! There is a positive aspect to this inflated ego, however: vampires will frequently underestimate the risk that mortals pose, believing that the "obvious superiority" of immortals to such ephemeral creatures means that all mortals are incapable of harming it. A wily vampire hunter can sometimes play upon this overconfidence.

Insanity

Throughout the "life" of a vampire, there is always a grave risk of insanity. Perhaps it is the enforced separation from the community of mortals that unseats the creature's reason, or perhaps it is the prospect of the eternity that stretches before them. Perhaps it has a more physiological reason, based on the changes that occur in the brain on transition to undeath. Whatever the reason, a significant proportion of vampires become insane.

Sometimes the transition from sanity to insanity is hard to spot. As a result of the creatures' immortality, they will often engage in plans that might take centuries to reach fruition. The creatures' day-to-day actions, when viewed without the long view of immortality, might make little or no sense. The transition to insanity is insidious, subtly more complicated as the vampire engages in more and more intricate plans - "wheels within wheels within wheels", to quote one vampire - and more labyrinthine plotting. Eventually the creature's day-to-day actions make no sense to the creature itself, but it follows through with them anyway.

In other cases, the transition to insanity is more obvious. As the vampire grows older its behavior becomes more psychotic, more paranoid as it begins to grow tired of its way of life. The tiny part of it that is still mortal yearns tenaciously for the things it had in life, while the part of it that is a vampire scorns those pleasures of the flesh. Eventually, the strain of the creature's dualistic nature becomes too great. Soon after, the vampire becomes subject to fits of rage and insane behavior.

This easily identified kind of vampiric insanity will usually draw unwanted attention and eventually destruction upon the vampire. If the insane individual is the minion of a more powerful creature, the master vampire will almost always destroy the servitor at this point. In a similar vein I have heard that, in a far-away city, there were three vampires who had totally integrated themselves into the upper crust of society. These creatures were renowned businessmen, patrons of the arts, and even ex officio members of the city council. Unfortunately, one of the creatures went insane. In order to protect their own positions, the other two immediately destroyed it.

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To this day I cannot remember what first aroused my suspicions. But suspicious I was: I believed that there was something unethical or illegal about how the young Berron Labras inherited the ancient estate from his grandfather, Jonat Labras. (I admit it: I suspected that Berron has slain Jonat just to acquire the estate.)

I began to investigate. I learned that the estate had been in the Labras family for five generations. I also found that each time the estate changed hands, the current owner died or disappeared and a young relative appeared from abroad to take over the property. On a hunch, I examined samples of handwriting from all five owners of the estate. To my horror and shock, the writing samples - spread over a period of two centuries - had undeniably come from the same hand...

- From the journal of Fastil Merryvane

The Facade

In addition to hibernating, discussed earlier, another way in which vampires can minimize the risks of madness and detection is to "play the grand facade": to take on the guise of mortality and assimilate, at least partially, into mortal society. A vampire might continue this charade for weeks, years, or even decades. If it takes the precautions described in this chapter, it can continue the pretense for centuries. The vampire might imitate a noble or a peasant, or anyone in between. In any event the impersonation will usually be flawless due to a vampire's uncanny ability to imitate human gestures.

Exactly why the assumption of a mortal life aids a vampire in survival of the ages is unclear. Some sages believe that all vampires yearn for the mortality which they once had. By pretending to be a mortal and by being accepted as kin by mortals, a vampire can at least partially relive what it has lost. Others simply seem to enjoy contact with mortals, for a wide range of reasons, and seek it out almost from the start. Still others see the facade as a vital tool in achieving their goals, whatever they may be.



Whatever the reason, all vampires who decide to "play the facade" must face a similar set of problems. The ingenuity shown by these creatures in overcoming these problems is, at times, astounding.

The Roles of the Vampire

When the murders began, I realized at once that there was something familiar about the methods used. At the time I had no opportunity to dwell on it, however. The city council was breathing down my neck - understandably, because the first four victims had been city council members - and I had important skins to protect.

It was only several weeks into the reign of terror that I realized why the methods were so familiar. I had read about them in a local history book. I found the volume in the constabulary library quickly enough. The reference was two hundred years old, from when this great city had been nothing more than a tiny fishing village. But there was no mistaking the handiwork of the killer.

It was the Spider, Ancient Assassin, back in business after a hiatus of 200 years...

- From the journal of Superintendent Bryndan Oleary

The first question that must be asked by a vampire who wishes to assume the role of a mortal is, what kind of mortal? Specifically, what position in society will the vampire hold?

This is not a trivial question, and the answer will depend largely on the vampire's goals when entering society in the first place. If the intention is to garner power, then the role chosen will be different than if the vampire simply wants to stave off boredom.

Vampires will usually shun the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. There are many logical reasons for this. Obviously it is very hard to rise to a position of power from the peasantry. The risk of detection is, perhaps surprisingly, greater should the vampire mingle with the lower castes. Deviations from the norm are less tolerated than higher up the social scale, where differences can be reframed as "charming" eccentricities. Superstition is more prevalent, and people are more likely to suspect vampires in their midst. And finally, if the vampire's goal is simply to enjoy its stay in mortal society, the abuse generally heaped on the poor will quickly diminish this enjoyment to nothing.

No, it is much better for the vampire to insinuate itself into the middle or upper echelons of society. Here the creature can minimize the chance of detection by insulating itself, to whatever degree it sees fit, from casual contact. For example, a rich merchant who owns a trading coaster is expected to be somewhat limited in his contact with others. Equally, a patron of the arts can be forgiven for limiting personal contacts with others to specific occasions. In addition, the upper classes are much more likely to accept odd behavior as eccentricity than are the lower classes (speaking generally, of course).

The other major benefit a vampire gains from entering the upper class or aristocracy (if possible) is proximity to power. By insinuating itself into the social whirl of a nation's capital, a vampire can learn many things that will aid it in its own climb toward dominance (if such is its goal, of course).

Vampires are uniquely suited to insinuate themselves into society. Certainly, there is the requirement for some degree of wealth, if only as "stage dressing", but vampires have many ways with which to acquire this wealth. On the personal level they are unmatched at quickly earning the trust, respect, and friendship of mortals. This is a result of both their unusual force of personality (Cha) and judicious use of their charm-gaze. With careful work vampires can position themselves to become power brokers: dealers in information and disinformation, disseminators of rumors, and the center of a network of interlocking favors and obligations. From this position they can start to amass wealth and power, should this be their aim.

Some vampires shun the upper class haunts of the wealthy, preferring to enter a different form of society: the criminal underclass. Here urbanity and suave conversation take a back seat to violence and determination. The criminal leaders and rulers of this dark underworld reach their exalted positions through a combination of cunning and ruthlessness - both traits of which vampires have an abundance. Many of the powers possessed by a vampire would make a mortal thief sick with jealousy: the ability to shapechange, the ability to assume gaseous form, the monster's natural *spider climb* power. A vampire can quickly rise through the ranks of criminals by beating thieves at their own game and by openly eliminating rivals, eventually reaching the pinnacle of success. I have reason to believe that vampires hold positions as grandmasters of various thieves' and assassins' guilds throughout the lands of mist, and elsewhere as well. An interesting question to which I have never found an answer is whether the subordinate members of these guilds know that their leader is a vampire, and if they truly care. I would suspect that some guild members know the nature of their leader, but could not care less as long as the guild continues successfully.

Another fascinating role that a vampire may assume is that of the "gentleman adventurer". This compelling figure would be as much at home in polite society as he would be outside it (often far outside it). This is the perfect role for a vampire to take on. An aloof manner and a very daunting reputation may keep others so distant that they never suspect the adventurer's true nature. And the character's propensity for going off on adventures provides a perfect cover for the vampire's "hunting trips".

In all of these roles there is one issue that the vampire must address, and that is feeding. Usually this is not a major problem in a town or city of any size there are enough poor and destitute to sate the hunger of an army of vampires. The creatures would rarely, if ever, kill, choosing instead to drink small amounts from numerous victims. Even if the vampires' did kill, few citizens would miss a destitute beggar or two.

Disguise

To successfully infiltrate society, a vampire must disguise, or draw attention away from, those characteristics that set it apart from mortals. This often requires great cunning, yet these fiends usually have a surfeit of that characteristic.

Psychical Traits

The most obvious traits that identify a vampire are physical. For instance, the skin of a vampire is typically pale and cold. While this alone is not enough to identify the creature's true nature, when combined with other clues it can be damning. Vampires who wish to survive in society must avoid even the slightest risks.

There are two ways to handle the issue of skin color. One is to change it, either through makeup or magic. The other is to leave it alone, but simply provide a convincing rationale for it. A "gentleman adventurer" vampire might blame his cold and pale skin on a "jungle fever" he suffered some years ago and, in the absence of any reasons to suspect otherwise, he could reasonably expect everyone to believe him. Skin temperature cannot be disguised by makeup, but a vampire could simply devise an excuse for not physically touching anyone. A life-long phobia, a religious requirement, or something similar would serve.

One physical characteristic impossible to explain away is a vampire's absence of an image in a mirror. Obviously the creature's only choice is to avoid mirrors and other polished surfaces. Thus a vampire's home will have no mirrors or highly waxed floors. If the vampire should go abroad in society, it will always be on the lookout for reflective surfaces and avoid them. This is a ticklish point, and the vampire must be very careful that mortals do not realize it is avoiding mirrors, because this can be almost as damning as the lack of a reflection. Vampires are exceptionally cunning, however, and will frequently find some way of worming out of this problem.

Other physical characteristics that can give a vampire away are its resistance to physical damage and the inhuman speed with which it heals. This is easily solved, of course. The vampire simply has to avoid being drawn into combat or into situations where it might be harmed. Or, if it is drawn into combat that it cannot avoid - if challenged to a duel, for example - it has merely to slay its foe before that unlucky soul even has a chance to strike the vampire. Considering a vampire's physical strength, quickness, and magical abilities, this is usually very simple to arrange.

Behaviors

Vampires are cursed with certain behavior patterns that can give away their true nature to careful observers. The most notable of these behaviors are discussed below.

As was mentioned in Chapter Seven of this treatise, some vampires are able to ingest normal food and drink, and to keep it down for at least some period of time. But individuals unable to do so must either disguise or explain the fact that they do not eat or drink.

The easiest solution is simply never to enter a situation that involves public eating - dinner parties and the like. The vampire may simply claim a prior engagement. Alternatively, it could explain that its religion forbids it from eating and drinking in public, or even that it is allergic to many types of foods and must adhere to a very specialized diet. (This latter is something of a risk because obliging hosts might offer to meet whatever dietary requirements the individual has.) In social gatherings among the upper class, wine often flows freely. Fortunately for the vampire, it is easy to claim an aversion to alcohol based on any number of reasons (religious prohibitions, personal taste, allergic reaction, etc.).

More difficult to explain away is the creature's aversion to holy accoutrements. These are rarely in evidence at social or business gatherings, however, because religion is a personal matter and few people would risk offending guests of other faiths. The vampire would have to build a reputation as either a complete atheist or as a devotee of a faith that requires private worship, and in this way avoid being invited to temples or chapels. The greatest risk to a vampire is casual or purposeful display of holy symbols. For example, a visiting prelate might well be invited to the same social gathering as the vampire, and the prelate would almost certainly wear the holy symbol signifying his or her office. The vampire would either have to decline the invitation or otherwise avoid the prelate, or trust to his or her abilities to suppress signs of distaste brought on by the holy symbol.

If suspicion has built up to such a point that someone tests the vampire - by trying to turn it, by demanding that it grasp a holy symbol, by splashing it with holy water - the vampire has stayed around much too long. No vampire in its right mind will let things get to this level, of course. It is much safer to simply drop out of sight and reassume the facade in another

guise after years or decades have passed.

Fortunately for the vampire, the vast majority of social events in the upper strata of society occur after dark. This is not as true in the lower levels of society - another reason why vampires usually take on upper-class personae. Peasants, shopkeepers, even middle-class businesspersons must work during the day, and one who does not will attract unwanted attention. Among the "idle rich" and the aristocracy, however, few care how others spend their days. A vampire moving in these circles can simply accept only those invitations which take place after sunset. If necessary, the vampire might provide an additional explanation; perhaps he suffers from a "childhood malady" that makes the eyes painfully susceptible to bright lights.

In criminal society there is less risk of detection, because so many of this underclass's activities naturally occur at night.

The Extended Facade

The body of a vampire shows no sign of aging. Even after a millennia or more of unlife a vampire looks little changed from the day on which its mortal body died. In the short term this is not an issue. If a vampire wishes to continue its masquerade over a period of years or decades, however, this longevity is something that must be addressed, especially among the short-lived races, such as humans.

A vampire playing a prolonged facade must take care to simulate the effects of aging. This can be done through makeup or by magic. Both represent risks, of course. Even the best disguise can be penetrated, and magical alterations can be detected, arousing suspicion, and they even can be dispelled. Powerful magical items such as a *hat of disguise* can assist the vampire in keeping up the charade of mortality, but the risk remains.

Many vampires minimize this risk by keeping their affectations short-lived, or by changing locations and identities every decade or so. A vampire might "pack up shop" in one city and disappear, only to resurface with another identity on another continent.

If the vampire is looking to gain nothing more than diversion from the facade, there is no problem with this kind of relocation. If the goal is wealth, however, the vampire must find some way of transferring its accumulated possessions to its new locale. It must be very careful in doing so because shipping manifests and such represent a way by which hunters can track it down.

If the vampire's goal is power, the situation becomes even more problematic. In essence, the creature is stuck in one location because power is rarely portable. Vampires seeking power must either take great precautions to hide their agelessness or isolate themselves by working only through trusted intermediaries. (Few vampires feel totally comfortable with this, of course, because trust does not come naturally to these creatures.)

Vampires playing a long-term facade will sometimes go to the extreme of faking their own death, and then appearing as a "young heir" to take over the "dead benefactor's" property and wealth. This can be risky, however, because both the vampire's disguise and the details of the "inheritance" must be able to withstand scrutiny.

Shadow People

Vampires have a term for those of their kind that feel the need to spend prolonged time in facade. The term is "shadow people".

To many vampires it is a pejorative term. Those individuals despise the facade, considering it to be a grotesque lie. "Vampires are what they are", these individuals claim, and should revel in their true nature rather than trying to assume the mantle of "lesser creatures".

More mature and intelligent vampires tend to view the facade as a great game, a challenge. They recognize the benefits of partial assimilation into mortal society, and respect those of their kind that are particularly expert at the facade.

Finances

"Why do I need all this?" The vampire waved a hand negligently around, indicating the beautiful works of art that surrounded us. "In truth, I do not need it at all. But I enjoy it, much more than you are capable of understanding. Do you see that statue over there?" It indicated a figure carved from smooth black stone. "I can see the grain structure of the rock, details much too small to be detected by your mortal eyes", it told me, "so I can experience another level of beauty from that statue which is forever beyond your grasp. And, after all", the creature said with a satisfied sigh. "I was not in a position to enjoy luxury while I was alive. Why not take advantage of the opportunity afterward?" It smiled grimly. "Many mortals talk about an afterlife, an existence after death and how much finer it is than earthly life". It sat back complacently. "Well, this is the afterlife", it said, gesturing around it. "And I find it to be very fine, indeed".

- From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

Vampires who play the facade need money if they wish to minimize the risk of discovery. At least some level of wealth is needed to insulate oneself from the press of (demi)humanity. A home must be purchased, servants hired, the other trappings of mortal life acquired. If the vampire has chosen to enter the upper classes, then maintaining the appropriate lifestyle - with regard to entertaining and such - is vitally important, and extremely expensive.

Of course, many vampires relish wealth for its own sake. This is not necessarily a result of greed. Many of the creatures seem to enjoy opulence and surround themselves with beautiful objects of art. As do many mortals, they enjoy wealth for what it will buy them in the way of comforts and diversions.

Also, a wealthy vampire can acquire and outfit a number of sanctuaries within its "territory" and elsewhere. The more sanctuaries a vampire has the greater its security. The vast majority of vampires understand this and will amass wealth for this reason if for no other.

Sources of Wealth

Vampires are generally denied the sources of great wealth open to mortals. For example, how could a vampire possibly claim an inheritance? Or earn its own fortune working its way up from a common laborer? Or, for that matter, even keep possession of whatever wealth it had while alive?

Most vampires acquire their "starting capital" through theft of one kind or another. Depending upon the personality of the individual vampire, and upon the location, the nature of this theft can vary wildly. For example, in unpatrolled areas a vampire could become a fiendishly effective highwayman, robbing unguarded travellers and merchant caravans with relative impunity. Perhaps a "lone adventurer" might join a party on a treasure hunt, only to murder his associates when the prize is achieved. In a town or city the vampire might indulge in mugging, or in breaking and entering. In any case the creature's abilities would give it a massive advantage over mere mortals. A vampire might also hire itself out as a lethal assassin.

One of the most interesting options open to a vampire in need of starting capital is also one of the most risky. It is possible for a vampire to kill a wealthy person - perhaps the owner of a manor - and temporarily take that person's identity, thus playing a very specific kind of facade. This would usually involve a magical disguise of some kind to handle the physical resemblance, but the other facets of the impersonation - voice, gestures, movements, and so forth - would be remarkably easy for a vampire create. The risk of detection would remain relatively high unless the vampire made sure to limit contacts with the outside world - by claiming a virulent illness, for example.

The impersonation need not last long, of course. The vampire would need only sufficient time to orchestrate a convincing excuse for shipping away some measure of the unfortunate victim's wealth, and then could make its escape. With at least some portion of the victim's possessions converted to untraceable form, the vampire could vanish and resurface elsewhere with a "nest egg" on which to build.

After a vampire has generated starting capital, it can build that money into a fortune, just as a mortal might do. The vampire, however, has a major advantage: time. The creature can spend a "paltry" one hundred years building a business empire, then liquidate and get on with its real plans.

Suspicion had been building in my mind that the self-styled Countess Abalia was actually a vampire. In fact, I had totally convinced myself that she was a fiend. You will understand my stupefaction then, when on that evening I saw her primping and preening in a little hand mirror she held before her face. I positioned myself behind her and looked in the mirror... to see her face, smiling archly at me.

It was only later, after my inaction had led to so many deaths, that I understood what had happened. The Countess Abalia was not only a vampire, but also a wizard of considerable skill. Both the mirror she held and the reflection I saw in it were nothing more than magical illusions...

- From the journal of Melnor Melabbey

Retained Skills

To quote from a respected bestiary, "In most cases, vampires do not lose the abilities and knowledge which they had in life when they become undead. Thus, it is possible for a vampire to have the powers of, for example, a wizard, thief, or even priest". Thankfully, this is not always the case, as the transition to vampirism sometimes seems to wipe the victim's mind clean of most or all previously held skills.

Priests

Only those priests who worshipped evil deities during life may retain the ability to cast spells after death. The reason for this is simple: priest spells are bestowed by the priest's deity or by its minions. Deities dedicated to Good will certainly not bestow spells upon vampires because these creatures will always use those spells for evil purposes. And some evil deities may refuse to bestow spells or, perhaps, only bestow certain spells upon vampires.

The process that a vampire-priest must follow to attain spells is the same as for a mortal priest. In other words, the creature must meditate and pray to receive the powers. Vampire-priests seem to be much more skilled at casting spells from the Necromantic sphere than are mortals, and less adept with spells from the Sun sphere.

Turning or Commanding Undead

Vampire-priests who followed nonevil deities while alive retain none of their mortal abilities to turn or command other undead. Priests who worshipped evil deities sometimes retain this ability after death and, in fact, often wield it with an aptitude they never had in life.

Wizards

Individuals who were wizards while alive can retain their spellcasting abilities regardless of their previous alignment, and seem to retain the ability to cast all spells they were able to wield while alive, with much the same effect. The fact that vampires can develop inhumanly high levels of intelligence gives some creatures the ability to cast sometimes many more spells than they could while alive.

Vampire-mages must memorize spells as they did while alive. The same holds true for gaining access to new spells. Vampire-mages must have spellbooks, like mortal wizards. These undead wizards are particularly adept at casting spells of the Necromantic and Illusion/Phantasm schools.

Thieves

Of all professions, it seems that thieves gain the most from their transition to vampirism. Not only do vampires skilled in the thieving arts often retain these abilities, but many seem to be even more proficient after passing through the veil into undeath. As has been stated before, vampires are stronger, faster, and more dexterous than the great majority of

(demi)humans, and their senses are significantly keener than those of mortals.

When one couples these improvements in physical skills with the spell-like abilities of a vampire - such as shapechanging, assumption of gaseous form, and the ability to spider-climb at will - it becomes obvious that a vampire-thief is the ultimate nightmare for anyone concerned about security. The only positive factor is that the vampire-thief will probably be unable to enter a private dwelling without invitation (although the creature's charm-gaze can frequently make up for this).

Bards

The skills of the bard seem to suffer the most from the transition to vampirism. Of course, a vampire-bard gains similar enhancements to its roguish skills as does a normal thief, but bards who could cast wizard spells while alive invariably lose this ability when they become vampires. Opinions are divided on why this is. I believe it is because bards, unlike true wizards, rarely if ever understand exactly why their spells work, casting them only by rote. Changes occur with the transition to vampirism, and the bard understands too little of magical tradition to properly alter the spell's components and cast it as a vampire.

An even greater change occurs in the bard's ability to inspire and sway the opinions of mortals. Vampire bards always lose this ability. This may, on the surface, be very surprising. It is true that a vampire's ability to mimic behavior allows the creature to play instruments, to sing, even to recite poetry with superhuman virtuosity. But there is something missing from the vampire's performance which forms the core of a similar performance by a bard: the understanding of the thoughts, fears, hopes, and desires of the mortals in the audience. The transition to undeath so distances the vampire-bard from the emotions of mortality that it is incapable of forming the emotional connection with its audience that a mortal bard can create instinctively. Thus, while the musical performance of a vampire may be technically perfect, it lacks "soul"; the performance of a mortal bard may be less perfect, but it touches the emotions. (Of course, the creature's enhanced force of personality and charm-gaze can somewhat make up for this lack.)

Paladins

Unsurprisingly, all of the exalted and magical abilities of a paladin are lost, should the unfortunate soul become a vampire. The creature is considered to be a simple vampire-warrior. If the former paladin had a war horse, the mount will immediately turn against the vampire and try - vainly, of course - to destroy the abomination that its rider has become.

Should, by some extreme chance, the paladin ever be brought back from vampirism, the poor individual will no doubt be forced to undertake quests of extreme rigor to be atoned in the eyes of his or her deity, for the evil taint of vampirism.

Ranger

Vampire rangers retain their tracking abilities, and their skills at hiding in shadows and moving silently. In fact, these abilities benefit from the creature's enhanced sensory acuity. It loses forever its ability to cast spells and its adeptness with trained or untrained animals. (The only exception to the latter is with animals whose form the vampire can take.)

Psionicists

Effects on psionicists are dependant upon the powers these beings had before death. Vampire-psionicists are able to retain most "psychic" powers that they had while alive. All other types of psionic powers are lost when an undead state is assumed.

Combat Abilities

Vampires who have had no mortal experience with melee are yet lethal foes in combat: this I know from painful experience. It seems that a previously unskilled vampire can pick up a sword or even a bow and use it, albeit with less facility than he boasts when attacking bare-handed.

How much worse is a vampire who, in life, was a highly skilled warrior! The weapon skills learned by an experienced fighter are frequently retained when the creature becomes undead, including specialty training.

A vampire wielding a two-handed sword or a heavy crossbow can be a daunting sight. Nonetheless, it is better to face an armed vampire than an unarmed one because the creature can drain life energy only when it strikes a foe with a bare hand. Thus, while a two-handed sword in the hands of a vampire can cause hideous damage, there is not the associated risk that anyone killed by the attack will rise later as a vampire.

Nonweapon Proficiencies

Many vampires also remember skills they learned while alive that are not directly related to the profession they followed. These skills may relate to their childhood environment or to hobbies they took up at a later date.

The main impediment most mortals find in learning new skills is time. For an immortal vampire, time is hardly an issue. Thus, should it strike the creature's fancy, a vampire could gain proficiency in a huge number of skills over the years. This is aided by the fact that the monster's enhanced intelligence eases the process of learning new skills. Such ease with the acquisition of noncombat enhances the assumption of a facade. It is also an almost certain bet that the creatures can turn even the most harmless-seeming skill into a weapon against their foes.

This discussion, of course, refers to PCs and NPCs belonging to specific character classes. The DM decides whether any individual character turned into a vampire retains his or her character class abilities. As a general rule of thumb, the DM could assign a 65% chance that the character retains class abilities.

Priests

Vampiric priests who worshipped Evil deities retain whatever level of experience they had at the time of their death, and retain access to the same spheres they had as mortals. As with living priests, the DM must adjudicate what spells are bestowed, based upon the vampire-priest's actions and the nature of its deity. For example, if a vampire priest worshipping the god Bane prays for and receives a *flame strike* spell, and then uses it to kill some followers of Bane, then Bane would be unlikely to grant the vampire-priest more spells until the creature had atoned for this indiscretion. Priests who worshipped Good deities in life will naturally lose their spellcasting powers.

Vampire-priests advance in level much more slowly than mortals: they gain one-to-three levels per century. For every 500 years that a Patriarch exists, it has a 50% chance of advancing a level. Vampire-priests cast Necromantic spells as if they were one level higher than they actually are, and Sun spells as if they were one level lower.

If a vampire priest worshipped an Evil deity in life, there is a base 50% chance that the creature will retain the ability to command other undead as a vampire-priest. Should the creature retain this ability, it commands other undead and turns paladins as if it were 3 levels higher than its actual level. As mentioned above for spellcasting, a vampire-priest has a 35% chance of advancing a level for each age category it achieves, and a 50% chance of advancing a level every 500 years it exists as a Patriarch.

Wizards

Vampire-mages retain whatever level of experience they had at the time of their death, and retain access to the same schools they had as mortals. They advance in level much more slowly than mortals. Each time the creature attains a new age category, it has a 35% chance of advancing one level in spellcasting ability. For each 500 years a Patriarch exists, it has a 50% chance to advance a level.

Vampire-mages cast Necromantic and Illusion/Phantasm spells as if the mages were one level higher than they actually are. In addition, any mortal who is the target of a Necromantic or Illusion/Phantasm spell cast by a vampire-mage suffers a -1 penalty to any saving throw against that spell.

Thieves

A thief that becomes a vampire gains some significant bonuses. First, a vampire's Dex increases with age to a

maximum of 20, the vampire-thief enjoys the normal bonuses to its thieving skills for exceptionally high Dex. Second and most importantly, the vampire gains an additional experience level upon its transition to undeath. This represents the improved coordination and sensory acuity described by Dr. Van Richten.

Vampire-thieves advance in level more slowly than mortals. Each time the creature attains a new age category, it has a 45% chance of advancing one level in thieving ability. For every 500 years that a Patriarch exists, it has a 55% chance of advancing a level.

Bards

Upon its transition to undeath, a vampire-bard advances one level of experience, but only with regard to its thieflike abilities and its power of identifying the purpose and function of magical items. Vampire-bards have a 10% chance to advance one level each time they achieve another age category. Patriarchs have a 25% chance of advancing a level for every 500 years that they exist.

Rangers

Rangers automatically gain one level of experience when they become undead, to reflect their hypersensitive senses. Vampire-rangers have a 25% chance of gaining a level whenever they achieve a new age category. Patriarchs have a 30% chance of gaining a level for every 500 years they exist. Vampire-rangers never attract followers.

Psionicists

These characters lose all psionic abilities other than those of the telepathic and clairvoyant disciplines. These retained powers are much more potent for the undead; vampire-psionicists gain a -2 bonus when using powers from these two disciplines.

Vampire-psionicists advance much more slowly than the living. Each time the creature attains a new age category, it has a 45% chance of gaining a level as a psionicist. For every five centuries that a Patriarch exists, it has a 65% chance of advancing a level.

Combat

The following comments refer *only* to vampires that were warriors in life (unless the DM decides otherwise). In undeath, the creature uses whichever THAC0 is better (lower): the THAC0 appropriate to a monster with its number of Hit Dice, or the THAC0 appropriate to a (demi)human warrior of the creature's level. For example, a 9th-level warrior becomes a Fledgling vampire (8+3 HD). An 8+3 HD monster has a THAC0 of 13 and a 9th-level warrior has a THAC0 of 12. Thus, the vampire warrior's THAC0 is 12. When the vampire advances to Mature, it becomes a 9+3 HD monster, with a THAC0 of 11.

Weapon proficiencies are retained after death in many cases. Vampires may use weapons with which they are proficient with no penalty. The nonproficiency penalty for a vampire is -3. Warriors who had specialized in weapons while alive may retain the specialization as vampires (i.e., +1 to hit and +2 to damage with melee weapons; +2 to hit at *point blank* range with bows and crossbows). Vampire-warriors gain one new weapon proficiency slot for every 4 levels they advance after death.

Vampire-warriors have a 25% chance of advancing a level each time they reach a new age category. Patriarchs have a 35% chance of advancing a level for each 500 years that they survive. No matter how far a vampire-warrior may advance, it never automatically attracts a body of followers.

Nonweapon Specialisation

Characters have a base 75% chance of retaining nonweapon proficiencies when they become vampires. For each age category after Fledgling that a vampire attains, it gains 1d4 nonweapon proficiency slots, modified by the bonus proficiency slots granted for high Intelligence. (For example, an Eminent vampire achieves Patriarch status. The monster gains 1d4 nonweapon proficiency slots. However, the transition to Patriarch also increases

the monster's Int to 20, Referring to the Intelligence table from the *Player's Handbook*, an Int of 20 bestows an additional 9 nonweapon proficiency-slots, bringing the creature's total of new slots up to 1d4 + 9.) The DM should also be careful not to assign a vampire with proficiencies that are contradictory to the creature's nature (such as animal handling or cooking, for example).

PC Vampires

To put it bluntly, it is strongly recommended that DMs rule PC vampires to be categorically impossible unless using the rules from the Requiem boxed set.

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Vampire, Nosferatu

Climate/Terrain:	Ravenloft/Any
Frequency:	Very Rare
Organization:	Solitary
Activity Cycle:	Night
Diet:	Blood
Intelligence:	High to Genius (13-18)
Treasure:	F
Alignment:	Any evil
No. Appearing:	1
Armor Class:	1
Movement:	12, F 18(C)
Hit Dice:	8+3
THAC0:	11
No. of Attacks:	1
Damage/Attack:	1d6+4
Special Attacks:	Constitution Drain, <i>charm</i> gaze
Special Defenses:	magical weapon required to hit
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	M (6' tail)
Morale:	Champion (15-16)
XP Value:	2000

During the nighttime hours, a nosferatu looks like a normal member of its race, though its skin is unusually pale. At sunrise, however, the nosferatu falls into a death-like coma. If it has fed within the previous two hours, its skin appears slightly flushed. If cut or stabbed at this time, the creature bleeds as would a living being. As the day wears on, the body loses its fresh appearance. By the following nightfall, the face is gaunt and the flesh a pale gray.

Nosferatu retain knowledge of all languages and skills (including magic, if any) that they possessed in life.

Combat: While the common vampire drains life-energy levels to gain sustenance and survive, the nosferatu drains Constitution points from its victims instead, via the victim's blood. Except as noted, nosferatu possess all the strengths and weaknesses of common vampires.

Many nosferatu fight empty-handed; they should be considered proficient in this mode of combat (no attack penalties, in other words). Its great strength (18/76) gains it a +2 attack bonus and a +4 damage bonus. Those nosferatu with access to magical weapons typically keep them close at hand, ready to use. Exceptional nosferatu also may retain PC-class skills that they possessed while alive.

Nosferatu typically feed from only weakened or *charmed* prey. To drain Constitution points, it must bite the victim - on the neck normally - and drink the victim's blood. If the victim actively resists this, the nosferatu needs a successful attack roll to drain Constitution points. Armor protects a victim normally (dexterity bonuses also apply), but shields offer no defense (and no AC adjustment).

Once a nosferatu has bitten a victim, Constitution draining happens automatically in subsequent rounds. Usually, the nosferatu drains 1 point of Constitution per round (the better to savor the victim's agony), though it can drain up to 3 points per round if it wishes.

While draining a victim, a nosferatu's only possible other action is its charm gaze. It can, of course, elect to cease draining the victim at any time. The victim, assuming he or she survives, regains lost Constitution points at a rate of 1 point for every two days. Those who perish from the bloody kiss of the nosferatu rise again as a half-strength nosferatu under the control of the nosferatu that created it. As noted elsewhere, this control is often transitory.

Using a unique form of *telepathy*, a nosferatu can *charm* from afar any person it has bitten. Once so *charmed*, the victim is subject to the nosferatu's will for the rest of the victim's life or until a *remove curse* spell is cast on the victim by a cleric of at least 14th level. This telepathic communication is one way; the victim cannot read the thoughts or influence in any way the nosferatu. The nosferatu can telepathically instruct its *charmed* victim as long as the two are within 360 feet of each other.

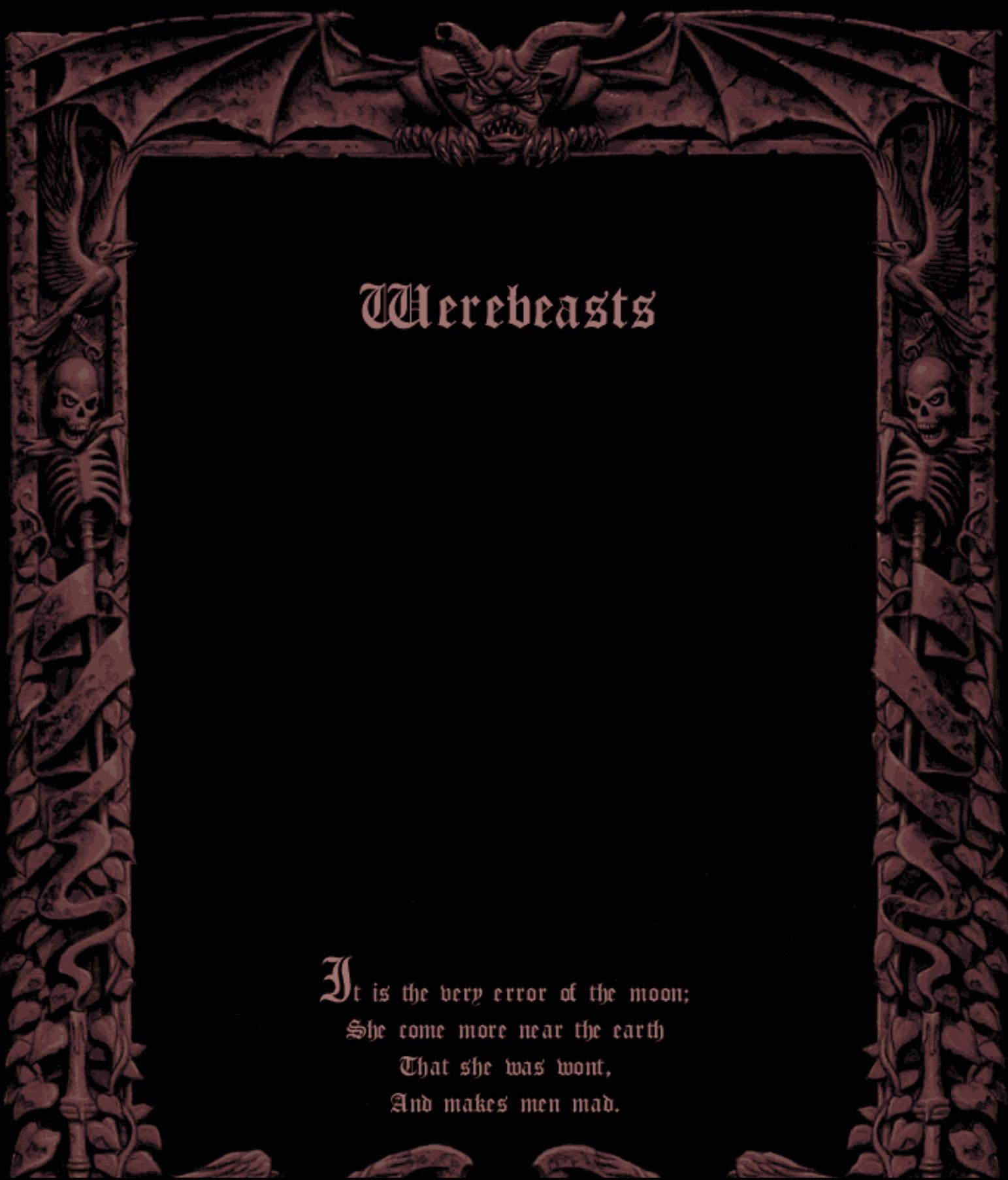
Habitat/Society: Most nosferatu live in cemeteries, crypts, mausoleums, or other abandoned-by-the-living locales. They hunt at night and return to their coffins at dawn. Nosferatu most often have coffins in several locations throughout their "territory" to prevent them from being easily caught (and destroyed) by the morning sun.

Ecology: Unlike the common vampire, nosferatu need the blood of (demi)humans to survive. Unless the creature drains 3 Constitution points each night, the nosferatu loses 1 HD. This loss is cumulative until the nosferatu drains sufficient Constitution points to make up for all it's missed (if a nosferatu doesn't feed at all for two nights, on the third night it must drain 9 Constitution points to regain its full strength) or until the nosferatu reaches 4 HD. If the creature is reduced to 4 HD, no further degradation occurs, but the nosferatu enters bloodlust (as defined in this tome) if a viable victim is within 40 feet of the creature.

Nosferatu can survive on the blood (and Constitution points) of animals if need be, but such feedings, no matter how frequent, leaves the creature 1 HD below normal.

Nosferatu also need sleep. They lose 1 HD per night without proper rest (8 hours in a coffin on soil from its original gravesite). A "tired" nosferatu can regain 1 HD per day of proper rest, provided it has drained at least 6 Constitution points during the previous night.

Nosferatu age as do common vampires and grow more powerful over the centuries. Consult the charts and rules in Chapter Two for details.



Werebeasts

*I*t is the very error of the moon;
She come more near the earth
That she was wont,
And makes men mad.



- William Shakespeare
Othello

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*In the heart of every man hides the soul of the beast.
In this way, we are not so different from the Shapeshifter.*

- *Speculations*, Marth Venn

Introduction

Tales of the lycanthrope - of the shapeshifter, the beast in man's form - are common to every society, human and demihuman alike. There is a certain universality to the concept, which is understandable. The symbolism is so potent, so immediate: A man becomes the beast, and the beast masquerades as a man. Does this not perfectly encapsulate the duality of human nature? In many accounts, the metamorphosis is beyond the shapeshifter's control, signifying the bestial rage that can well up within the mildest of souls. And the fear engendered by the presence of the shapeshifter - the suspicion that any stranger or even a friend may turn out to be the beast - is a reflection of the grim truth that no man may truly know what is in his fellow man's heart.

Yes, the shapeshifter is a powerful symbol. And when I was young, I felt certain that this creature was purely symbolic. One did not have to believe in the existence of the shapeshifter to understand the innate truth of such wild tales, for that central truth had nothing to do with monsters or bestial nightmares, but with the psychology of humanity (or so I believed).

How naive was I then. While tales of the shapeshifter may be symbolic, they also reflect a substantive reality. I know now that shapeshifters do exist. Once, I discounted the werebeast as a superstitious folly, as something no more significant than an old wives' tale. But I had overlooked the obvious: those so-called "old wives" frequently remember the ancient truths...

A Welcome

Greetings, fellow scholar. I am Dr. Rudolph Van Richten - erstwhile healer, herbalist, chronicler, husband, father. It seems to me now that I have lived many lives, pursued many careers. How could all of my experiences, all I have learned, be encompassed by a single life span?

Yet that is definitely the case. I was born nearly threescore years ago in the land of Darkon. Although the tales and rumors may say otherwise, Darkon is not a place of unrelieved terror, death, and destruction. Certainly, those who live within its boundaries must make certain . . . *adjustments*. . . to their manner of life. There are particular regions where one travels only at the greatest of need, where one invites only trusted friends across the threshold, and where the windows are always shuttered and barred after sunset.

Yet during the daylight hours, Darkon - or that region where I spent my childhood, at least - is a beautiful land. For me, few places can rival the allure of its rolling hills, deep primeval forests, grassy glades, and meadows ablaze with a profusion of wildflowers. Before the chill of night sets in, the breezes are gentle, carrying with them the whispers of the trees, and the perfumes of myriad flora.

I find that now I can look back on those days of youth with pleasure, and can relish their richness. Such was not always the case. Once, the slightest reminder of the past would rack me with pain and grief. For I had been sundered from those innocent, joyful times by a chasm that no living man could ever cross.

In what now seems a previous lifetime, I had a family I loved, a profession I cherished. I was a simple healer leading a simple existence. Then a wretched, blood-sucking horror took my wife and child. My simple existence died with them, and I came to follow a path very different from the one I had chosen for myself.

Today I am driven not by my own needs and whims, but by a central cause: to rid the world of the Accursed, those unnatural and supernatural predators who threaten the lives and happiness of all. I speak, of course, of those beings which some have imprecisely classed as "monsters:" the various forms of undead, the shapeshifters, and other fiendish beasts who feast on sorrow and pain.

Some who know of my cause believe me to be driven by vengeance. Not so. This once was true, of course. After the loss of my beloved wife and son, desire for vengeance burned brightly within me. It shames me to admit it, but I took great pleasure in sending the fell beast who had destroyed my family down into the blackness of true death. The realization that I had enjoyed my act forced me to re-examine my motives, however, and to scrutinize the very shadows in my soul.

It was that intense personal scrutiny which redirected my efforts. From that moment forward, I no longer sought the destruction of such foul creatures for personal benefit or desire for vengeance. Today my central motivation is to spare others the torture and heartache that I myself have suffered. If I go to my grave knowing that I have saved only one person from the torment that I was forced to endure, I will count myself a lucky man and judge my life to have been of worth.

The House on the Hill

As I have stated, once I did not believe the legends of the shapeshifters, the werebeasts. It was in my thirty-ninth year that I discovered my mistake. By that time, I had traveled the length and breadth of Darkon in my quest to eliminate the unnatural predators which threatened the populace namely, the undead. I was near Varithne, a village too tiny to appear on most maps. It lies in the north of Darkon, where the terrain is rugged and the populace sparse. As was (and still is) my habit, I stopped at the local tavern at day's end, seeking a glass of brandy and a bit of conversation.

That night, Varithne's tavern was crowded. Nearly all who filled the room were talking of strange disappearances. Simply by listening, I discovered their plight.

Over the past fortnight, seven men had gone missing. The first two were shepherds. As it was the season for doing so, they had led their flocks into the hills to graze. Neither shepherds nor sheep ever returned. Scant days later, a pair of professional hunters joined the ranks of the missing. The people of Varithne had hired these two men to provide meat for the village. Their hunting expedition was to last only a day or two, but like the shepherds they failed to return.

The latest to disappear were three travelers who claimed they hailed from a land called Sembia. These adventurous men took it upon themselves to locate the shepherds and hunters. Again, none returned.

At first I paid little heed to the rumblings in the tavern that night. Certainly I understood the villagers' concern, but there are many *natural* predators in the hills of Darken, and I assumed that the seven unfortunates had fallen victim to such creatures. Wolves, bears, or the like could easily have killed the seven men. I was not then, and am not now, a hunter of normal, living creatures.

I had emptied my brandy and was about to leave the tavern when I overheard something that changed my mind. Two villagers began to exchange tales of a strange howling they had heard. The sound had been carried on the night winds that blew down from the hills. I asked them to elaborate. This was not the howling of a wolf, the pair assured me, but something quite different. My curiosity was piqued. Not long before, I had discovered and destroyed several unusual ghostly creatures, apparently examples of a hitherto unrecorded subtype of wailing spirit. Those hauntings had been characterized by a nocturnal howling very much like that described by the villagers. Assuming that the orchestrator of Varithne's torment might be one of these spirits, I decided that I would put to rest this accursed creature as well.

The next day I set forth into the hills, equipped with several vials of sanctified water, which had proved quite effective against the other wailing spirits. I was confident that I could recognize the sanctuary of my ectoplasmic quarry and then dispatch the creature with little ado. For one of the first times in my life, overconfidence possessed me, and truly led me astray. Not simply in a symbolic sense, mind you. I admit it openly: I became lost. Although a bright morning sun had greeted me when I left the inn, by midmorning that sun was hidden behind slate-gray clouds and a thick mist clung to the hills. Visibility decreased to little more than a stone's throw. I fear I wandered in circles for hours, until the day - already twilight-dark under the clouds - began to darken still further.

As the damp chill of the mist leached the warmth from my body, fear washed over me. It was not the darkness I feared, however. It was disorientation. In fact, there was still light enough for me to see, even though the sun had already sunk below the horizon. As in other regions of Darkon, the rise and fall of the hills was traced by a faintly shimmering, blue-green luminescence. Many call it "gravelight." This light might still have allowed me to return to the village safely - if only I had known in which direction the village lay.

It was then I heard the howling: a high-pitched, prolonged ululation. It hung upon the cold wind, fading and then renewing

itself again and yet again. My ear perceived the sound, and my soul understood its meaning. It spoke of hunger, solitude, and ferocity. And, cliché though it seems, it spoke of inhuman glee. No mere wolf had ever uttered such a sound - that I knew at once. Nor did the hideous cry precisely match my memories of the wailing spirits. But, in the emotion of the moment, I discounted the difference.

I was lost, but I knew the direction from which the heart-numbing howl had come. If I could not find the village this night, at least I could complete the task to which I had set myself and hunt down the wretched spirit. I strode determinedly through the mist.

The wailing spirits I had previously destroyed always lurked within some human-constructed building: a deserted house, a desolate warehouse, or (by preference) an abandoned church. Thus, when I saw a small stone house set atop a nearby hill, I thought my trek was at an end. Surely this was the sanctuary of the unquiet spirit I believed I was hunting. Preparing my holy water and other accoutrements, I advanced stealthily toward the building.

Great was my surprise and embarrassment when the front door swung open, silhouetting a burly figure against the light. No spirit this, but a red-faced, jolly-looking man around his fiftieth year. He was tall and broad, as muscular as a blacksmith, yet with the weather-tanned face of a farmer. When he set his eyes on me, upon a comparatively little man skulking toward his home like a thief, he threw back his head and laughed. Of course, this only added to my humiliation.

"Come in, come in," he called boisterously. "No need to steal an invitation to shelter when it's freely given. Get yourself in out of the night."

I felt my face burning as I returned my vials of sanctified water to my pack and slid my silver-bladed knife back into its sheath. "My apologies," I began abashedly, but he cut me off with another booming laugh.

"Ne'er mind that now, friend," he said. "and sup with me. Unless ye'd prefer to sleep in the gravelight, o'course."

I did not have to be invited twice. Though I was confused - for surely the wailing spirit must be somewhere nearby - I welcomed the invitation. This man was undeniably among the living, and no joy of life such as he displayed could coexist with a wailing spirit. Perhaps this burly fellow could direct me to the ectoplasmic horror's true sanctuary ... on the morrow, of course.

He gestured for me to enter and I stepped into the cozy little two-room structure. My host's face was wrinkled in a jolly smile, yet it was curious: I sensed some kind of undertone, some submerged emotion, beneath his jocularity. Was it tension? A well-concealed effort or strain? I quickly forgot this little mystery, however, as he maintained a continuous flow of words. At first, I tried to follow my host's rambling conversation, but before long I realized that he was talking for the sake of speaking rather than to communicate anything of value. His must be a lonely life, I decided. My visit represented a rare opportunity for conversation, for which the man was both eager and out of practice.

Still, I did not mind the man's chatter. There was a fire in the hearth and a kettle of stew hanging over it. The transition from a bone-chilling cold to such cheery warmth seemed to numb my mind like a strong herbal sedative. When he bade me sit near the hearth, I did so with a will. It was only moments before I felt my head start to nod with the onset of sleep, and I began to fade away.

Then the man said something that drew me out of my reverie.

"Welcome I said, and welcome I meant, Dr. Van Richten." He was standing behind me, near the front door. His tone was still friendly, but the words that came next were not. "Your name is known to me, for your fame has spread far. So fine it'll be to feast on a man as famous as yourself..."

With that I turned, disbelieving. I simply could not have heard him say what I thought I heard.

The scene that unfolded shocked me into stupefaction. The man had stripped off his shirt and he was *changing*, undergoing what I now call the *transfiguration*. As I watched in dumb horror, I saw his bones shift, bend, and lengthen. His skull warped as though made of clay. His mouth and nose became a bestial snout, and his forehead sloped sharply back above his eyes - eyes that were suddenly bloodshot and glaring. His muscles, too, shifted beneath his skin. The sight would have been enough to nauseate me even without the accompanying sound: a wet, grisly squashing and crunching reminiscent of the noise made by tearing apart raw chicken. His hair, previously shoulder-length, had shortened and become more like a mane or a dog's hackles, traveling along the path of his spine. And a gray pelt had sprung into being, covering his exposed skin.

The transition was over in only a heartbeat or two, yet to my fevered mind it seemed much longer. Then the beast stood before me: half man, half animal, with a predator's smile. Saliva dripped from its lips. Now, almost too late, I realized what had invited me to dine.

Then it repeated its blood-chilling howl and pounced!

I was fortunate. As I have now come to learn, it was but a weak example of its kind. Had it been one whit stronger, it would have devoured my flesh and sucked the marrow from my bones. As it was, I narrowly managed to defeat the creature. Its claws and teeth scored me a dozen times, but my silver ceremonial dagger proved an efficacious weapon. Eventually, the thing lay dead, pierced to the heart with my nine-inch blade. As I withdrew the weapon from the corpse, the creature underwent a reverse metamorphosis, returning to its human form. Once more I gazed at the broad, jolly face of the farmer. This time, however, it was truly at peace, without the hint of tension I had sensed earlier.

A *werewolf*! I thought I searched the rest of the building, both in fear that it had a fellow and in grim suspicion that I would find the final resting places of the missing villagers. was right in my guess. There is no need to go into a description of what I discovered; some things are best left undescribed. Suffice it to say that I was not the only one who had been invited to dine with this fellow and then found himself on the menu. For obvious reasons, I was unable to remain in that house that night. I set out across the hills once more, and by sheer luck [stumbled across a road that led me back to Varithne.

The creature's death did little to ease my terror. I remained in mortal fear for weeks - not for my life, as such, but for my humanity. I had heard many of the legends describing werewolves, although I had paid little enough attention to the details. I feared that the wounds inflicted by the creature would ensure that I would suffer the same dire curse - that I would, upon the next full moon, become a ravening monster myself.

Yet no such grievous fate overtook me. To this day, more than a decade later, I have suffered no ill effects. Perhaps the wounds that the monster inflicted were not serious enough to convey the contagion. Or perhaps my natural resistance to disease provided some protection. Perhaps the fact that I used cold silver to slay the beast was the reason for my good health.

Or perhaps I was simply fortunate.

From that day forth, the insidiousness of the werebeast's threat has not been far from the forefront of my mind. From that day forth, I have numbered the werebeast among the nemeses of mankind.

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The blood of me parents runs through my veins... with all that this kinship implies. Is this blood that we share cursed, tainted? Or is it blessed, somehow sanctified by a power greater than that of humanity? My father would have me believe the latter - that our kinship marks us as far above the bustling hordes of humanity as they are above the cattle they slaughter for food.

Yet in these latter days, I have trouble believing that. I hear their screams as fall upon them and I have to believe they are not so unlike us. We, too, are kin in some sense - humanity, and that which my blood tells me I am. They consider my kind monsters, and sometimes I wonder whether they are right.

But when I feel the fierce elation of the metamorphosis come upon me, then how can I not consider myself blessed, as one small step below the gods?

- Excerpt from a Werebeast's Journal

An Overview of Lycanthropy

Since my encounter with the werebeast in the hills near Varithne almost two decades ago, I have endeavored to learn all that I could about its foul kind. This has proved to be difficult, although not for the same reasons that my research into the nature of other supernatural beasts was so challenging. No, the degree of variability between two werebeasts sharing the same animalistic form is far less than the variability shown by vampires, for example.

The difficulty of the research stems more from the fact that the werebeast is such an emotionally evocative symbol. So many descriptions, tales, and legends that refer to werebeasts incorporate purely symbolic material. It seems, in fact, difficult verging on impossible to find any discussion of werebeasts that sticks entirely to the unembellished truth. While understandable, as a researcher I find this highly irritating. Nevertheless, I have been able to separate - to some degree, at least - the truth of the matter from the symbolic elaborations.

There are, of course, many *phenotypes* of lycanthropes: werewolves, wererats, werejaguars, even werebadgers, to name but four I have encountered personally. (The word "phenotype" was introduced to me by a sage from a mysterious and distant land. I find it more descriptive than "species.") I shall outline the characteristics of each phenotype in a subsequent chapter. In this section, however, I shall concentrate on the two basic classifications of werebeasts: true lycanthropes, who inherit their condition, and infected lycanthropes, who acquire their affliction through a werebeast's attack. Because the latter condition more closely resembles a disease and can be cured (albeit through extraordinary means), I have dubbed it *pathologic* lycanthropy. There is a third classification as well, which is curse-induced, or *maledictive*, lycanthropy. However, examples of this class are so rare, and their characteristics so diverse, that I shall only touch briefly upon the subject.

Finally, at the end of this chapter I shall share with you my theory on how lycanthropy arose.

Heritable Lycanthropy

This is the archetypal form of the scourge that is lycanthropy. Often called true lycanthropy, it is an inherent, self-sustaining



condition that can neither be cured nor contracted by others. If one is not born a true lycanthrope, then one can never become one. If one is so born, then it is impossible to alter or cure the condition, much as it would be impossible to cure an elf of the condition of being an elf.

True lycanthropes have their own society as well as their own rules of conduct. Although they may move through normal human society, they are not of that society. This is discussed in considerably more detail in Chapter Three. For the moment, suffice it to say that when it comes time to choose a mate, most true lycanthropes select another of their kind. The offspring of such a union will always prove to be heritable lycanthropes themselves.

Sometimes, for whatever reason, a true lycanthrope will breed with someone who does not suffer the scourge. If it is the male who is the true lycanthrope and the female who is free of the contagion. I estimate a simple 50 percent chance that any offspring of the union will be a true lycanthrope. If the offspring does not inherit true lycanthropy, it should be completely free of the taint (although the father may well come back at some later time to transmit the contagion through an attack, thereby infecting his own child).

If it is the mother who bears the scourge of true lycanthropy, however, the offspring cannot be so lucky as to escape the taint. There is still a 50 percent chance that any offspring will be a true lycanthrope, inheriting the full form of the condition. If this does not come to pass, however, the child is not completely spared: instead of becoming a true lycanthrope, it becomes an infected, one. Thus, every offspring of a lycanthropic mother will suffer one form or the other of the scourge.

Transfiguration

Transfiguration is the term I apply to a werebeast's ability to change forms, or *aspects*. With few exceptions, a true lycanthrope has three aspects, any of which it can adopt at will. In contrast, an infected lycanthrope normally displays but two forms (to the best of my knowledge). Furthermore, the true lycanthrope is generally unaffected by the triggers that initiate transfiguration in infected lycanthropes. Thus, a true werewolf need never fear that the full moon will trigger an unwanted transfiguration.

It is important to stress that the actual process of transfiguration is not typically a rending, burning agony for true lycanthropes, but it is often so for the pathologic variety. In fact, many of the true lycanthropes with which I have spoken (before destroying them) have claimed that the experience is one of transcendent ecstasy.

Furthermore, true lycanthropes retain all of their mental faculties while in any of their forms. At no point do they forget what occurs when not in human aspect, nor do they lose control of their actions. In addition, they always retain their immunities and most of their abilities.

Primary Aspect

The first aspect of a true lycanthrope is human (or demihuman, of course), and the human aspect is characteristic of the individual. In other words, when in human form, it will always look the same. A werebeast cannot use the transfiguration to alter its human appearance or create disguises.

To an astute observer, certain characteristics of the true werebeast's human form can provide hints of the individual's *inhuman* nature. Almost invariably the human form shows one or more bestial features: slightly pronounced canine teeth, unusually bushy brows which meet above the nose, slightly pointed ears, abnormally pronounced body hair, hair on the inside of the wrist and on the palm, or perhaps exaggerated finger- or toe- nails, for example. Furthermore, many true lycanthropes have overly long forefingers, equal in length to the second finger of each hand.

Of course, it should be pointed out that none of these physical traits is sufficient to incontrovertibly label a subject as a werebeast. I have personally met folk who have never so much as seen a lycanthrope, yet they themselves exhibited one or several of these telltale signs. In truth, I feel somewhat uncomfortable over having listed these apparent signs at all, since they can be (and *have* been) misused to accuse innocents of being werebeasts.

Secondary Aspect

The second form that any true lycanthrope can assume is that of the beast. In this aspect, the individual appears as an animal. Again, the type of animal and the specific details of its appearance are characteristic of the individual. Details such as eye

color, pelt markings, and other distinguishing features do not change, which makes it possible for an astute observer to distinguish between individuals, just as an owner of hounds can tell the difference between two members of the same breed.

A true lycanthrope's animal aspect is usually larger than average, when compared to normal animals of the same type. Remember, however, that there is a wide variability in sizes among natural animal populations.

While it is true that lycanthropes in animal aspect are larger than the average for that species, it is not always true that werebeasts are larger than all other specimens. If a werewolf is leading a pack of timber wolves, the lycanthrope need not automatically be the largest creature in the pack. (Wererats pose a special case: their secondary aspect resembles a giant rat, not a normal rodent. With that caveat, my remarks above still hold, with wererats frequently appearing as larger-than-average giant rats.)

Many tales and legends claim that lycanthropes in their secondary form can be distinguished from natural animals by their sense of intelligence, unnatural wisdom, and anomalous watchfulness. This can be true in some cases, but only when the werebeast wants the observer to discern its true nature. True lycanthropes in their animal aspect retain their full intelligence, which makes them much more intelligent and aware than natural animals that may surround them. Yet the monsters are also in touch with their animalistic nature - the beast within - in the form of natural senses and instincts. They can, if they so wish, allow these senses and instincts to overshadow their human intelligence and thus behave identically to a natural animal. This knack for subterfuge makes it exceedingly difficult to distinguish a werebeast from a normal animal.

It is important to point out the fallacies in some legends and tales. While it is true that lycanthropes in animal aspect can still understand the languages of mankind, it is not true that they can speak them. The anatomy and physiology of animals precludes this. For example, the throat and mouth of a rat is incapable of human speech; thus, so is a wererat in animal aspect. (The wererat would be able to both speak and understand the limited communication of natural rats, however.) Similarly, while in animal aspect most werebeasts have neither hands nor fingers, and thus cannot easily manipulate their environment. Accordingly, those tales which describe werewolves in wolf form opening intricate locks or latches are most obviously fantastical.

It seems obvious that natural animals can distinguish a werebeast in animal aspect from one of their own kind. Natural animals' responses to werebeasts vary quite widely, however. Pack-oriented or herd-oriented creatures will usually cede dominance of the group to the werebeast. Thus, wolves will almost always signal their submission to a werewolf in their midst and allow the lycanthrope to lead the pack. Trained animals such as domesticated dogs will be more likely to react with unease or even distress if a werebeast is in the area. Naturally solitary animals will usually respond by avoiding werebeasts in animal aspect.

As an aside, there are many tales in which faithful house pets detect the inhuman nature of true lycanthropes in human aspect, and react by growling, whining, or even attacking. I can neither support nor deny these contentions. I have seen no evidence on either side of the issue.

It was a travesty of justice, of course. While I can well understand the townsfolk's fear over the wereboar's predations, I could never sanction their response to that fear.

That response was hysteria, pure and simple. They needed someone on which to vent their rage and their terror. They selected the hermit who Uued on the outskirts of the uillage. nicknamed the "terrible old man," he was actually a harmless soul, cursed by diminishing mental faculties. Encroaching senility made him something of a curmudgeon. and he had earned the enmity of many of the villagers. His appearance was unkempt: his hair was wild, his clothing ragged, his teeth discolored and crooked. All in all, his appearance could well be described as feral, and that was all the villagers needed.

Their response was brutal in its immediacy. To this day I blame myself for not acting fast enough to stop it. But before I even knew what was happening, the old man was writhing in terminal anguish, impaled on the sharpened stake the villagers had set up in the square. It did not take the villagers long to realize their mistake. The night after the old man's grisly end, the wereboar was on the hunt again...

- From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

Tertiary Aspect

The true werebeast's third aspect - half man, half beast - is indeed the most dreadful. This is the form most commonly associated with true lycanthropes in tale and legend. The man-beast has the features of both human and animal forms, creating a horrifying, unnatural blend.

The actual details of the man-beast aspect vary from phenotype to phenotype, and even from individual to individual within a single phenotype. Any given individual will always look the same in his or her tertiary aspect, however.

In general, the body's overall form is humanoid, although there may be noticeable differences in musculature. The head closely resembles that of the animal, but with some disturbingly human features. The eyes are typically human in appearance, albeit frequently bloodshot and glaring - malignant intelligence seems to gleam within them. The entire body is usually covered in fur, which is similar in color and texture to that of the natural animal. The pelt is typically thicker around the head and shoulders, especially at the back of the neck. Hands and feet usually sport elongated nails - not quite claws, but definitely reminiscent of them, and capable of inflicting gruesome wounds.

The tertiary form always has characteristics symbolic of the phenotypical animal. Thus, if the natural animal type is powerful, then the man-beast form based on it will also be powerful, as in the case of werewolves for example. If the animal type is exceptionally agile, then the man-beast form will reflect this, too, and thus wererats are slender, fast-moving things. It is interesting to point out that this characteristic is based more on symbolism than anything else. If the animal type is symbolic of some attribute, whether it actually possesses it, then the man-beast form will incorporate that attribute into its appearance.

True lycanthropes in man-beast aspect retain the ability to use language. Their voices are usually harsh and growling, however. The creatures also retain their full dexterity in man-beast form, and thus can manipulate their environment easily.

The chance of a character contracting lycanthropy in the Domains of Dread is 2% per hit point of damage suffered from a werebeast's attack. (On other planes, the chance is only 1% per hit point.) The damage must be inflicted by the "natural weapons" of the werebeast: teeth, claws, or (in human or demihuman aspect) unarmed attacks. If the werebeast uses a weapon, damage inflicted by that weapon is not taken into account when determining whether the victim is infected or not.

To minimize bookkeeping, DMs may decide to include damage inflicted by weapons in the total, on the rationale that such wounds decrease the victim's systemic resistance to infection. Note that infection is possible, under this rule, only if the lycanthrope's natural weapons have inflicted at least one point of damage.

Further, other types of "close contact" may pass the infection on. If a werebeast's blood or other fluids were to enter a living human's eyes, mouth, or open wound, there's a small chance (2% to 8%, for example) that the lycanthropic infection will be passed on. A kiss, for instance, is unlikely to pass on the infection, but more intimate contact could do just that.

Pathologic Lycanthropy

This is the dreaded disease described in hundreds of folktales, the cursed affliction that turns an innocent victim into a ravening beast. No race or sex is immune; it is a plight to which every man, woman, and child is susceptible.

Unlike true werebeasts, infected lycanthropes are not born with their affliction. Their condition more closely resembles a disease, in that it can be contracted and passed on. If the victim is very fortunate, it can even be cured, though not as any ordinary disease might be (see Chapter Four: The Pathologic Scourge for a more in-depth discussion of cures). This form of lycanthropy can be acquired through contact with the saliva, blood, or other secretion of either a true werebeast or another infected werebeast (and perhaps even that of a maledictive one).

Compilers' Note: It seems that, once again, Dr. Van Richten's theories have proved to be the truth. My sister and I have found evidence that supports the Doctor's position that maledictive werebeasts can indeed infect hapless innocents.

Simply touching a werebeast or its bfood will not transmit the contagion, however. Conventional wisdom - which I have found little evidence to discount - is that the infective agent must be insinuated into the bloodstream of a victim through some wound. (A handful of legends suggest that more intimate contact may convey the affliction, but this is beyond the range of my expertise.) The chance of a victim succumbing to the scourge seems to be proportional to the severity of the wounds inflicted.

As described in a subsequent chapter, infected lycanthropes are (initially at least) unaware of their affliction. When in nonhuman aspect, they have the mentality of an animal, a ravaging beast. Thus, infected lycanthropes cannot have the same kind of distinct society enjoyed by true lycanthropes.

The offspring of a father who is an infected werebeast does not automatically suffer the same affliction. Remember, there is no genetic or heritable component to this form of the scourge. However, a child born to a mother who is infected with lycanthropy will be similarly blighted. This is because the intimate, nourishing bond between the mother and her unborn child. The offspring does not, strictly speaking, inherit the affliction; rather, he is infected before birth. This distinction makes little difference to the innocent child, except that a cure is still possible. If the infected mother is cured of her lycanthropy before the child comes to term, the poor offspring is still susceptible to the affliction. In my estimation, such a child must undergo its own cure if it would be rid of the scourge.

Transfiguration

While most true lycanthropes have three forms, an infected lycanthrope has only two: human or demihuman, and either animal or hybrid. Further, unlike the true lycanthrope, an infected werebeast has no control over its transfiguration. Each infected individual has a characteristic "trigger" - an event, circumstance, or set of circumstances that initiates the transfiguration. The archetypal trigger for werewolves is, of course, the full moon, but there are many more possibilities. Sometimes extreme emotion triggers the change - usually anger or fear, but sometimes (tragically) even love. In other individuals, the trigger is physical pain or proximity to violence. And for some particularly unfortunate victims, every sunset or sunrise may bring about the metamorphosis.

For an infected werebeast, the experience of transfiguration is usually one of tearing, rending agony. Such is the nature of the affliction, however, that the victim almost always suppresses all memories of this agonizing pain.

Primary Aspect

This is, of course, the natural and original form of the infected victim. According to many folktales, the same signs by which a true lycanthrope can be identified - the long forefinger, slightly bestial features, etc., - also mark the victim of infection. My own studies neither support nor contradict this contention; in truth, I have found little evidence on one side of the issue or the other.

Certainly, a few of the infected lycanthropes I have encountered have shown progressive development of bestial features. Yet I am not convinced that this progression was actually a result of the lycanthropy itself. Outside my study of lycanthropes, I have seen the appearance of an individual begin to change as his or her heart darkened through crime or sin. Perhaps that person's actions or desires attracted the attentions of some malign agency, which in turn caused the physical alteration. Or perhaps one's body can truly become a mirror of one's soul.

At any rate, if such physical changes can occur among those who are not lycanthropes, it seems quite possible that it could hold true for an infected lycanthrope as well. For this reason, I cannot embrace the widely held belief that infected lycanthropes will always, in time, display some physical manifestation of their curse. More likely, such a notion is no more than a feeble attempt at self-reassurance. And the disturbing truth is that one cannot directly detect the taint of lycanthropy until the transfiguration is actually triggered.

Fortunately for those who hunt the lycanthrope, other clues sometimes exist, pointing at the fearful truth. Most notably, infected lycanthropes often return to their primary aspect bearing wounds, bruises, or abrasions... which they cannot remember sustaining.

Secondary Aspect

The secondary aspect of an infected lycanthrope can be either a normal animal or a man-beast similar to the true lycanthrope's tertiary form. Each infected individual has a characteristic secondary aspect and always assumes this form when the trigger condition occurs. There seems no way of predicting beforehand (that is, before the lycanthropy is acquired) what one's secondary aspect will be.

Compilers' Note: Further "researches" on our part have shown that, in about two of three cases, the infected lycanthrope will gain the secondary aspect of the werebeast that infected it. Also, in at least 4 of 5 cases, this secondary aspect is the animal form.

- LWF

If the secondary aspect is an animal, it largely shares the features discussed for a true lycanthrope's animal form. Thus, it is larger than average for the animal type and frequently becomes the leader of a pack of like creatures. A man-beast secondary aspect also largely conforms to the description provided earlier.

The important difference between infected and true lycanthropes is that the former do not retain their normal mentality when in their secondary aspect. Instead, they take on the personality - if that is the correct word - of a ravaging, predatory animal. The beast within comes to the fore, taking control and suppressing all elements of the human character. The new personality incorporates elements of the phenotype's behavior. Thus, wereboars tend to be blindly aggressive, while wererats show more low cunning. In any event, the major elements of the secondary aspect's persona are aggression and hatred. The werebeast will kill anyone or anything it encounters, initially to feed, although it may still attack even if its appetite is totally sated.

It has frequently been stated and seems to be true that the preferred victims of an infected lycanthrope in secondary aspect are those individuals closest and most important to the werebeast when he is in human form. In other words, loved ones are the most likely to be harmed by the beast. This tragedy seems to confirm the old saw that love and hate are closely related emotions.

When he returns to his natural form, the werebeast rarely remembers any details of his actions while in his secondary aspect. If he does recall anything at all, it will have a hazy, indistinct cast to it, much as a nightmare is vaguely recalled upon waking. In fact, many infected lycanthropes believe at least initially that such memories are nightmares. Only when they find that reality matches elements from their dreams might they realize what is happening, and not all individuals understand (or admit that they understand) even then. Humans have an almost infinite capacity for self-delusion.

Maledictive Lycanthropy

Maledictive is the term that I have coined to describe those unfortunate victims who suffer from lycanthropy as the result of a curse. While powerful magics such as a wish might also induce lycanthropy, such maleficent enchantments are fortunately very rare. On the other hand, a curse that somehow summons the beast within is not so uncommon that it can be ignored.

In the lands with which I am familiar, maledictive lycanthropy is a very real risk of which all residents and visitors must be aware. While I have heard travelers speak of distant lands where curses generally are not strong enough to cause this affliction, I myself have never visited a place.

Three general forms of curse exist, each of which may result in lycanthropy. These can cause a condition that is indistinguishable from the pathologic form of lycanthropy with one exception: the victim of such a curse may or may not be able to infect others with his contagion.

Self-Inducted Curses

This is an incidence of a dark desire, where an individual lusts for some power or boon, and that lust is acted on in a transport of terrible evil. In effect, this situation is a kind of cry for help, which some mysterious and malign agencies will sometimes grant, but always in a way that causes suffering and despair in the long run for the recipient.

Both the *divine curse* and *ancient curse* spells can be found in *Domains of Dread*, pp. 177-178.

I know the details of only one curse of this kind (which is not to say that other cases do not exist, of course). The curse's recipient was a man named Talbot, the servitor of a petty noble in Darkon. Talbot was a soft-spoken, sensitive man who seemed cowed by every circumstance, and particularly by the reactions of others. He appeared incapable of standing up for his own rights; an impotent sort who could not defend himself against the anger of others. If blamed for an act he had not committed, he typically hunched his shoulders, turning in on himself. In other words, he acted as though he were crippled with guilt for acts he had never performed.

In contrast, his master Lord Meritu was a verbal and emotional bully. Meritu verbally abused Talbot at every opportunity, and while virtually any other person would eventually have responded with anger, Talbot simply endured the torment. The servitor seemed incapable of expressing the natural anger (and even hatred) that Meritu would certainly engender in another man.

Eventually, a tremendous internal conflict arose between Talbot's self-effacing mien and his unquenched rage, which ultimately led to a tragic conclusion. Rather than facing the author of his misfortune, Meritu himself, Talbot vented his fury upon Meritu's young children. In short, Talbot poisoned these innocents and then ran off to the countryside.

Although Talbot never expressed it, his actions were the result of a desire to express his indignant wrath. Apparently some dark agency responded to this unspoken cry for help by turning Talbot into an infected lycanthrope. He became a wererat, in fact, with sunset as the trigger of his transfiguration. Now, every evening when the sun goes down, Talbot is finally able to express the rage within him. Unfortunately, however, he has no control over who becomes the victim on this rage...

Curses of Vengeance

The fact that infected lycanthropes frequently turn on those they love makes this affliction the logical result of a curse of vengeance. Although I have yet to personally encounter such a case, I have heard of almost a dozen incidents, all of which follow similar lines. An individual kills or seriously harms the loved ones of another, and in a transport of hatred this other cries out for a curse to fall upon the killer. The killer, in a form of divine justice perhaps, is then blighted with lycanthropy. In all of those cases, among the first victims of the new werebeast were his or her loved ones. However, in three rather unusual episodes, the person who brought down the curse eventually fell victim to the werebeast as well: such is the ironic justice of curses.

Mystical Curses

Magics such as a *wish* spell or the more specific *divine curse* and *ancient curse* spells also can inflict lycanthropy. As many spellcasters know, the intent of a wish is frequently perverted in some dire manner. Thus, when a wish causes lycanthropy, it is quite likely that this outcome was not what the caster intended.

Neither the *divine curse* nor the *ancient curse* spell suffers the same risk of perversion of intent. However, for the curse to take effect, the casting priest's deity must approve it. Only the most malignant deities would countenance the infliction of lycanthropy on anyone.

Removing a Curses

Most curses of vengeance and magical curses include some kind of escape clause. If the action in this clause is performed, the victim is freed of the taint of lycanthropy. This is not necessarily the case for others who have contracted the dreaded affliction from the original curse victim. The fate of these secondary victims depends in large part upon the details of the original curse. Their own affliction may end the moment the curse is lifted from the original victim. If the original curse is particularly powerful, however, this may not happen. Once the original victim is free of the curse, all secondary victims can potentially be cured, just as if the original source of the affection had been slain.

Other Characteristics

Most maledictive lycanthropes resemble infected lycanthropes in all particulars. Otherwise, no set of characteristics is typical of the maledictive class; each curse can be unique. For that reason, and because maledictive lycanthropes are comparatively rare, I shall confine my discussions in subsequent chapters to heritable and pathologic lycanthropy.

Shapechangers and Lycanthropes

Lycanthropes are men and women who assume the shape of animals. They are not to be confused with other shapechangers such as wolfweres and jackalweres, which are animals that can masquerade as men and women. Despite their superficial likenesses, both types of creatures are profoundly different. All of the discussions in this volume concern lycanthropes.

Animalistic shapechangers do enjoy some magical benefits similar to those shown by lycanthropes. For example, jackalweres are harmed only by enchanted weapons or by those forged from cold iron. They also have the ability to change at will between three (or, in some rare cases, only two) aspects. Surely, some sages argue, this makes them kin to werebeasts. Not so, I suspect. The major distinction is that shapechangers pass on no contagion to victims of their attacks. It is impossible to contract lycanthropy from a jackalwere, and that is the vital difference between the creatures.

I believe that there might, once, have been some kinship between lycanthropes and other shapechangers. Many centuries ago, it may be that a union between a lycanthrope in animal aspect and a normal animal gave rise to these beastweres. Unfortunately, there are few means to test and validate my hypothesis.

Origins of Lycanthropy

How did the blight of lycanthropy first come into the world? Many sages and scholars have addressed this problem. And many more legends - most quite literally incredible - have proposed more or less far-fetched answers.

One theory, embraced by many true lycanthropes, is that the creatures naturally evolved from normal, nonlycanthropic humans and demihumans. The symbolism incorporated into this view is compelling, if not totally convincing. First came the beast, in the form of proto-humanity, the precursors from which humankind arose. Then came humanity itself, in which the beast still exists, yet is suppressed and driven deep into the subconscious. And finally comes the lycanthrope, in which the beast and the socialized human are united in a balanced form. The beast is no longer denied or suppressed; instead, it is accepted, welcomed, cherished... *utilized*, instead of conflicting duality, there is now unity. How this can not be considered progress and evolution, the proponents of this idea argue.

Then there are scholars, many of a theological background, who argue very much the opposite. Lycanthropes are the result of devolution, these sages propose. If progressing from animal to socialized human was evolution, how could releasing the suppressed beast be anything but regression?

I find myself unable to fully accept either proposition. The latter position argues from ethics and morals, and hence is somewhat suspect. Not that I discount morals and ethics; quite the opposite, I consider them to be of overreaching importance. Yet morals and ethics are based on individual choice. They are not laws of nature, and the path from unethical or amoral action to what we consider civilized behavior is not a natural or preordained progression.

The former position also lacks empirical substance. In my view of evolution, the next logical step for humanity would be a super-race, in which the beast is not present at all.

The beast is loose. It prowls the night around my village. At first it fed only on livestock, but now its tastes have - matured. In the past fortnight, full seven of my friends and neighbors have fallen to the beast, their throats torn out by its ripping teeth.

And yet, the nighttime landscape is not the only place the beast prowls, it haunts the internal landscape of my dreams as well. Is there some mental link between me and this fell creature? I must accept that there is, since my dreams seem to echo with details of the foul murders - details I could not know were our minds not somehow linked.

Yes, that must be the answer...

- Anonymous

The Parasitic Theory

After considering the facts and speculations, I bold that true lycanthropy, that form which is genetically heritable, arose originally as an infection similar to the pathologic lycanthropy we see in the world today.

I believe that the infective agent involved was a magically active parasite - perhaps akin to the tiny, unseen entities to which some sages attribute the spread of disease. I imagine, although i have little enough evidence for my position, that this parasite arose naturally, although perhaps in a time and place where the magical influx was somehow greater. It infected humans and demihumans alike, causing behavioral symptoms similar to those of hydrophobia, or rabies, which in effect unchained the beast within its victims. Yet since it was also magically active, it had other, more pervasive effects. In the manner of sympathetic magic, as the beast was released from within the victim, so did his body alter to reflect his symbolic nature.

At first I imagine that the destruction and suffering caused by those initial victims was great in the extreme, for in the first flush of its rage the beast cares little for others. In its earliest form, I believe that the infective agent proved to be a generally unsuccessful parasite, in that it caused the death of its hosts - not in the way of most other diseases, where sickness causes systemic damage that eventually proves fatal. Rather, the parasite led to death by forcing those around the victim to slay him in defense of their own lives.

Yet parasites adapt, given time. The lycanthropy agent probably did so, possibly by lessening the intensity of the bestial rages it caused. It allowed its victims to retain some of their intelligence, or perhaps mere animal cunning. At this point, I imagine that the victims of the parasite began to form small communities of their own, analogous to wolf packs or hunting groups.

This allowed the infectious agent to undergo its most significant and pernicious adaptation. Gp to this point, I envision that the parasite was passed on in much the same way as today's pathologic lycanthropy: through the saliva or perhaps the perspiration or other secretions of a lycanthrope, insinuated into the bloodstream of a victim. Now, however, a new vector of infection presented itself. The infected victims were able to breed.

Initially, the blight of lycanthropy was passed on from mother to offspring, due to the mixing of blood in the womb. In essence, progeny of lycanthrope parents were infected before birth by this time.

This, too, changed with time, or so I believe. Eventually the infective agent, the parasite, became incorporated into its victims (now its hosts). Eventually it became incapable of existing in its true form, separate from the host. In essence, it became a natural, innate characteristic of its hosts, passed on from generation to generation, now according to the laws and patterns of heredity and not of infection, much as are hair color and other attributes.

At this point, I believe that the various phenotypes of true werebeasts split off from the human and demihuman races. Werebeasts, regardless of their ability to assume human or demihuman form, are not human or demihuman. They have become totally distinct races. Some taxonomists consider them as distinct species, but I do not fully share this approach. True werebeasts can interbreed with humans and demihumans, producing fertile progeny, which implies that they are not distinct species after all.

Such is my belief, at least. It seems to me very unlikely that the truth of this theory will ever be determined. Not even the deities have been of assistance; in fact, they have been singularly unforthcoming when I have questioned them via commissioned spells.

In practice, of course, it hardly matters how lycanthropy first arose. The fact that it exists, and that it remains quite disturbingly prevalent, is sufficient for most people.

Some important distinctions can be drawn between lycanthropes that exist on the Prime Material Plane and those that are born or infected specifically in the Demiplane of Dread. First, the victim of a Prime Material lycanthrope has various options by which he or she might avoid the affliction. As described in *Monstrous Manual* tome, if the victim eats belladonna within an hour of the attack, there's a 25% chance that this will cure the affliction (or, more precisely, stop it from occurring in the first place). This possibility of reprieve isn't available to victims of Ravenloft werebeasts. Victims of such a monster's attack can certainly eat belladonna (and suffer the 1d4 days of incapacitation that this poison inflicts), but there's exactly zero chance that it will prevent the onset of lycanthropy, should the die roll (2% per point of damage suffered) indicate infection. The PCs don't have to realize this, of course.

Furthermore, curing lycanthropy is considerably easier outside Ravenloft. Outside the Demiplane of Dread, all that's

required is the casting of a remove curse on the night of a full moon (or on the night preceding or following a full moon), if the infected character makes a successful save vs. polymorph, the curse is broken.

Not so within the Demiplane; the process is much more involved. First, the original source of the contagion, the true lycanthrope that infected the victim or started the chain of contagion, must first be destroyed. If that creature is not destroyed, no cure of its victims (or its victims' victims) is possible.

Once the master lycanthrope is dead, the victim must perform a ritual of piety and penance to cleanse himself. The specifics of this ritual are left to the DM, to be determined by the circumstances and character in question.

Next, the victim must assume his bestial form (this form must somehow be triggered). While in this form, a priest must cast the following spell upon the victim: *atonement*, *cure disease*, and *remove curse*. During this time, the victim's player must make a saving throw vs. death magic (due to the excruciating pain). Success indicates the cure is complete. Failure means that the victim is likely doomed to the dual existence of a lycanthrope for the duration of his life. In many cases, this life is fortunately brief, as the priest or other attendants commonly slay the victim on the spot. In death, the victim regains his human form on final time.

Additionally, 10th-level rangers have the ability to create an herbal draught that has a chance to cure lycanthropy. This ability is defined on page 251 of the Domains of Dread book and may be used to supplement or replace the rules above.

Furthermore, there's more variability among Ravenloft werebeasts than in those found elsewhere. Not all lycanthropes are triggered by the full moon, and not all are vulnerable to silver. Certainly each infected lycanthrope has a trigger, and each werebeast (regardless of classification) has a nonmagical vulnerability. However, in the Demiplane of Dread it's much harder to predict what these elements are.

Finally, infected lycanthropes in Ravenloft are much more likely to choose friends and loved ones as their victims. Outside the Demiplane, werebeasts target either personal friends or enemies, making no distinction between the two. (As stated in the Monstrous Manual book, all that matters is the strength of the love - or hate - binding werebeast and victim.) Such is the dark, horrifying nature of Ravenloft that friends, family, and lovers are much more likely to suffer.

I never knew my natural parents. My guardians never spoke of them, never seemed to know anything about them, never ever showed any curiosity. Thus my own curiosity was never satisfied. I dreamed - as most adoptive children do - that my birth parents were a great lord and lady, perhaps a king and queen. I dreamed that they would one day find me, take me away from my humdrum life, and anoint me as prince of a distant land.

I always thought I was different from the other children around me. I was faster, stronger and fiercer sometimes. I felt more of a kinship with the village dogs, particularly the major's vicious hunting dogs, than I did with human children.

Even then, at the age of ten, I had the inescapable belief that my mysterious heritage would set me apart from those around me. Three years later, with the onset of puberty, I realized I was right.

How I wish that I had been wrong...

- Anonymous

A Biological Survey

Werebeast Phenotypes

Werebeasts come in a staggering number of phenotypes, each distinguished by its animal form. During my travels, I have personally encountered evidence of a baker's dozen, from the common werewolf to the enigmatic wereraven. If that were not enough, I have heard credible rumors of roughly another half-dozen varieties. This does not include the scores of more-or-less fantastical tales which describe everything from werefrogs to wereelephants.

I have determined certain guidelines as to what animal forms are viable. In my experience, there is only one strict prohibition: a lycanthrope never has a pure herbivore (plant-eater) as its animal aspect. To my knowledge, this prohibition has never been broken, and anyone who claims to have encountered a wererabbit or a werewolf has almost certainly been hallucinating, perhaps after an extended visit to the local tavern.

For the vast majority of lycanthropes, the beast within is a carnivore, a creature that subsists on the flesh of other animals. This category includes werewolves, weretigers, werejackals, and the like. Though less common, certain lycanthropes do assume the form of omnivores, creatures whose diet comprises both plants and animal flesh. Examples include werebears and wererats.

Whatever their diet, the majority of animal aspects are mammals - furred, warm-blooded, air-breathing, and viviparous. This is not a hard-and-fast rule, however. Several nonmammalian creatures are worthy of note, including the wereraven, the weresnake, the wererocodile, and the dreaded wereshark.

For the record, I have personally encountered lycanthropes with the following animal forms: wolf, bat, boar, rat, tiger, badger, bear, fox, shark, crocodile, raven, seal, and jackal. Other phenotypes which I believe to exist, although I have not seen them myself, include cats, snakes, coyotes, lions, jaguars, walruses, and-may the gods help those who sail the seas-killer whales!



Whatever their form or phenotype, werebeasts in the Ravenloft setting share a common ability: they can see in the dark as well as any character with infravision. Further, when the moon is full, werebeasts can see as well as they do in broad daylight.

Vulnerabilities

Lycanthropes of all types are daunting foes. Magical weapons [of +1 or better enchantment] can strike them and inflict damage normally, but most other weapons are useless against a lycanthrope in its animal or man-beast form; the wounds caused by a non-magical weapon heal almost instantaneously.

When in human form, an infected lycanthrope is as vulnerable to attack as any normal man or woman. Though this is not so for the true lycanthrope. In my experience, a true lycanthrope in human form may appear to sustain a wound from an ordinary weapon, but in reality suffers no ill or lasting effects. The apparent wound fades quickly, sometimes in an hour or so, but the change is not instantaneous. In this way, true lycanthropes can maintain a ruse of being normal humans. (Perhaps this is for the best. I shudder to imagine the ignorant hunter who might stab one innocent after another, looking for the one who fails to bleed profusely.)

Yet the situation for a would-be hunter of lycanthropes is far from hopeless. Every werebeast has at least one nonmagical vulnerability, one item or substance which can bring about its death. If common lore is to be believed, no lycanthrope is immune to silver weapons. While that may be true in some mythical or distant realm, it is not true in any land I have visited. Rather, the vulnerability varies from phenotype to phenotype, and less frequently, from individual to individual within a single phenotype. The werebeast hunter who relies solely on a silver weapon will inevitably face his own grisly death, or worse.

Most phenotypes are susceptible to some herbal concoction or naturally occurring element (even those who can be harmed by silver weapons). While some of these compounds are poisonous to humans, their effectiveness against specific lycanthropes is unmatched. The slightest trace of the appropriate compound, whether ingested or insinuated into a wound, may be enough to slay a susceptible werebeast instantly. Most lycanthropes find the smell of their chemical nemesis distasteful, although this reaction is not so strong that an individual cannot suppress it if circumstances so warrant.

A werebeast has a 75% chance of detecting any trace of its chemical nemesis in its food. If a piercing weapon is coated with this substance and subsequently wounds the creature, the beast is allowed a save vs. poison to avoid the fatal effects of the substance.

It remains for the DM to determine werebeasts' susceptibility (if any) to "common" poisons; those substances that are poisonous to human beings such as belladonna or arsenic. One possible default rule is that all werebeasts gain a +4 bonus to their saving throws against these substances.

Below I have set out what I have managed to learn about the vulnerabilities of different phenotypes. (While I recognize that other werebeasts exist, I have not been able to gain such information about them.) Note that infected lycanthropes share the same vulnerabilities as the creature who infected them. Also note that none of my statements below is categorical; it would be unwise to bet one's life on this information.

Werebat: The vast majority of werebats are vulnerable to weapons made of silver, as are werewolves. One rationale I have heard put forward is that the color and nature of silver represents the full moon, which is a frequent trigger for lycanthropes. (Since not all lycanthropes have this as their trigger, I am not totally convinced of this, but I have nothing better to propose.) Also note that many werebats are vulnerable to the herb skullcap.

Werebadger: I have encountered only a few of these creatures, so I must emphasize that my experiences may not be representative of an entire phenotype. However, those I battled proved vulnerable to silver weapons. Upon the advice of a Vistani (which I followed only with the greatest reluctance), I tricked one werebadger into ingesting poppy seeds. This substance proved fatal to the werebeast.

Werebear: Most werebears are vulnerable to a cold-forged weapon, provided the weapon is made of the purest iron. The

symbolic rationale for this vulnerability seems to be that cold-forging iron requires great physical force, a characteristic that also applies to werebears. In addition, many werebears are susceptible to belladonna, or "deadly nightshade."

(Regarding cold-forged iron: According to the armorers I've consulted, most ordinary weapons are made of low-grade steel. Pure iron is rarely used, for it is softer than steel, it takes less of an edge, and it is less resilient. Thus, a would-be hunter desiring a cold-iron blade must commission a blacksmith to create it. Furthermore, most weapons are forged - beaten into shape - when the metal is red-hot and pliable. In contrast, cold-forged weapons cannot be heated. The iron must be beaten into shape while it is cold. Obviously, this is a much more difficult procedure.)

Wereboar: In general, wereboars are vulnerable to spears made of sharpened oak. The entire spear must be free of any metal or stone reinforcement; a metal spear point renders the weapon ineffective. Natural boars are sylvan creatures, and they are most frequently hunted with spears (thus the expression, "bleeding like a stuck pig"). This seems to be the symbolism for this vulnerability. As for an herbal bane, many wereboars are susceptible to camphor.

Werecocodile: Perhaps because they are relatively primitive creatures, werecocodiles are vulnerable to primitive weapons. The majority can be struck normally by cutting, piercing, or bludgeoning weapons made of flint. Flint weapons may have wooden or other handles, so long as the actual cutting edge, piercing point, or place of impact is unreinforced flint. Mandrake appears to be the herbal nemesis of most werecocodiles, though I am uncertain whether any singular part of the plant is responsible.

Werewolf: Surprisingly, most werewolves are vulnerable to bludgeoning or piercing weapons formed from the bones of any canine creature (dogs, coyotes, wolves, or jackals). I am intrigued by the possibility that this is a form of symbolic magic, since fox hunts using dogs to chase and kill the prey are common in several regions I have visited. In addition to the weapons described, many werewolves seem vulnerable to juniper berries.

Werejackal: Weapons made of beaten copper are effective against most werejackals. This soft metal is rarely used for normal blades, so copper weapons must be custom-made. I do not understand the symbolism of this vulnerability. As for other banes, some werejackals seem extremely vulnerable to fennel.

Wererat: These fell creatures show the greatest variation in their vulnerability. Some are susceptible to silver weapons, others to weapons of cold iron, still others to implements of wood or stone. This variability makes these, perhaps the least powerful of werebeasts, quite difficult to destroy. They show similar variability with regard to chemical susceptibilities. There is no single chemical which can be depended upon to harm any significant proportion of wererats.

Wereraven: Most of these creatures are vulnerable to weapons made of silver, possibly for the same reasons described for werebats. If these creatures have an herbal bane, I have not discovered it; wereravens do not appear susceptible to any chemical poison.

Wereseal (Seawolves): Weapons made from the bones or teeth of whales are particularly efficacious against most wereseals, since carnivorous whales are among the natural enemies of this animal aspect. In addition, these fell creatures are usually susceptible to amaranth.

Wereshark: The majority of, but certainly not all, weresharks are vulnerable to silver weapons. Most others are susceptible to weapons made of two materials: petrified wood (whether the petrification occurs naturally through age or magical intervention) and flint. (Like werecocodiles, weresharks are primitive creatures, and this is reflected in their vulnerabilities.) I know only of one herbal nemesis for weresharks: mangrove leaves. Unfortunately, it does not appear to be equally effective against all members of this phenotype.

Weretiger: Weretigers are frequently vulnerable to cutting and piercing weapons made from obsidian, a resilient volcanic glass which can take a lethal edge. If there is a symbolic reason for this vulnerability, I do not know it. In addition, many weretigers are said to be susceptible to ginseng.

Werewolf: Most, but not all, werewolves are vulnerable to weapons made of silver. Solid silver is not required; even a weapon coated with a thin layer of this metal will usually suffice. In addition, some werewolves are highly susceptible to wolfsbane, also known as aconite, a highly toxic relative of horseradish.

Table 1: Summary of Vulnerabilities

Creature	Weapon Vulnerability	Chemical Susceptibility
Werebat	Silver (piercing)	Skullcap
Werebadger	Silver	Poppy seeds or oil
Werebear	Cold-forged iron	Belladonna
Wereboar	Oaken spear	Camphor
Werecocodile	Flint	Mandrake
Werefox	Canine bone	Juniper berry
Werejackal	Copper	Fennel
Wererat	Varied	Varied
Wereraven	Silver	Unknown
Wereseal	Whalebone, whale tooth	Amaranth
Wereshark	Petrified wood or silver	Mangrove
Weretiger	Obsidian	Ginseng
Werewolf	Silver	Wolfsbane (aconite)

Table 2: Weapon Effects

1d10 Roll*	Weapon	Type Consequences
1	Cold-forged iron	-1 to hit
2	Wood (choose a specific type)	-1 to hit, -1 to damage
3	Flint	Weapon breaks on attack roll of a natural "1" (piercing or cutting weapon only; -2 to hit; -1 penalty to damage)
4	Bone	-1 to damage (bludgeoning weapon); weapon breaks on attack roll of natural "1" (piercing weapon)
5	Copper	-2 to hit, -1 to damage
6	Bronze	None
7	Lead	Bludgeoning weapons only
8	Silver	None
9	Obsidian	Cutting weapons only
10	Gold	-3 to hit

*To determine a new werebeast's vulnerability at random, roll 1d10.

The special weapons used to combat lycanthropes present their own set of difficulties. For example, characters who attack with cold-iron weapons incur a -1 attack roll penalty. That's because cold iron can't hold an edge as well as steel. Copper is even softer, increasing the attack roll penalty to -2 and carrying a -1 penalty to damage. Since these weapons are custom made, their cost is whatever the blacksmith wishes to charge (i.e., "as much as the market will bear").

Spears or other piercing weapons made of pure wood, without metal or stone tips or reinforcement, have an attack roll penalty of -1. Such weapons also carry a -1 penalty to damage.

Flint weapons have fragile edges and points. They carry a -2 attack roll penalty and a -1 penalty to damage. Furthermore, each time a character uses a piercing or cutting weapon of flint, a natural 1 on the attack roll means the weapon has broken, and is useless. This rule does not apply to bludgeoning weapons, however.

Bones are lighter than the materials normally used for bludgeoning weapons. Large bones can serve as clubs, but they carry a -1 penalty to damage. Bones also can be sharpened and used as piercing weapons. They're brittle, however, and will break if the player rolls a natural 1 on the attack roll.

The Transfiguration

The transfiguration is the process by which lycanthropes change from one form (or aspect) to another. It takes approximately one minute, during which time the creature is unable to take any action whatsoever. It cannot move, attack, or defend itself. It is aware of its surroundings, however, and can act appropriately the instant the transfiguration ends.

During the transfiguration, the creature's body is racked with convulsions as its skeletal structure and musculature shift into their new orientations. Observers can see the bones and muscles shifting around under the skin, a process which is accompanied by a wet, tearing sound. For true lycanthropes, the transfiguration usually is an experience of transcendent joy. For infected lycanthropes, however, it is one of mortal agony. Because of this, true lycanthropes are quite likely to hold on to any objects or equipment they happen to be carrying during the transfiguration while infected lycanthropes are more likely to drop whatever they hold.

During the round in which it transfigures, a werebeast loses any Dexterity bonus to its AC. further more, it cannot use a shield. Characters who attack a transfiguring werebeast gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls.

The sight of a werebeast undergoing a transfiguration is so dreadful that anyone witnessing it is subject to a horror check. If the creature is transfiguring into a particularly powerful beast or man-beast form, a fear check might also be required, at the DM's discretion.

Infected lycanthropes must save vs. death magic to avoid dropping anything they are carrying.

Clothing and Armor

While the transfiguration changes the form of a werebeast's body, it obviously does not transform the creature's clothing or equipment. In most cases, the man-beast form is larger and more heavily muscled than the human aspect. Depending on the particular phenotype, the metamorphosis from human to animal form may involve either an increase or decrease in overall size. For example, awererat's animal aspect is smaller than man-sized, while a werebear's is larger. This size differential will determine what effect the transfiguration has on any clothing or armor worn by the creature.

If the transfiguration decreases the creature's overall size, then clothing and equipment pose little inconvenience. Elaborate clothing or a complex suit of armor might momentarily limit a much smaller aspect's freedom of movement - a two-foot-long rat is almost caged in a suit of plate mail, for example - in all but the rarest instances however, the werebeast can quickly free itself from such impediments. [At the DM's option, this may take an additional round.]

But what if the new aspect, the one into which the creature is transfiguring, is larger than the one that donned the accoutrements? With all but the most robust and confining clothing, there is little problem. The force with which the skeletal and muscular changes occur is almost always sufficient to burst any clothing at the seams. This happens so fast that the creature is not discommoded, since the torn fragments simply fall away.

Such is not the case with all armor, however. Suits of armor are obviously more robust than normal clothing; they are designed to withstand abuse as well as to resist being torn away. So resilient are most types of armor that they can cause significant harm to a werebeast unwise enough - or unlucky enough - to change into a larger aspect while wearing them. Generally speaking, the more protection a suit of armor provides, the more damage it can inflict on the werebeast wearing it.

When a werebeast changes back to human form, it will almost invariably be naked. The experience of returning to one's self, naked, bruised, and in a strange place, is often the first clue to an infected lycanthrope of his affliction.

Calculations for constriction damage caused by armor are optional. Damage occurs during the round in which the transfiguration takes place. (Note that this damage is not healed during the transfiguration.) At the end of that round, the armor fails away: straps and the like tear, or the armor bursts asunder at the seams. There is no saving throw against this damage.

Table 3: Constriction Damage

Armor Type	Damage (hp)
Leather/padded	0 or 1
Studded leather/ring mail	1d2
Scale mail	1d3
Chain mail	1d4
Splint/banded mail	1d3+1

Damage and Healing

The transfiguration is a process by which the entire body modifies itself to conform to a different pattern or standard. Since this standard describes an unwounded, whole body, it should come as no surprise that the transfiguration can effectively cause cuts and contusions to vanish. Whenever a lycanthrope changes form, it heals a significant proportion of any wounds it has suffered in its previous aspect. In other words, if a wererat in rat form suffers a laceration, it may be able to heal that wound, at least in part, simply by changing to its human aspect.

I have heard tell that lycanthropes in certain distant and mysterious lands can heal by transfiguration only that damage which they suffered while in animal aspect, in other words, by changing from animal to human form. However, in the lands I'm familiar with, any transfiguration will have salutary effect. Note that lycanthropes will be cautious when it comes to transfiguring while in combat, even if they could benefit from healing, because the process briefly leaves them at the mercy of their foes.

Each time an infected lycanthrope returns to human form, it heals 10% to 60% (1d6 x 10%) of any damage it has suffered since its last transfiguration. The same rule applies to true lycanthropes whenever they assume a different aspect. DMs who wish to avoid a tittle extra bookkeeping may rule that the transfiguration heals 10% to 60% of any outstanding damage, without regard to when it was inflicted.

Note that reversion to human form upon death is not the same as transfiguration, and hit points are not regenerated when this occurs.

Memory Loss and Retention

True lycanthropes suffer no memory loss due to the transfiguration. Their personalities are unchanged and their memories unaltered, regardless of their current aspect.

As mentioned earlier, they are even totally aware of their surroundings during the transfiguration itself. Would-be werebeast slayers who count on a moment of disorientation or shock immediately after their foe's transfiguration are bound to be sorely disappointed.

The situation with infected lycanthropes is more complex. As I have discussed previously, an infected lycanthrope in human form will remember his actions in secondary aspect vaguely at best. Those memories will have the surreal, indistinct characteristics of a nightmare incompletely recalled upon waking. Without other, more tangible clues such as inexplicable wounds, few victims of the dread affliction will believe those memories are anything but nightmares.

Further, even the transformation itself cannot be clearly recalled. For the present purposes, one should consider an infected lycanthrope to be in its secondary aspect from the moment the first transfiguration starts to the instant the second one ends. Thus, he will not remember clearly the torment of shifting to animal form or back again... although faint echoes of these agonies might be part of his "nightmares."

For infected lycanthropes, memory loss is unidirectional. In other words, a werebeast in human form will not recall what he has done as an animal. However, while the werebeast is in animal form, he will remember virtually everything that he knows in human form, though bloodlust colors his attitudes and sensibilities. This is how an infected werebeast successfully hunts down loved ones and enemies alike; it recalls all pertinent facts about its prey. Such knowledge includes any precautions, tricks, and traps that the prospective target may have mentioned to the marauder while the latter was in human aspect. Further, the ravening beast recalls any precautions that he himself might have taken while in human aspect whether or not the human suspected that his own dark side was a thing to be feared.

I recall one particularly fateful case in Darken. Unbeknownst to anyone, including herself, a well-known and well-loved merchant was an infected wererat. When a mysterious, marauding beast started to slay this merchant's closest friends and associates, the survivors asked for her aid in protecting them. She helped them design cunning tricks and traps that should,

by all rights, have kept even the shrewdest intruder out of their homes. Then the marauder penetrated these security precautions as though it knew everything about them... which of course it did.

Eventually, the merchant began to suspect the truth. So she set snares and traps around the periphery of her own home, hoping to trap herself while in the form of the beast as she left the building for her nightly rampage. Although a cunning ploy, this also failed, since her beast form remembered all of the precautions she had taken while in human aspect. Eventually, she had no choice but to voice her suspicions to her neighbors and ask them to lock her up at night. Fortunately for all concerned, that was when I came upon the scene. After having tracked down the true wererat that originally infected the woman, I was able to arrange for her cure.

The DM decides whether a deity withholds spells from an infected priest as punishment for the actions of the beast within.

Effects on Character Skills

Some victims of pathologic lycanthropy have learned specific skills before they contracted the dread affliction. For example, they may have acquired prodigious weapon skills. Or they may have learned how to wield the powers of magic. How does the transfiguration affect these skills?

As long as a victim of pathologic lycanthropy is in human form, the affliction has little effect on his skills. He can wield his sword or cast his spells as effectively as he did before he acquired the infection.

While I have heard that certain specific attributes are altered, this seems to be rare. For example, those skilled woodsmen known to some as "rangers" frequently show unusual degrees of animal empathy, being able to calm wild beasts with their very presence. This ability may evaporate if the ranger is infected with lycanthropy. Priests of the more beneficent gods may find that their deities become somewhat unresponsive. Once the lycanthropy has started to manifest itself - that is, once the individual has transfigured for the first time - a priest may find himself unable to acquire and use the more potent types of clerical magic. I suspect that this arises more from the actions of the person while in secondary aspect than from the simple fact of his infection, however. Any priest who acts against the tenets of his faith will be punished, and the actions of a transfigured lycanthrope will almost certainly be against the tenets of all but the most bloodthirsty religions. Certain deities, especially those who follow the precepts of forgiveness, might not exact such penalties on their priests. I do not know this for sure, however.

What, then, about skills acquired through training and experience? Does an infected lycanthrope retain these special abilities even when he becomes the beast?

In general, the answer is no. In animal aspect, a lycanthrope's ability to attack and to defend itself are those of the aspect itself. It matters not whether the victim is, in human form, a sickly peasant or the mightiest warrior in the world. In animal aspect, both of these folk have the same physical strength and combat skill (assuming both are transformed into the same phenotype, of course).

An infected lycanthrope does not retain its human mentality when in animal aspect. While knowledge of facts is retained, all skills depending on mental outlook and philosophy are lost with the transfiguration. Thus, the animal aspect of a spellcaster cannot wield the powers of magic.

As noted, memory is maintained in animal aspect, albeit possibly in a modified form. (Otherwise the beast would not be able to evade traps set by itself in human form, and could not track down its victims using knowledge of their habits and whereabouts.) It thus seems logical to me that skills based largely on factual knowledge will be maintained in animal aspect. For example, if a woman skilled in heraldry becomes infected with the scourge, she will retain her ability to recognize coats of arms even while in animal form.

What about true lycanthropes? Since they were born as werebeasts and surely will die as such, they have no "previous skills" to lose. The issue of what special skills a werebeast can acquire is discussed in Chapter Three.

In general; all class-related skills will be lost on transition to animal form: a rogue's lock-picking and climbing

skills, for example, or a warrior's combat skills. An infected lycanthrope in animal form has the abilities and immunities of the werebeast that infected him. This means his THACO, AC, damage, saving throws, hit points, and special attacks and defenses are those of the werebeast.

It's up to individual DMs as to which nonweapon proficiencies a lycanthrope retains in animal form. In general, active skills - those that require some degree of dexterity - are lost, while passive skills involving knowledge and perception are retained.

Diet

Infected and true lycanthropes differ significantly in their eating habits and dietary requirements. Thus, I shall deal with each type of lycanthrope separately.

Infected Lycanthropes

While in human aspect, victims of pathologic lycanthropy experience no significant change in their need for food; it remains just as it was before they contracted the contagion. Although their preferences alter somewhat, leaning more toward rare cuts of meat, they can still subsist on normal diets, and can extract sustenance from fruits and vegetables.

As soon as infected lycanthropes assume the shape of a beast, however, things are very different. The creatures will immediately try to eat their fill of fresh, raw flesh. The amount required varies by phenotype and matches the requirements set out for true lycanthropes below. (For example, when an infected werewolf assumes its animal form, it will start hunting for 20 pounds of fresh meat.) Very few infected lycanthropes maintain their secondary aspect for more than eight to twelve hours, however, so the chance of starvation is slim. Once the beasts become human again, their need for flesh is diminished. Nonetheless, infected lycanthropes that retain their animatistic form for extended periods could conceivably starve if opportunities for killing were limited.

Table 4: Diet of Lycanthropes

Type of Creature	Estimated Requirement (Daily in Pounds)
Werebat	2
Werebear*	50
Wereboar**	20
Werecocodile*	50
Werewolf	5
Werejackal*	20
Wererat*	2
Wereraven*	1
Wereseal	50
Wereshark	75
Weretiger	50
Werewolf	25

* Note that such a creature may also be quite creative in fulfilling its dietary requirements. I once observed a bear who literally subsisted on thousands of moths each day!

** Indicates scavenger.

True Lycanthropes

Regardless of phenotype, all true lycanthropes must eat meat to survive. Although they can eat vegetables and fruit (and will do so to bolster their masquerade while in human aspect), they gain little nourishment or enjoyment from doing so.

Some phenotypes can subsist on previously killed prey, on flesh that has been dead for hours or even days. This ability matches the natural feeding habits of the base phenotype. If the animal form resembles a creature that is naturally a scavenger - for example, wererats, werewolves, and werejackals - then the werebeast can eat older flesh. If the animal aspect is naturally a hunter - weretigers or weresharks, for example - the werebeast can gain sustenance only from flesh that is freshly killed.

Regardless, all werebeasts vastly prefer freshly killed prey.

A wary hunter of werebeasts does not confuse the need for a fresh kill with the inability to stomach cooked or aged meat, however. Even a weretiger could enter an ordinary household and dine heartily on a venison stew. While the creature would gain no sustenance from the meal, and might have to feign any enjoyment, it would not be harmed by the experience.

For werebeasts who assume the form of animal scavengers, the restrictions on what meat they can and cannot eat is very similar to the requirements of normal humans. Thus, if meat is in a state fit for humans to eat without serious risk of sickness, a scavenger lycanthrope can also eat it.

Scavenger lycanthropes can and do preserve flesh, using techniques similar to those used by humans, that is, spicing and salting. Such techniques decrease the nutritional value of the flesh, however, by a factor of two. Thus, scavenger lycanthropes must eat twice as much preserved meat as normal. Even scavenger werebeasts can never extract sustenance from cooked food. Cooking instantly and irrevocably destroys the nutritional value of meat for a werebeast.

As a general rule, a true lycanthrope must eat an amount of flesh roughly equal to the amount necessary to sustain a natural specimen of its animal aspect. For example, a two-foot-long giant rat would eat perhaps two pounds of food each day. This means a wererat must eat two pounds of raw flesh each day to sustain itself. Food other than raw flesh - or, in the case of non-scavenger werebeasts, other than fresh raw flesh - does not count toward this total. Thus the wererat would still have to eat two full pounds of flesh, no matter how much fruit, bread, and vegetables it otherwise consumed.

From my own research and encounters, I provide the following estimates of food requirements for different phenotypes. I must stress that these are estimates: variation between individuals may exist. Also, this does not take into account the possibility that certain werebeasts may prefer to eat more than others.

The figures above represent my best guess at average requirements. A true lycanthrope can go for up to four days without suitable food before it begins to suffer any ill effects. This assumes, however, that it eventually makes up for the food it has missed.

Note that even the wererat discussed above will probably slay one animal (or person) every day (or couple of days, at least). Since it prefers fresh meat, it will probably make a kill just to get its two pounds of flesh.

All lycanthropes appear to prefer human and humanoid flesh to that of animals. This preference is not so strong that the creatures cannot override it when necessary, however. They can derive sustenance from any form of flesh (keeping in mind the restrictions I have set out above, of course).

Van Richten's estimates for dietary requirements are quite accurate, but he fails to answer several key questions. For instance, how much flesh can a werebeast glean from the average man? From a goblin? For a simple solution, use the following guidelines in play: On average, a man-sized victim yields 100 pounds of flesh (including skin, marrow, and organs). A creature classified as "large" yields 150 pounds, while a creature that is size "small" yields 50.

For each day beyond four that a lycanthrope goes without sufficient food, the creature loses one-eighth of its hit-point total (rounded up). Each day, it receives a saving throw vs. polymorph to resist the day's loss. Note that the loss is of one-eighth of the creature's total normal hit points.

For example, a werebat whose hit points usually add up to 24 is forced to go without food. For the first four days, it suffers no ill effects (except, perhaps for an increasingly foul mood). On the fifth day, and on each subsequent day, it must save vs. polymorph or lose 3 hit points (one-eighth of its total).

Note that a werebeast cannot regain hit points lost to starvation simply by changing form. (The reverse is also

true; obviously, a werebeast cannot heal combat damage simply by eating a square meal.) Although magic can restore the points lost to starvation, the mere passage of time has no effect. The creature regains all starvation points as soon as it devours all of the flesh it should have eaten up to that point.

Progressive starvation has another consequence. A starving werebeast has an increased chance of suffering bloodlust. (Bloodlust is discussed in more detail on page 150.) For each day beyond four that the creature goes without sufficient food, it suffers a -1 penalty to its save vs. polymorph to avoid bloodlust. This penalty vanishes as soon as the creature makes up for all the time that it's gone without sufficient food.

Life Span and Lifecycle

Unlike the undead creatures I have studied, werebeasts follow a natural cycle from birth to death. They are born, they mature to adulthood, and they eventually die of old age. As noted below, however, this pattern varies between infected and true lycanthropes.

Infected Lycanthropes

When a person contracts pathologic lycanthropy, his or her natural life span is unchanged. Thus, a human blighted with lycanthropy will rarely live past 75 or 80, while an elf with the similar affliction might have to suffer it for half a millennium or more.

To the best of my knowledge, regardless of the age and maturity of the victim, the animal aspect is always that of a mature creature in the prime of its life. (This quite obviously puts the lie to that oft-quoted folktale that an infected werewolf must only put up with the affliction for 15 or so years, after which time the wolf within will have died of old age.) Whether the victim is a youth or a centenarian, the animal aspect is always powerful and vigorous.

Does this mean, then, that an infant - perhaps infected with the blight while in the womb - may undergo the transfiguration the first time it experiences its trigger? Could a baby, on the occasion of its first full moon, become a ravening werewolf? Such is not the case. In my experience, infected lycanthropes will not undergo the transfiguration until they have reached puberty (at whatever age that occurs for the species in question). Up until this time, they do not react to the trigger stimulus.

Why is this? I believe that the infective agent insinuated into the bloodstream requires its own trigger - something to make it active. Presumably, the vast physiological changes of puberty provide such a trigger.

According to many tales, infected children do respond to their trigger conditions in subtle ways. Rather than transfiguring into the beast, they exhibit a strong or inappropriate emotional reaction to the trigger. Thus, a child who will one day become a wolf when the moon is full may respond to a full moon with rather beastly behavior. In short, the child may exhibit a monthly lunacy. As of yet, I have found no direct evidence to support this notion, however.

Other aspects of the life cycle - sexual maturity, senility, and the end of fertility - are all unaffected by the blight of lycanthropy. Victims of this dread affliction reach all these signposts of life at the same ages as others of their race.

It should be pointed out, however, that the animal aspects never reach such signposts. No matter how old the human aspect, the beast form will never grow senile, nor will it suffer other visible or physiological effects of aging.

Of course, some infected lycanthropes have a hybrid as their secondary aspect. (They take the form of a man-beast.) In that case, the hybrid form shows the same outward signs of aging as the werebeast's primary form.

Statistics measuring the Strength and Dexterity of common werebeasts in hybrid form are listed on page 138. These figures, and the accompanying notes on aging, apply to any creature in man-beast form, pathologic or infected.

True Lycanthropes

The overall life span of a true lycanthrope seems to be approximately that of the race which its primary aspect resembles. Thus a werebeast that can appear human will have a life span of about 70 years, while a creature that seems to be an elf can live for over half a millennium.

I have been led to understand that, in certain distant lands which I have never had the chance to visit, the offspring of true lycanthropes mature quite differently from normal children. (For example, wererat offspring reach maturity in about two years.) This does not match my personal experience, however.

Everywhere that I have had occasion to visit, the offspring of true lycanthropes always appear to be normal human infants. Some, but not all, exhibit some of the subtle bestial characteristics described in a previous section (see Chapter One), such as slightly elongated forefingers. Otherwise, children who inherit lycanthropy grow and mature at the same rate as others of their apparent race or species.

Like infected children, the immature offspring of true werebeasts cannot change shape. The transfiguration is beyond their grasp, and they remain in human aspect. When they reach puberty, however, the situation changes rapidly.

At some point early in puberty, the child undergoes its first transfiguration. The exact moment cannot be predicted, nor can the metamorphosis be halted or controlled. Even the aspect assumed is uncertain; the child may become either the animal or the man-beast (assuming the phenotype exhibits all three aspects). Once transformed, the child cannot predict how long the change will last. For a period measured in days, the child has absolutely no control over its body, which changes from aspect to aspect randomly.

This period of uncontrollable change lasts for 1d3+1 days. During this time, the lycanthrope changes aspect every 1d6 hours. For each change, randomly determine which aspect it assumes.

Each time the lycanthrope assumes its animal or man-beast form, it must make a successful save vs. polymorph with a -2 penalty to avoid bloodlust. (Bloodlust is described in detail on page 150.)

Without direct training from an adult lycanthrope of identical phenotype, there's only a 50% chance that a young werebeast will learn to control its shapeshifting. If it fails this die roll (it only gets one chance), its random changes occur every 1d6 days (not hours). It still has no warning when a change is going to occur or which of its aspects it will assume.

Understandably, this period is terrifying for the young lycanthrope, even if its parents have told it what to expect. When in secondary or tertiary aspect, there is a very real risk that the creature will fly into bloodlust.

For obvious reasons, the parents of a young true lycanthrope will find some excuse for separating the youth from human society before the onset of puberty. In some secure location, they will monitor the progress of their offspring, helping it gain control of its transfigurations. This training period may last for days or weeks, depending on the personality of the child, and the care with which its parents try to teach it [in other words, DM's discretion]. At the end of this time, the creature will have full control of its shapeshifting ability, and will rarely (if ever) undergo transfiguration without actively willing itself to do so.

What about young lycanthropes who are separated from their parents, or those who may even be unaware of their true nature? (I have known one such case, an unfortunate child whose adoptive parents were forced to slay him when he became a wererat and tried to kill them.) Without guidance, it is possible that even an orphaned child could learn to control its transfiguration. The learning process takes much longer without suitable guidance, of course, extending from days or weeks to weeks or months. Some individuals can never learn how to control their transfigurations, however. With time, the random shifts become less frequent, but they never completely vanish. For obvious reasons, these individuals cannot successfully masquerade as humans. Neither are they accepted by their own kind, and thus are doomed to solitary (and usually short) lives.

Aging and True Lycanthropes

True lycanthropes never assume the form of immature animals. Nor, in my experience, is there such a thing as a child-beast hybrid. When the first change comes upon the creature, its other aspects are fully mature in all characteristics. This to not

say that time does not touch the true lycanthrope, however. Unlike their infected brethren, true lycanthropes appear to age in all their aspects.

In animal form, the changes wrought by age are largely cosmetic. The fur on the animal's ears and muzzle becomes whiter, the teeth discolor, and the eyes become steadily more rheumy and bloodshot. Such aging reflects the relative age of the creature's human form. (For example, assume that the primary aspect is a human with a life span of 80 years, and the animal aspect is a wolf, with a life span of 20. When the creature is 40 years old, its animal aspect will resemble a 10-year-old wolf.) Looks are deceiving, however. The animal's actual speed and strength seem to change only slightly with age, if at all.

The man-beast aspect also appears to age at a rate which is proportionate to the human aspect's condition. In time, patches of gray will appear in its pelt, and the hair may even start to thin. The eyes will become more bloodshot, in this case, appearances are correct. The man-beast's strength, dexterity, and other characteristics are affected by age, in much the same way as the primary aspect.

Procreation

While I probably know more about this fascinating subject than any other expert, even my knowledge is incomplete. Like most other creatures, lycanthropes consider their procreative behavior to be intensely personal, and not a topic for public discussion.

Infected Lycanthropes

While in human aspect, infected lycanthropes will engage in the same procreative behavior as uninfected individuals of their own race. Fertility, incidence of multiple birth, gestation period, and similar factors are unchanged. As mentioned in the previous chapter, if the father of a child is an infected lycanthrope, the child will not automatically suffer the affliction (unless the father subsequently infects it through normal means, of course). If the mother suffers the blight, however, so will the child. It will share the same phenotype and trigger condition as its mother.

It is interesting to point out that infected females who are with child become immune to their normal trigger condition during the last third of the gestation period. This seems to be an adaptation designed to protect the unborn child. Human females, then, will not undergo transfiguration - no matter what the stimulus - during the final three months of pregnancy. As though to make up for the lapse, the first transfiguration after giving birth may be particularly violent, and it will always lead to bloodlust.

The woman automatically flies into bloodlust on changing into her secondary form, and must eat twice her normal amount following her first post-partum transfiguration. If she survives this episode, she reverts to her normal behavior thereafter. The effective Strength and Dexterity of many man-beast forms are listed below. Note that some infected lycanthropes may acquire a man-beast form as their secondary aspect (rather than an animal). The rules stated here apply to such infected creatures as well.

As the man-beast ages, Strength and Dexterity decline. Table 11 in the Player's Handbook presents three categories for characters past their prime: middle age, old age, and venerable. When a werebeast shifts to a new category, its Strength and Dexterity drop one ranking (see Table 3: Strength, in the Player's Handbook). Thus a "venerable" werewolf has an effective Strength and Dexterity three notches below normal: 18/76 and 13, respectively.

Table 5: The Man-Beast in Ravenloft

Creature	STR	DEX
Werebadger	18/91	16
Werebat	18/01	19
Werebear	19	15
Wereboar	19	15
Werecocodile	20	14
Werefox	18/76	18
Werejackal	18/00	17

Wererat	18/51	19
Wereraven	18	17
Wereseal	20	16
Wereshark	21	14
Weretiger	21	18
Werewolf	19	16

The Armor Class value commonly given for each creature reflects the benefits of the Dexterity shown above. Any bonuses listed for attack rolls or damage do not reflect the figures above. Note that the man-beast's natural weapons (claws, teeth, etc.) are not affected by Strength and Dexterity.

Although it would seem logical that a female werebeast's first target after giving birth might be her own offspring, this does not seem to be the case. Probably as the result of a prosurvival adaptation, female werebeasts in their secondary aspect seem to consider their own children off-limits ... so long as those children are also infected lycanthropes. Children born before their mother's infection, who do not share the lycanthropic scourge, often do become targets of her bestial predations. (Of course, this willingness to attack one's own offspring can also be observed in infected males whose children do not share their affliction.)

True Lycanthropes

There are some significant differences in procreative behavior between true lycanthropes and the human or humanoid species they resemble. Gestation period is unchanged; thus, a female werebeast whose primary aspect is human will carry a child for about nine months. Many other characteristics of procreation are different, however.

For example, werebeasts reach sexual maturity earlier than most members of their "primary species." This difference is not so great as to be remarkable (as it would be if a young werewolf were sexually mature at age three, for example). However, if this early maturity were allowed to become known, it would qualify the offspring as sexually precocious. True werebeasts also tend to be more fertile than members of the race they resemble. And they have a slightly higher incidence of multiple births. However, none of these differences is great enough to alert any but the most meticulous (and suspicious) researcher.

The offspring of a male and female true lycanthrope will always be a true lycanthrope of the same phenotype, whatever conditions apply. I have heard strange tales of werebeast societies in which males and females only seek out their mates in hybrid form, but I cannot confirm such reports. Such behavior may be ritualistic. Or perhaps it reflects a societal perception of sexual attractiveness. (Do not normal men and women put their best face forward to attract the opposite sex?) At any rate, I know of no reason why any aspect of the true lycanthrope should be infertile, since each form is but a natural extension of the same being.

As dreadful as it may seem, true lycanthropes do sometimes court normal, uninfected humans or demihumans. Such a union can lead to the birth of a child. (It is for this reason that I have characterized each variety of lycanthrope as a phenotype rather than a species.) The lycanthropic condition of their offspring is discussed in Chapter One.

Those who are well acquainted with werebeast lore have no doubt heard an occasional tale of the union between two distinct phenotypes - a wererat and a werewolf, for example. I have seen scant evidence of such aberrant pairings; fortunately, true werebeasts appear to have an aversion to such behavior. I firmly believe, however, that offspring will be produced only if the corresponding animal species - in the example above, a rat and a wolf - would produce young under normal circumstances. Thus, only similar phenotypic species can reproduce, werejaguars and weretigers for example, or werejackals and werewolves. The offspring of such a union would reflect a mixed heritage in all three aspects. Note that such offspring would themselves be infertile; they could not produce young of their own.

Gestation and Birth: During the first quarter of the gestation period, female true lycanthropes are free to transfigure into any of their three aspects without any risk to their unborn child. After that, however, they will not change into animal aspect unless the only other alternative is death. (I do not know categorically what effect this change would have on the unborn, but I suspect that it might lead to a stillbirth.) During the latter three-quarters of pregnancy, the female limits her transfigurations to human and man-beast aspects exclusively. Dietary needs change as the pregnancy progresses; after the second month, the mother's appetite is increased by one-quarter to one-half.

True lycanthropic mothers usually give birth in the same form in which their children begin life: human. However, I have heard tell that the pain of labor may induce a spontaneous transfiguration into the man-beast aspect. [The lycanthrope must save vs. paralysis to prevent this.] Perhaps for this reason, many true lycanthropes prefer to bear their offspring in private, lest a midwife learn of their true nature. (On the other hand, they may simply slay the midwife after the birth.)

Lycanthropes recover from the rigors of birth much faster than do normal humans. They could be up and around, fully functional, within minutes of the birth, if this were necessary. Most lycanthropes will feign the post-partum weakness (and sometimes depression) exhibited by humans, however, merely to maintain their masquerade.

Rearing Young: True lycanthropes show a somewhat schizophrenic outlook with regard to their young, if they can do so without personal risk or significant hardship, they will usually nurture their young until the offspring have reached puberty and can control their transfigurations. At this point, all contact between parents and offspring usually comes to an end. Before puberty, the parents - predominately the mother - will protect and educate the children. Most werebeasts are stricter, more severe parents than are the majority of humans. The difference is rarely great enough to attract overmuch attention, however.

It is important to note that few lycanthrope parents will tell their offspring the "facts of life" until the children are old enough to understand the importance of concealing their true nature. Since the parents are hunting throughout this period, it is not uncommon for lycanthropic children to be orphaned before they learn what they are.

The attitude of werebeast parents toward their children seems directly tied to the parents' own security. Most true lycanthropes I encounter are living within (or at least on the outskirts of) human civilization, masquerading as normal humans. Typically, no one suspects their true nature. Cunning lycanthropes can maintain this facade for years or even decades - possibly not in the same locale, but by moving on to a new village or town when the focus of suspicion turns in their direction. However, if suspicion does start to focus upon them, true werebeasts with young children will, without a qualm, arrange it so that their offspring are the next victims of the "mysterious monster." This will usually divert suspicion, at least for a time, since few humans want to believe that parents of any species could so cold-bloodedly sacrifice their children. Such is the nature of werebeasts, however.

Even if children merely represent a hardship, true lycanthropes are quite likely to abandon or sacrifice their young simply to make their own lives easier. This may occur if the presence of children hinders the parents' ability to hunt or otherwise feed themselves, or - if traveling is necessary - when offspring would limit the parents' mobility. This willingness to contemplate and perform infanticide is perhaps the most horrifying facet of the lycanthropic personality, and the fact that most distinctly sets these beasts apart from humans.

The preceding paragraphs focus on lycanthropes that masquerade as humans and thus infiltrate society. Within the limits of my personal experience, such creatures are in the majority. However, there are also werebeasts who prefer to exist in the shadows beyond normal human society. These creatures spend much of their lives in man-beast or animal aspect, assuming human form only temporarily-when it would benefit them on the hunt, for example. How do creatures of this feral ilk handle their offspring? Remember, such offspring are born in human aspect, and they cannot change form for more than a decade.

Based on my personal knowledge, lycanthropes of this kind use two main strategies. One is simply to raise their offspring themselves, carrying them around in the wilds, succoring them and educating them in the ways of their own savage lifestyle. I believe that immature lycanthropes raised in this way are at the heart of many legends of children who were raised by wolves or other creatures.

The second strategy is simply to abandon the offspring on the outskirts of human settlements. In most cases, of course, the foundlings will be adopted by members of the community who are unaware just how feral such children really are. I have no doubt that the true parents of these monsters enjoy many a cruel laugh at the humans who behave so generously. For that generosity will, in all likelihood, eventually be rewarded by a savage and lethal attack.

If the lycanthropes choose not to follow either of these options, they seem no less willing to practice infanticide than true werebeasts who lead (or feign) a more civilized existence.

Lairs

As I have hinted earlier, many true lycanthropes dwell within human or humanoid civilization or on its outskirts, acting as

societal parasites. Some, however, choose to live in the wilds, or perhaps in secret lairs beneath the streets walked by unsuspecting humans. And even werebeasts that do reside within human society may maintain secret haunts elsewhere; lairs to which they can retreat should their true nature be in danger of discovery, or simply because they need time alone. Infected werebeasts do not typically alter their habitat once they have acquired lycanthropy, but they maintain a home in the fashion of others of their race. Thus, the following discussions relate primarily to true lycanthropes.

Town Lairs

Although they are not what most people think of as lairs, the houses or apartments occupied by werebeasts within human society are worthy of some attention. In general, a lycanthrope's personality will be largely influenced by its phenotype (see the following chapter for further detail). Since an individual's home will usually be an outgrowth of his personality, it follows that a lycanthrope's town lair will reflect its phenotype.

In large part, or at least symbolically, a lycanthrope's town lair will resemble the kind of lair the phenotypic animal would have in the wild. (In other words, the town lair of a werewolverine will symbolically resemble the lair of a real wolverine.) Other facets of the creature's psychology might also be reflected. For example, a wererat will almost certainly have one or more secret escape routes. And, if at all possible, it will also have arranged access to the sewers or the local equivalent.

Despite such nuances in individual taste, several characteristics are common to werebeast lairs regardless of the owner's phenotype. First, most lycanthropes create at least one concealed access to their town lair. Werebeasts must frequently go out to hunt. However, few are daring enough to use the front door of their homes each time they leave and return. At any time, an observer might correlate the creature's late-night jaunts with killings or disappearances and suspect the werebeast's true nature. A secret passage helps eliminate this risk. However, even a cautious lycanthrope will sometimes leave by the front door to embark on a hunt - quite openly in fact, with some believable excuse. In this way, it will avoid suspicious patterns.

Storage is a common concern. Those creatures who subordinate their preference for fresh meat to the convenience of having a supply must create a larder. This larder must be concealed; otherwise a visiting busybody, with no suspicion of the werebeast's true nature, might find the half-eaten remnants of a vanished neighbor. The werebeast also must make provisions to prevent the supplies from spoiling, which would both render the food inedible and give the werebeast's secret away with the smell of corruption.

A town lair will typically be laid out so the lycanthrope can negotiate the doors, rooms, and hallways regardless of what aspect it currently holds. (This is more important for creatures like werewolves than for wererats, of course.)

Allow me to describe the lair of a werebeast I faced in Port-a-Lucine, a town in Dementlieu. This individual, a wererat, had resided in this town for almost half a decade without anyone growing wise to his true nature. In fact, he held a position on the town council. (Readers from Dementlieu may well recognize the individual of whom I write, although for personal reasons I will not refer to him by name.)

Compilers' Note: And against my better judgment, I'll accede to the wishes of the good doctor and my sister and leave this vermin anonymous despite later events the doctor describes herein.

- LWF

This individual had commissioned his small house to be built on the Widow's Walk, the wide thoroughfare that ringed the natural harbor. Although the werebeast's human aspect was slightly above average size, the house's doors and corridors were surprisingly narrow, and the ceilings unusually low. The heads of most visitors would brush the ceiling, while the owner himself had to stoop. I believe the reason for this was psychological. As a wererat, he was innately used to cramped, labyrinthine warrens. Perhaps he even relished them. Thus, the wererat built his house in a fashion that made him feel most at home.

Although the individual was relatively wealthy, he had little interest in the finer things of life. His house was far from empty, however. Instead, it was full of knickknacks, predominately small and shiny things, items that were of no discernible monetary or aesthetic value. While the individual seemed to enjoy being surrounded by these items, he evinced little emotional attachment to specific objects.

Unbeknownst to the builders, the individual had located his house directly over an abandoned branch of the storm-drain

system that ran beneath much of the town. In his private chapel, he had installed a concealed trap door that gave him direct access to this network of underground drains. It was via this route that he left his home to hunt. It was also this storm drain that he used as his larder.

Although the wererat had no true religion, he had persuaded the townsfolk that he was a fervent follower of a particularly introspective religious tradition. This tradition, he explained, required him to practice long hours of meditation and self-examination in the chapel included in his house. He would always make a big show of returning home for his devotions as soon as the sun had set. In fact, of course, he was preparing to hunt.

For most individuals, this alibi would have been sufficient, but this wererat's cunning took it one step further. He constructed a mannequin that resembled himself, kneeling in prayer. Every time he left his house at night to hunt, he placed this kneeling mannequin before the altar in his chapel. Should any of his neighbors spy in his window, they would see a reverent man in rapt devotion.

Although I hesitate to boast, I must admit that it was I who discerned this individual's true nature. On the request of certain townsfolk, I agreed to seek out the source of the mysterious depredations that had been bedeviling the place for years. After much research, I determined that the only way the ravaging creature could have reached its prey was through portions of the storm-drain system thought to have collapsed. Returning to ancient records describing the system, I found where the unused section ran. Lo and behold, the only building that could possibly have access to that section was the house of the council member. Proud though I am of my detective work, the story did not end well. I found myself in a face to-face confrontation with the werebeast, one which I survived only through good fortune. The beast escaped with its foul life, and could well have since set up housekeeping elsewhere.

Wilderness Lairs

Lycanthropes that eschew human society make their lairs in the wilds. "Socialized" werebeasts may choose a wilderness setting as well, albeit for other reasons (such as pleasure, a place to hunt, or a place to mate and raise offspring).

Like town lairs, wilderness lairs reflect the nature and psychology of the phenotypic animal. The psychological element is frequently more pronounced in wilderness lairs, since the werebeasts are most commonly in animal or man-beast aspect while using them.

We had ridden forth, my friends and I, for an enjoyable day of hunting boar. We had our horses, we had our beaters to drive the quarry before us, and we had our weighted spears.

The weather was perfect, and luck seemed to be with us. We had been in the saddle for less than an hour when the beaters called that they had seen signs of a fine boar in the woods ahead of us. My companions and I readied for our sport.

We heard the cries of the beaters, then a crashing from the underbrush before us. The boar burst into the clearing where we sat - a fine, muscular creature, larger than any I had ever seen. It lowered its head and charged directly at the legs of my horse. Calming my mount with whispers of encouragement, I steadied my spear.

It was a perfect thrust, I swear it. The keen point should have sheathed itself in the beast's flesh, just behind its shoulder - a killing thrust indeed.

Yet, for some reason, the spear point turned on the creature's pelt, with the shaft wrenched from my fingers by the impact.

And then the terror began...

- From the journal of Lord D'Arcy Penspot

Finding a suitable location for a wilderness lair is often an exercise in compromise. It must be at least somewhat removed from human habitation. (Otherwise, why have a wilderness lair in the first place?) Yet it must also lie close enough to suitable sources of food (that is, near humans or humanoids, for most werebeasts at any rate). Wererats seem to have the easiest time in meeting both these criteria. They often make their wilderness lairs beneath the streets of a town or village, in the sewers or storm drains. Despite the fact that they are within the limits of a town, I qualify these as wilderness lairs

anyway because they are distinct from human habitations.

Security is also a major concern. Most lycanthropes have little to fear from normal hunters. If an unfortunate woodsman encounters a werewolf, it will probably be the last creature he ever sees. Yet one day such an interloper may survive and inform others that a werebeast is close at hand, and those others may be quite capable of harming the lycanthrope. Even within the most depressed and fatalistic cultures, few villages would shy away from taking action against a lycanthrope that had constructed a lair nearby. For this reason, most lycanthropes seek to conceal the entrances to their wilderness lairs in some manner. This is obviously much easier for werebeasts with relatively small animal aspects (wererats, for example). While the interior of the lair could well be large enough to accommodate the creature in human aspect, the actual entryways may block anything larger than the phenotypic animal itself.

Some lycanthropes, it seems, build their lairs to resemble the lairs of natural animals of their phenotype. (Thus, a werebear's lair might, at first glance, be indistinguishable from the den of a real bear.) This has both advantages and disadvantages for the creature. On one hand, it will draw little attention from adventurers or investigators who may be looking for evidence of lycanthropic activity. On the other, it might draw unwanted attention from hunters who would normally track and slay the phenotypic animal, either for food or sport. Many werebeasts disguise their lairs as something else entirely - an overgrown cave entrance, for example.

An easy means of entering and escaping the lair is very important. Most lycanthrope lairs have a main entrance, which is large enough to admit the beast regardless of its aspect. In addition, the lair features several other escape routes, usually well concealed. Depending on the phenotype in question, some of these routes may be accessible to the creature only when in certain aspects. Obviously, creatures with animal aspects that are smaller than man-sized can benefit the most from this technique.

The interior of a lair can vary dramatically. Some that I have seen are bare of any adornment and free of any humanlike comfort. They are nothing but bare-walled caves, resembling the dens of ordinary bears. Other lairs look almost like human homes in their decor - at least when one is beyond the concealed entrance. Such lairs may have simple furnishings and carpets made of woven grass. Only rarely does a wilderness lair have more elaborate furnishings, such as ornately carved woods or artwork on the walls. Lycanthropes who enjoy such human-style luxury usually establish it in town rather than in the wilderness.

Like town lairs, many wilderness lairs have some sort of storage area for food. However, most wilderness lairs have no provisions that can preserve raw flesh for any significant length of time. Thus, even the best-stocked larder will not significantly decrease the frequency of a lycanthrope's hunting.

Certain self-styled lycanthrope hunters claim that traps of unsurpassed cunning and lethality protect all wilderness lairs. Judging from my experience, such claims are nothing but self-aggrandizement, designed to make the hunters' own actions seem more dangerous and hence more valuable. This is not to say that traps are never found, however. I have personally visited lairs that were protected by deadfalls, concealed pits, and other rudimentary traps. Only one was protected by anything more sophisticated - in this case, mechanical and magical traps of disturbing efficacy. However, the werebeast in question was atypical, having learned the rudiments of the mage's art. Just as few humans have the skill to set up complex tricks and traps, so too do few Lycanthropes. A few werebeasts with greater proficiency have somehow learned the skills of the thief, the mage, or the priest (which is discussed further in the following chapter).

I had always thought - perhaps because I had been told - that werebeasts were nothing more than kill-crazy monsters. No intelligence worthy of the name, just low cunning and evil intent. No greater goals than ripping up a few innocent and eating their flesh. That's what I was 'specting when I joined the group tracking down the werewold terrorizing travelers on the Old Svalich Road. I figure for a nasty battle at the end of our hunt, sure, but I was ready for it. I was armed for a stand-up fight against a foe tougher than any werewolf could possibly be.

It didn't take long to re-evaluate that thought when people started dying: people I respected, people I figured would make it through with nary a scrape. What's more, it wasn't the werewolf what was killing them, not directly anyway. What I'm saying is, they weren't killed by claws or teeth.

They were killed by dropped rocks, and pits, and sharp stakes and other such traps. They were led into ambush and slaughtered. And I came to realize this was no dumb beast we were hunting.

- From the journal of Zef Merrigan

A Psychological Survey

Moral and Ethical Outlook

In some distant lands, I am told, certain types of lycanthropes exhibit moral and ethical outlooks that are more or less benign. For example, travelers have claimed that were-bears have exhibited concern for the general weal. Further, though these creatures champion individualism above all else, they oppose those who spread pain and suffering. Judging from still other tales, there are werebeasts in some climes that run the gamut of behavior, from beneficent to indifferent to malevolent.

Such is riot the case within the realm of my experience. It is my considered opinion that virtually all lycanthropes are highly malign (although I must admit the actual nature of their malignity can vary somewhat). To be ever truthful, of course, the nature of my business is such that I am unlikely to encounter any werecreature of a less than cruel nature. As such, I must allow that "good" werebeasts can exist, though I have yet to meet them.

Why are lycanthropes such creatures of evil? My own guess is that they are subject to the same strange agencies that pervert magical wishes and twist the spirits of those who transgress the unwritten laws of moral behavior. Lycanthropy is a dark, malign disease - a perversion of the way life should be - and hence it is somehow akin to evil itself. When someone willingly kills a sentient creature, this is, in my view, an act of evil. Because such acts will ultimately corrupt the mind of those who perform them, so will a lycanthrope's killing slowly warp him into a malign form, whatever his original inclinations.

It has been my experience that lycanthropes native to the lands with which I am familiar (that is, Darkon, Dementlieu, and the rest) are malign in the extreme, regardless of phenotype. If they are born into lycanthropy, they exhibit their malign outlook regardless of the form they take. (This does not mean that a werebeast cannot pretend to have a different moral outlook when in its human aspect, of course.) Such lycanthropes are likely to exhibit a range of ethical attitudes, however. For example, a werebear will be aggressively independent and selfish, while a wererat may be more amenable to group interaction.



The infected lycanthropes I have met in my travels retained their original moral and ethical outlook when in human form. However, when they transfigured into their secondary aspect, they took on the moral and ethical stance appropriate to their phenotype. In my efforts to rid the world of these menaces, I have often been placed in an uncomfortable predicament. Believing a human is good, yet knowing his wereform is evil is a paradox that I have had to resolve within my own heart. Unfortunately, many infected lycanthropes resist all efforts to cure them, for their hearts have been claimed by their dreadful curse. As such, they too must be destroyed.

When infected werebeasts first enter such lands as Darkon or Dementlieu, they retain the personality they had before their journey - or so certain sages insist. In all too short a time, however, these blighted people grow progressively immoral and depraved. Sages claim that this change does not affect the creatures' ethical stance - that is, whether they value the common good higher than individual freedoms - but only their moral outlook.

This process is not instantaneous. Some lycanthropic individuals seem capable of resisting the siren song of depravity for a considerable period of time. Eventually, however, nearly all succumb to the fell blandishments of corruption. Werebeasts born to their malady who wish to resist this change seem able to postpone the inevitable by limiting the number of times they kill sentient creatures. This seems to imply that it is the slaying of intelligent, self-aware victims, and not a simple fact of lycanthropic nature, that causes the progressive decline into depravity.

Dr. Van Richten's zealotry to rid his world of evil is laudable, but his bias against lycanthropes is colored. He believes that all true werebeasts must ultimately be evil. This is not so in game terms. A werebear in Ravenloft may still have chaotic good tendencies, whether it is born in the Demiplane of Dread or is swept there via the mists. The same is true of other lycanthropes. Dr. Van Richten is correct, however, in the assumption that, given time, the dark powers of Ravenloft itself may corrupt even a lawful-good werecreature.

Please note: Dr. Van Richten's references to "moral outlook" equate, in game terms, to good and evil alignments; "ethical outlook" equates to the lawful and chaotic alignments.

Goals and Desires

Many believe that lycanthropes are dumb, ravening beasts, with only a modicum of animal cunning and certainly no real intelligence. This is true in enough instances that the belief has become firmly rooted in the minds of man. Yet it is definitely not the general case.

Why does this misconception persist, when anyone who has had personal experience with a lycanthrope can testify to this fallacy? I believe that the misconception is, perhaps, an attempt to minimize danger represented by werebeasts - that is, to deny that they are as significant a threat as they undoubtedly are. It is less daunting to consider lycanthropes as unintelligent, albeit still powerful, animals. How much more terrifying they become when one factors in human-level intelligence... As I have discovered many times in my travels, humanity shows a remarkable capacity for self-delusion.

Each time a non-evil lycanthrope hunts and kills a sentient victim, it must save vs. polymorph. If it makes this save, its alignment remains unchanged... this time. If it fails, however, the component of its alignment moves one step toward evil. (For example, a chaotic-good werebear is transported to Ravenloft. Each time it hunts and kills intelligent prey, it must save vs. polymorph. The first time it fails this save, its alignment permanently changes to chaotic neutral. The second time it fails, its alignment becomes chaotic evil.) This rule applies equally to infected and true lycanthropes.

This progressive change in moral stance affects true lycanthropes in all their aspects. Infected lycanthropes, however, become more malign only in their secondary aspect. When in their primary human aspect, their personality remains unchanged.

Note that this rule refers only to incidents where the lycanthrope kills an intelligent quarry for food. Even in Ravenloft, Sycanthropes aren't punished for killing in self-defense.

Unless the DM rules otherwise for special cases, a victim is "sentient" if it has an intelligence of "Low" or

greater.

Infected Lycanthropes

In their secondary form, that of the beast, infected lycanthropes come closest to the stereotypical view of ravaging monsters - particularly during the first few times that they transfigure. When a newly infected lycanthrope changes shape, its overriding desire is to find food. While it may show some level of animal cunning in hunting down its prey, it will rarely exhibit anything akin to true intelligence. Its hunger is simply too vast - its sense of freedom too overwhelming as the beast within is released from captivity - to allow it sober judgment.

The issue of bloodlust, too, is something that comes into play here. As discussed in more detail later in this chapter, newly infected lycanthropes are highly likely to be overcome by this fiendish urge. Thus, the lack of intelligent planning during early kills and the greater propensity to enter bloodlust ensures that an infected werecreature is likelier to be detected at the beginning of its "career" than later on. Based on rather infrequent encounters, I can only hazard that this condition pertains to the first five or six times an infected lycanthrope undergoes transfiguration. Needless to say, the goals and desires of a recently infected werebeast differ from one that has adjusted to its new lifestyle.

If the creature can avoid being detected and destroyed, after the seventh transfiguration or so it begins to show a little more intelligence and restraint in its behavior. Its chance of entering bloodlust also decreases at about this time. Hunger and the lust to hunt are still its dominant desires, but now the creature seems able to analyze and act upon these motivations a little more dispassionately.

While a newly infected werebeast will hunt quite openly (which is, might add, the most opportune time to track and kill these creatures), one that has survived numerous transfigurations will be more cunning. It will make the effort to cover its tracks and to keep its true nature secret. For example, a newly infected werebeast is quite likely to attack its prey - often, sadly, a loved one - in a relatively public place, rending him or her within clear sight of others. An "experienced" (if I may use that term) werebeast is more likely to sneak into the house of its prey at night and drag the victim into the woods. In a private, secluded place, it will devour its quarry with vicious glee, knowing that his or her screams will never be heard.

Obviously, if an infected lycanthrope has survived its first six or so transfigurations, the chances of its continued survival dramatically increase. Once the werebeast begins to apply its intelligence to the problem of survival, the difficulty of hunting it increases tenfold. For this reason, it is vital to start the hunt as soon as a werecreature has claimed its first victim. If the culprit is a newly infected lycanthrope, the chances are much better of successfully hunting it if the effort is made immediately.

True Lycanthropes

There is a wide variation in the goals and desires of lycanthropes that inherit their condition. Initially, when I first became aware of the existence of werebeasts, I suspected that this variation was based along phenotypic lines. In other words, I believed that lycanthropes of the same phenotype shared an overall set of behaviors and views. Over the intervening years, however, I have found that this is not true - or, at least, not universally true. Certainly, there are similarities between lycanthropes of the same phenotype. But, quite often, the variability within a phenotype is greater than that between phenotypes. The inescapable conclusion is that lycanthropes are individuals first and foremost. Indeed, they show much the same disparities and similarities as do humans and demihumans.

The central aspect of any lycanthrope's philosophy is survival. Since survival requires the creature to eat raw meat, and since its preferred food (regardless of its origin or moral outlook) is humanoid flesh, hunting intelligent prey is at the heart of all its behaviors. However, this does not mean that a lycanthrope that has inherited its illness will be the conspicuous, ravaging beast that newly infected werebeasts often are. (Certainly there are some true lycanthropes that seem to enjoy openly terrorizing humans and thus attracting attention to themselves, but they are rare. I postulate that this is particularly true because such creatures would bring down the wrath of every werehunter in the region. As such, these lycanthropes are few and far between.)

It is possible to argue this point by analogy. Humans must eat to survive. (Granted, they do not have the dietary restrictions of lycanthropes, but set that consideration aside for the moment.) Does this mean that a human's every waking moment will

be spent concentrating on finding his next meal? Does this imply that humans think of nothing but food? Of course not. The same logic holds true for lycanthropes, whether hereditary or infected ones that have adjusted to their disease.

Indeed, for many werebeasts the greatest motivation in their lives is that of continuing the deceit that they are normal humans or demihumans. I have personally encountered several lycanthropes that have crafted such cunning, complete masquerades that maintaining them interfered with their ability to hunt. They would undoubtedly have found it easier to feed if they had relaxed their attention to detail in their ruse. Yet they did not do so.

It has been posited that lycanthropes maintain a human facade to assure continued access to convenient sources of food. In the numerous cases I studied, this theory did not hold true, for the cost of maintaining a deceit frequently proved detrimental to acquiring food on a regular basis. Thus, these creatures must have been enjoying some other benefit gained from their deceptions. I believe this benefit is a kind of personal satisfaction, a knowledge that they are capable of deceiving - and thus proving they are smarter than - the humans surrounding them. So important to such werecreatures is this satisfaction that they will suffer obstacles to their hunting to maintain it.

This kind of demonstrated "superiority" over humanity seems to be a common motivator among werebeasts. Yet it is by no means the only one. Some of these fell creatures seem to share many of the same drives as humans and demihumans: wealth, comfort, power. Such lycanthropes tend to pursue wealth and comfort in much the same ways as mankind, through means honest or criminal. If they choose the latter, their unnatural powers provide them with significant advantages over merely human thieves.

It is interesting to note that true lycanthropes' definitions of wealth and comfort vary depending on phenotype. For example, werebears or weretigers relish a large house, with lots of space and privacy. Wererats, in contrast, prefer small, labyrinthine dwellings, cluttered with shiny baubles. In terms of artwork and other aesthetic elements, the items chosen by lycanthropes often reflect their underlying personality. Thus, the art preferred by a werewolf might well seem brutal, almost cruel, to humans. (One must not forget that most werebeasts are intelligent enough to understand this and will subvert their aesthetic tastes to maintain a facade, if they desire.)

Lycanthropes define "power" in either much the same way as humans do or quite the opposite. I have learned of werebeasts who pursued (and attained) public office. I have also encountered others who led human bandits, and still more who organized thieves' guilds, surrounding themselves with followers who were unaware of their leader's true nature.

One surprisingly cunning individual - a wererat - accrued great influence in a village by leading the locals' efforts to counter the depredations of the "mysterious beast" that was terrorizing the region. Although these efforts neither identified nor destroyed the beast (which was, of course, the wererat itself), they did minimize its impact on the citizenry, merely because the wererat scaled back its attacks as soon as it gained the position of power it had sought. Fortunately, few lycanthropes seem to be quite so cunning and enterprising. Unfortunately, most lycanthropes simply take the guise of a "mysterious ravaging monster" to remove anyone who attempts to block their advancement.

Regardless of phenotype, the vast majority of true lycanthropes have as a major goal the spreading of fear, pain, and suffering. Werebeasts seem to derive pleasure from tormenting mankind. While some werebeasts are quite blatant in this and go so far as to instigate "waves of terror" in which many innocents are slaughtered, others enjoy more subtle machinations. Through carefully escalated acts that start with mildly disturbing events and end with out-and-out atrocities, lycanthropes can create an environment of growing fear and paranoia, paralyzing and eventually destroying an entire community.

I suspect that some werebeasts consider this kind of terrorism to be the highest form of "art."

Bloodlust

I alluded to this topic earlier, and I include it here to present a counterpoint to the two previous sections on lycanthropic outlook and goals and desires. Bloodlust is the characteristic of lycanthropy perhaps most familiar to the average person, and it is by far and away the most frightening one. It is an uncontrollable rage into which a lycanthrope can fly when hungry, or when presented with the sight and smell of freshly spilled blood or fresh, raw meat.

Entering Bloodlust

Whenever a lycanthrope is exposed to a stimulus for bloodlust, the creature must save vs. polymorph. This saving throw suffers certain situational penalties as noted in the following table.

Table 6: Bloodlust Saving Throws Penalties

Condition	Penalty
Other werebeast nearby already in bloodlust	-2
Each day beyond 4 of food debt	-1
Werebeast tastes blood	-1
Werebeast has suffered 25% damage	-1
Werebeast has suffered 50% damage	-4
Werebeast has suffered 75% damage	-7
Werebeast is infected lycanthrope	-3
Werebeast is "new" infected lycanthrope*	-9
Werebeast is a true lycanthrope undergoing puberty	-3

*"New" means the creature has assumed animal form six or fewer times.

Hereditary lycanthropes are normally candidates for bloodlust only when in animal or man-beast form. If they are reduced to less than 50% of their total hit points while in human aspect, however, they must save vs. polymorph at -2 or enter bloodlust. If they do succumb to bloodlust, they will immediately transfigure into either of their other forms.

Effects of Bloodlust

A lycanthrope in bloodlust will attack the nearest living creature in a wild attempt to slay it. During this berserk rage, it gains a +2 attack bonus and a +2 bonus to damage; its AC, however, is decreased two steps (that is, AC 4 becomes AC 6). If multiple targets are equally close, it will usually attack the weakest creature, unless the DM decides this leads to a ludicrous situation (a lycanthrope faced by three warriors attacking a nearby rabbit, for example).

Shaking Off Bloodlust

Once a lycanthrope in bloodlust has consumed enough flesh to satiate its urges, it must again save vs. polymorph. All previous modifiers are eliminated, except for any relating to damage suffered. In addition, the creature gains a +2 bonus. The lycanthrope must make this saving throw each round until it succeeds. Once it makes the save, it leaves bloodlust and regains control of its actions. Its subsequent behavior will, of course, depend on the situation.

Lycanthropic bloodlust can be compared to the rage of a berserker or a feeding frenzy among sharks, where the creatures lose all inhibitions and forget all caution in the desire to feed. During bloodlust, werebeasts lose all inhibitions. They fly into a rage that is horrifying to behold, falling with incredible fury upon anyone and anything unfortunate enough to be in the vicinity. During bloodlust, all lycanthropes become the heartless, ravaging monsters from folktales - and then some. They will attack and attempt to slay anyone nearby, regardless of whether it is prospective prey or an erstwhile ally. They will fall upon that person and then feed to satiation. If the werebeast in bloodlust is well fed (that is, if it has been eating its normal food requirements over the past few days), it will eat only its regular amount . . . plus, perhaps, a little extra, if it has been denied food over the last several days (if it is suffering from progressive starvation or food debt as described in Chapter Two), it will eat enough to eliminate this food debt totally... and again, perhaps a little extra.

The primary stimulus for bloodlust is proximity to a source of food, combined with the sight, smell, or taste of fresh blood. Hunger, predictably, exacerbates the problem, as does the proximity of any other lycanthrope that has already entered bloodlust. The chance of losing control is also increased if the werebeast is seriously wounded; apparently, pain diminishes the creature's self-control. There are other aggravating factors: puberty (for true lycanthropes), and the unfamiliarity of the lycanthropic state (for newly infected werebeasts).

Infected lycanthropes can enter bloodlust only when they are in their secondary form. True lycanthropes are much more likely to enter bloodlust in their secondary or tertiary form, although if they are severely wounded they may also succumb while in their primary human aspect.

Once it has entered this state, a lycanthrope will remain in bloodlust until it has eaten its fill. Then it will slowly regain control. This effort may be immediate or may take several minutes. If the bloodlust continues after the creature has eaten its fill, it will not gorge. Instead, it will continue its slaughter, but it will not feed on the bodies of its victims.

Obviously, bloodlust is a hideous thing to witness. Lycanthropes - intelligent ones, at least - fear its onset, since it can easily destroy years of effort in building up a subterfuge. I shudder to write this, but I have heard that certain lycanthropes have learned how to initiate bloodlust willingly. I do not know how much credence to put in this claim, having never personally encountered a werebeast capable of this act. Having witnessed - and barely survived - a bloodlust engendered by a young lycanthrope, I can only cringe at the idea of confronting a wily, adult werebeast that chooses to enter bloodlust. [If DMs decide that this is possible, the ability to initiate bloodlust at will should be very rare indeed.]

Relationships Between Lycanthropes

Speaking generally, infected lycanthropes are solitary creatures, looking out for their own individual interests. (The only exception to this rule seems to be when they come under the influence of a true lycanthrope.) Werebeasts that are born to their disease, however, can be quite social creatures.

Within a Single Phenotype

In general, a lycanthrope's outlook toward others of the same phenotype will depend on its ethical view of the world. Thus, some werebeasts will be solitary, while others will be more social. Most, perhaps, will fall somewhere in the middle. Let us examine, for example, creatures at the two extremes: werebears and wererats.

Werbears have a highly individualistic outlook on life. They are more concerned with their own freedoms and prerogatives than they are with the rights and concerns of others. They are naturally solitary creatures, not given to seeking the companionship of their own kind except when it is time to mate. Werbears are extremely territorial and will frequently resist the incursion of others into their domains. (Werbears are also highly intelligent, so one masquerading as a human in a village will certainly not automatically respond to the arrival of another werecreature by changing form and attacking.)

In direct contrast, wererats are highly social, gregarious creatures, with respect to their own kind, that is. They demonstrate this enjoyment in ways that seem strange to most humans. The creatures are almost continuously in competition with each other: for mates, for standing within their community (and their "adopted" human community as well), for wealth, and for other tangible benefits. By human standards, this competition is not friendly; it is more sly and conniving than anything. Most humans would describe multiple wererats living a ruse in the same community as enemies, or at the very least ardent rivals. Yet, to the wererats themselves, this behavior does not illustrate any ill will; quite the opposite, in fact.

Weretigers and werewolves are examples of lycanthropes that fall in a middle ground. The former phenotype forms strong bonds within a "pride," or extended familial group. A pride will establish a territory and consider other weretigers that enter this region as rivals or even enemies. Interlopers are occasionally invited to join a pride, at which point such rivalry ends.

Werewolves are, generally speaking, loners. Yet under certain conditions they evince strong social behavior. For example, like their natural lupine cousins, werewolves can form packs (extended familial groups, generally larger than weretiger prides). Members of a pack will usually forget personal differences and work together if the pack is threatened, whether through the actions of locals or through the invasion of another pack. Yet, when there are no such direct threats, a werewolf pack is characterized by machinations, politics, and backbiting that makes most human political maneuvering look tame by comparison.

The leader of a pack is the strongest individual, usually judged through personal challenge and combat in animal or man-beast form. Other positions of authority fall to those who have the wherewithal to take them and hold them. Challenges and internecine squabbles within a pack are occasionally fatal, but this does not diminish the vehemence with which individuals pursue them.

It is important to note that characteristic behaviors hold true no matter what form the werebeasts involved are in. For example, two werewolves who are both masquerading as human merchants might extend their pack - based rivalry into the marketplace and engage in vicious price wars.

It is vital to realize that the above discussions are generalities only. Lycanthropes are individuals; even though they may be genetically predisposed to certain behaviors, they have the freedom to choose their own paths. Thus, though most wererats are social creatures, it is not impossible to encounter a solitary example of its kind. Similarly, atypical werebears may form a tight-knit social group. It is my belief that one who blindly trusts to trends and generalities is as foolish as one who categorically ignores them.

Between Phenotypes

Generally speaking, lycanthropes of one phenotype tend to shun those of another phenotype. They are liable to ignore the others' actions unless those actions would bring direct harm or disadvantage to themselves.

This said, I must again stress the unreliability of generalities. Some werebeasts show extreme antipathy to lycanthropes of different phenotypes (whether they act overtly on this antipathy is another question, of course); others show the opposite behavior and actively seek them out. It is impossible to predict the behavior of any individual werebeast. Further, there seems to be no phenotypic correlation with this behavior range: in other words, no phenotype is more or less likely to diverge from the norm. In this matter, then, phenotype is of no significance, while individual personality is of paramount import.

I have sometimes thought that collaboration between lycanthropes of different phenotypes would be beneficial, perhaps even favoring natural selection, and thus likely to become more common. While this has not proved to be the case over the decades I have studied lycanthropy, I am not yet ready to discard my hypothesis. Perhaps the increase in interphenotypic collaboration is so slow that I have been unable to measure it. Or, more disturbingly, perhaps collaboration is so successful that, where it occurs, the werebeasts involved are never detected and thus never destroyed...

Even when lycanthropes feel the strongest of antipathies toward each other, they will rarely abandon their own subterfuges to act on their hatreds. Even the most virulently hate-filled werebeast might suffer the presence of another, simply because taking action against the intruder would put itself at unacceptable risk. In all but the rarest cases, lycanthropes are highly pragmatic: they are practical enough to put enlightened self-interest ahead of any personal animosity.

From my experiences, most lycanthropes seem able to recognize and identify others of their ilk, regardless of what forms they take. This explains, perhaps, why werereatures who meet in man form in, say, the local market, do not react and attack. Perhaps this recognition is based on smell; yet, then, why would dogs not detect the difference? Or it could be visual cues too subtle for men to recognize. Most likely, however, is the supposition that lycanthropes exude a kind of "psychic taint" that others of their kind can detect. After all, in so many other ways it seems that Evil recognizes its own.

A resident werewolf I once knew sensed that a newcomer to town was actually a lycanthrope in disguise. I admit to believing the werewolf was in error, for I had detected nothing out of the ordinary from the stranger. But not only did the werewolf know the man was an interloper, she knew too that he was a weretiger of excessive cunning. Sadly, I still did not believe the fox, and she paid for my disbelief with her life when the weretiger decided to invade her territory. By then, of course, I believed my confederate. Try as I did, however, the weretiger eluded all my attempts to hunt and kill him. He escaped one night, and I have never seen him since.

Compiler's Note: This off-hand reference to the werewolf poses many questions. For some reason, he doesn't mention, Dr. Van Richten obviously knew of this werebeast's existence, but did nothing to eliminate the threat. Perhaps he only discovered the werewolf's true nature when it came to him with news of the weretiger, and the werewolf was killed by the second werebeast before the good doctor could act on his own.

- GWF

That was my first glimpse into understanding how keen the senses of werereatures must be in order to recognize someone not quite of their kind, regardless of what form they are in. On more than one occasion, this belief has been upheld and even fortified. Yet, on others, the creatures have seemed absolutely unaware of another's presence or specific phenotype. Does this mean that some werebeasts have the power to make the determination while others do not? I cannot say, but I maintain

that this ability is a highly dangerous quality for, if a lycanthrope is able to detect the presence of others of its kind, how unlikely is it that it will not be able to detect a werhunter?

Relationships Between Lycanthropes and Humanity

In its most basic terms, the relationship between lycanthropes and humans (or any humanoid race) is one of hunter and the hunted, predator and prey. Yet there are some interesting twists and complexities to the relationship that belie this apparent simplicity.

First and foremost, all lycanthropes I have encountered consider themselves undeniably superior to other races. As discussed in Chapter One, most of these creatures consider themselves to be the next logical step in evolution beyond humanity. Even those who do not fully embrace the evolutionary view believe that their ability to change shape and their immunity to nonmagical weapons make them definitely superior.

Still, many lycanthropes evince a need for mankind as more than handy prey. These are the werebeasts whose goals and desires extend beyond finding their next meal. Those lycanthropes that do feel a need beyond that of food are hardly ever creative; they can produce nothing, neither works of art nor items of practicality. Their rapacious natures inhibit, distort, and finally destroy whatever finer impulses might run through their veins. Instead, they must depend on humanity to provide for their material needs. Similarly, those werebeasts that desire repute and notoriety are dependent on humans simply because they need a means to achieve that end.

Werebeasts that infiltrate human society generally do so for multiple reasons. The first, of course, is to surround themselves with a food source. The second, however, relates to security. A lycanthrope that successfully maintains its subterfuge is safer from hunters than is one living in the wilderness, or so I have concluded. If the disguised werebeast has properly infiltrated the society, it will have a group of "supporters." These people know and deal with the lycanthrope, yet are unaware of its true nature; they will, consciously or unwittingly, help defuse any suspicion that their associate is actually a ravaging monster. A lycanthrope that has successfully infiltrated a village or town will use its neighbors to defend it from threats, particularly if a group of werhunters arrive in the region. Note that the longer a werebeast has been living in society, the less likely the locals will be to entertain suspicions against it. Although there are other reasons for this, one of the central motivations is that few people like to entertain the possibility that they may have been very wrong about someone. This unwillingness to consider the unpleasant has caused the death of more than one hapless villager.

Werebeast-led Groups

Although it is attractive and reassuring to think so, werebeasts have no monopoly on evil or ill will. There are those individuals who would not hesitate to knowingly throw in their lot with a lycanthrope. Fortunately, this situation is rare. But, when the condition does arise, the suffering and woe it can promote is considerable.

I am thinking specifically of a small settlement that used to exist in northern Nova Vaasa, a large village known as Mel Fira. Some decades ago, an ambitious wererat moved into the village disguised as a human merchant. Over a period of months, he picked out those residents of Mel Fira who were evil of heart, who were willing to bring woe to others to satisfy their own desires. To these individuals, the wererat revealed its true nature. If these individuals would work with it, the werebeast promised, they would enjoy wealth and personal power beyond their imagining. According to my sources, only one person out of the dozen approached refused the offer; of course, the lycanthrope killed her on the spot.

The wererat's band quickly took control of the village. The government was already corrupt, but this band raised matters to new heights of depravity. Throughout this period, the wererat brought more of its kind, also masquerading as humans, to Mel Fira. Apparently, none of the members of the creature's original band knew the true nature of these "new arrivals," believing instead that they were other human comrades of the wererat.

Although the townsfolk were unaware that there were wererats in their midst, they did not long remain ignorant of the presence of lycanthropes in the vicinity. Mysterious disappearances and deaths were on the rise, and various witnesses reported seeing twisted, almost-human shapes that could only be werebeasts. The wererats were careful, however, sharing the kills they made. Each creature needed only about two pounds of meat a day, and enough prime flesh to sate several wererats could be "harvested" from even the smallest human victim. The werebeasts were also careful not to spread their lycanthropy, which would undeniably prove the nature of the threat to the town.

The village government, under the sway of the wererats by this time, constantly acted to sow dissension and confusion, to allay people's fears, to cast doubt on the belief that the deaths were the acts of lycanthropes, and to prevent the villagers from taking any concerted action. Any strong leaders who arose among the uncontrolled populace "coincidentally" fell victim to the "mysterious monster" threatening the village.

Finally, someone suspected what was occurring and managed to get word to a small band of adventurers who were currently traveling through the region. This group, which included several magic-armed warriors, quickly saw the true situation and identified the original wererat and its human followers. They did not suspect that there might be more of the creatures in Mel Fira, however.

The hour of transformation is at hand... I feel the bite of my own teeth as my mouth distorts and fangs emerge between, suddenly hard lips. My hands tremble as they twist and curve into claws that make a mockery of human fingernails. My skin prickles and crawls with an unholy terror as bristles of jet hair emerge across my body.

And - O! - the stench of it all! The choking, putrid smell that is beyond description! The charnel smell of dried blood and burnt hair corrodes my nostrils as my face contorts into that of a werewolf. The rank smell of transformation haunts my waking hours, and it invades my dreams as well. I cannot rid myself of the fetid odor: it is driving me mad.

The waxen moon rises above the line of trees surrounding, sheltering me, and I fail to all fours. The hour of evil is at hand, and I must succumb to what is now my nature. I know now the shape of madness, of ravening insanity, and it is me!

- Anonymous

The final act of this tragedy took place in a general town meeting, at which the visiting adventurers accused the central figure of being a wererat. Rather than denying it, the creature transfigured into its man-beast form. Simultaneously, some eight or so other "townsfolk" also transfigured, causing absolute panic. The ensuing chaos culminated in a fire that virtually razed the village. Many townsfolk died, as did several human associates of the wererat, a couple of lycanthropes, and all but one or two of the adventurers. Most of the wererats escaped into the surrounding wilderness, but not before attempting to infect as many innocents as possible with their dread affliction. Mel Fira effectively ceased to exist that night and has never been rebuilt. The region where the village used to stand is considered one of ill omen, if not cursed. Although I have no firm evidence, I fear that the wererat that started the entire debacle escaped with its life. It may well be repeating its actions in another village.

The point of this story is to illustrate the vulnerability humans possess. Most men revere, and will gladly follow, any creature that proves itself more powerful than they. This theory also applies to demihumans and those of humanoid origins. Since a wereboar, for example, is considerably more intelligent and powerful than an average goblin, the lycanthrope would have little difficulty taking over leadership of a band of the small humanoids, should it so desire.

Lycanthropes typically consider humanoids to be even lower forms of life than humans, which are already inferior to themselves. There is no reason, however, why they cannot suppress their distaste and condescension if it suits their purposes. Humanoid followers do not offer the same potential for cunning and guile as do human devotees, but they do represent excellently expendable troops that can be used (and used up) in combat.

Infiltrating Society

It is sad but true that it is almost more difficult for a real person to become an accepted member of a town than it is for a werebeast to infiltrate the same society. Most townsfolk or villagers are highly suspicious of strangers. Initially, both "candidates" - a real human and a werebeast in human form - are on an even basis. Few normal humans are as socially adept as most true lycanthropes are, however. A human expresses his own personality, and it is a fact of life that not everyone is going to like that personality.

Lycanthropes, too, have their own personalities... but, almost from birth, they have learned to suppress their true manners and emotions. They have learned to watch the reactions of the humans around them and to tailor their delivery to make those reactions as palatable as possible.

A werebeast dissembling as a human might make an ambiguous comment about elves to the human farmer it meets. When the farmer expresses distrust of all nonhumans, the werebeast echoes the sentiment, tailoring the intensity of its opinion to match the emotional climate of the farmer. Since werebeast and farmer now have something in common - bigotry toward nonhumans - the lycanthrope is well on the way to earning the farmer's trust and even friendship. Obviously, this technique must be used in a subtle manner, particularly in group situations, where not everyone will share the same outlook. The basis remains the same, however. Lycanthropes are masters of this skill.

One characteristic I have noted among natives of more remote locales is the tendency not to ask questions whose answers might be disturbing. These people prefer not to reflect upon mysteries, the bases of which might be too frightening to contemplate. (Frankly, this is an attitude I find altogether frustrating and impossible to understand.) This tendency to shy away from "things man was not meant to know," to paraphrase what one old man shouted at me once, easily works to the benefit of lycanthropes. Once an individual - human, lycanthrope, or something else - has earned a level of superficial trust and acceptance, it is frequently free of any subsequent suspicion. People will not pursue nagging doubts, preferring instead to ignore them. An annoying, and often deadly, human trait I'm afraid, but one that the werehunter must keep in mind when dealing with townsfolk.

It is, perhaps, fortunate in some ways that there are always new arrivals to Darkon and other lands. Most of these new souls have not learned this tendency to shy away from unpleasant possibilities. Without such individuals who still maintain a natural level of curiosity, lycanthropes would have an even easier time infiltrating human society than they do already. Perhaps their fresh outlooks can excite the jaded townsfolk into a higher regard for safety and life.

Obtaining Skills and Abilities

Perhaps the most successful lycanthropic infiltrators in society have the ability of which I am about to describe. Apparently, or so I have been told, certain true lycanthropes have been able to learn the skills and abilities normally allotted only to those people who have dedicated themselves to pursuing an adventuring career. In other words, certain lycanthropes have learned the skills specific to trained warriors, rogues, mages, and perhaps even priests.

This possibility terrifies me, I must admit. I draw solace only from the fact that I have yet to encounter such a skilled werebeast, which leads me to believe this potential is exceptionally rare. I pray that my thinking on this is clear and not clouded by the human tendency to ignore unpleasantness.

"You call us the beast," the lycanthrope said, stroking its handsome human face. "You say we are dark, twisted reflections of you. Is that not so?"

I had to nod in agreement.

"Yet we see things differently," the creature continued, musingly. "We see ourselves as the next logical progression, the next step above humans. Tell me, " it said, leaning forward, "you have the beast, the rage within your soul, do you not?" It waited not for my answer. "Of course you do," it stated. "'Overpowering rage, ' is that not a common human phrase? That describes when the beast within you is beyond your control.

"Such is not the case with me. I am the beast, the beast is me. And thus it is always my will, not an inadequately leashed beast, that is in control. " He smiled.

"How, for example, " And with that, the creature began the transfiguration...

- From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

Character Class Skills

Generally speaking, no more than 5% of true lycanthropes - and possibly a lower percentage than that, at the DM's option - should be able to learn any character class skills. Of those that can learn these skills, the most common character class is warrior (note that werebeasts can't become specialized subclasses, except in the rarest of circumstances). The rationale is that these creatures are physically fit and highly aggressive, two of the

prime characteristics of good warriors. Some lycanthropes lean toward the rogue class (most notably wererats) since the characteristics of this class fit in well with their sly and manipulative nature.

Certain lycanthropes could conceivably become wizards or priests, but this should be exceptionally rare; perhaps only one-tenth of those lycanthropes capable of learning class skills. Both of these classes require much more introspection, cerebration, and self-discipline than the majority of werebeasts could muster. Lycanthrope clerics will, obviously, devote themselves to deities whose precepts match their own outlook on life. Good lycanthropes are likely to be priests of forest deities or guardian deities. Evil lycanthropes would be priests of storms, destruction, rage, or war.

Psionicist lycanthropes are likely to be even more rare an occurrence than the mage or priest werebeast. If the Dungeon Master is willing to permit these creatures into his or her campaign, they are only allowed to study the psychometabolic, psychokinetic, and telepathic disciplines.

Note that lycanthropes can use their character class skills when they are in human or man-beast form only.

The following table lists the character classes open to the most common types of werebeasts, along with the maximum level the creature can attain. If a particular class doesn't appear for a creature, it is incapable of learning that class. The order in which the classes appear indicates their relative frequency. DMs can also use the information in the table to extrapolate for additional phenotypes of lycanthrope.

Allowable Character Classes

Phenotype	Potential Character Classes (Maximum Levels)
Werebadger	Warrior (3rd), priest (2nd)
Werebat	Rogue (4th), wizard (3rd), psionicist (2nd)
Werebear	Ranger (3rd), wizard (3rd), priest (3rd)
Wereboar	Warrior (3rd), druid (2nd)
Wererocodile	Warrior (4th), priest (3rd)
Werewolf	Rogue (2nd), bard (6th), illusionist (4th), psionicist (3rd)
Werejackal	Warrior (3rd), wizard (2nd)
Wererat	Rogue (6th), wizard* (3rd), psionicist (2nd)
Wereraven	Ranger (3rd), wizard* (6th), psionicist (4th)
Wereseal	Warrior (3rd), rogue (2nd), psionicist (2nd)
Wereshark	Warrior (3rd), priest (4th)
Weretiger	Warrior (6th), priest (4th), druid (4th), illusionist (5th)
Werewolf	Warrior (3rd), wizard (2nd)

*These werebeasts can become specialist mages.

None of the lycanthropic phenotypes listed in this table get the THAC0 or Hit Dice size advantages for their class. However, they do get the best of both saving throw values, proficiencies (weapon and nonweapon), and other specialized class skills (such as spellcasting).

All werebeasts pay twice the normal Experience Point values to advance in levels. This reflects the fact that the self-discipline required for training doesn't come easily to these creatures.

Individual DMs can decide whether dual-classed or muttictassed lycanthropes are possible. If so, they should be even rarer than lycanthropic wizards, priests, or psionicists.

She was a charming lady, to be sure, and not at all the shy creature we had expected our old friend Edward to marry. Even though she was expecting, and very near her term, she showed mr an extraordinary degree of hospitality. Still, some memories of this visit were quite unsettling.

Here is one such example. You have no doubt heard that women who are with child may experience cravings for strange foodstuffs - pickled vegetables and the like. I was still surprised, however; when one night, unable to sleep, I was walking the house and found the lady, my hostess, in the kitchen, gnawing hungrily on a haunch of raw meat!

- From a letter penned by Rasten Fefoeg

The Pathologic Scourge

Pathologic lycanthropy, the form acquired through a werebeast's attack, is a blight unequalled in its horror. In this chapter I shall focus on the nature and stages of this accursed condition, from its contraction to (the gods be willing) its cure.

Susceptibility

Though I have used the word "human" to describe the primary form of werebeasts, it is well known that the so-called demihuman races also may contract the scourge of lycanthropy. Specifically, elves, half-elves, gnomes, halflings, and dwarves are all susceptible to the fury of the beast. But what about other races? Can they, too, acquire this heinous affliction? It is an interesting question, and one that allows for no simple, straightforward answer.

In theory at least, any living, fully mammalian, intelligent creature that matches the humanoid body form can succumb to the dreaded lycanthropic affliction. This is not to say that any intelligent creature with two arms and two legs may be stricken. In my estimation, creatures who are a great deal larger than humans (such as giants) do not acquire lycanthropy. Further, creatures who are inherently and highly magical seem immune, as do beings whose biochemical processes differ significantly from our own (thus presenting a hostile environment to the contagion). Of late I have begun to study certain fiendish and otherworldly creatures who truly are the stuff of nightmares, come to haunt us in the day. They, too, appear to be completely immune to lycanthropy.

Compiler's Note: Please see future volumes of Dr. Van Richten's compiled texts for these discussions.

- GWF

This immunity does not extend to any of the more common humanoid races, however, if my research is correct, the following races are indeed susceptible to lycanthropy: ores, goblins, hobgoblins, kobolds, ogres, bugbears, gnolls, and even the dark-natured elves, who dwell far below our surface world.

These humanoid races do not appear to be uniformly susceptible to all werebeast attacks, however. To a human or demihuman victim, the phenotype of the werebeast who transmits the contagion does not affect the viability of the disease. (A human attacked by a werebear is no less likely to acquire lycanthropy than a human attacked by a werewolf.) In contrast, other humanoid races appear more likely to acquire lycanthropy from just one or more particular phenotypes, while infected folk representing other phenotypes are unknown to their race. Often, the humanoid's own lore and beliefs support this



theory. Kobolds, for example, are particularly fearful of werebats. In my opinion, this fear is not unfounded, but it is the result of actual experience. While I have never seen a kobold take the shape of a wolf, I have indeed seen several fall prey to a werebat's assault.

The following table lists one or more phenotypes to which a major race is vulnerable. (Note that these entries encompass racial varieties, such as derro [dwarves], aquatic elves, etc.) If a member of the race is wounded by such a lycanthrope, the odds of infection are as usual: 2% per hit point of damage sustained.

The table also provides a "resistance percentage." This applies if a member of the race is wounded by a lycanthrope not of the phenotypes listed. The DM should roll 1d100 and compare the result to this percentage. If the roll is equal to or less than the stated percentage, the usual process is used, based on a 2% chance of infection per hit point sustained. If the roll is greater than the stated percentage, however, the victim is immune to this particular lycanthrope (the individual attacker, not the entire phenotype).

Susceptibility by Race

Race	Infective Phenotypes	Resistance Percentage
Bugbear	Werewolf, wereboar	75%
Drow	Werebat	95%
Dwarf	All	-
Elf (non-drow)	All	-
Gnoll	Werewolf, werebear	70%
Gnome	All	-
Goblin	Werebat, wererat	90%
Half-elf	All	-
Half-orc	All	-
Halfling	All	-
Hobgoblin	Wereboar, wererat	80%
Human	All	-
Kender	All	-
Kobold	Werebat, wererat	95%
Ogre	Werebear, wereboar, werewolf	65%
Orc	Wereboar, wererat	70%
Sahuagin	Wereshark, wereseal	55%
Troll	Werebear, werewolf	50%

Example: Two trolls are attacked by werebats - not a phenotype to which trolls are specifically susceptible. The resistance percentage for trolls is 50%. Each troll is attacked by one werebat. The DM rolls 1d100 for "Troll A," with a result of 45. Troll A is susceptible to the specific werebat attacking it, and its chance of contracting lycanthropy is 2% per hit point of damage suffered. For Troll B, however, the DM rolls 70. This troll is totally immune to infection from the werebat currently attacking it. Should the werebat attacking Troll A switch its attention to Troll B, however, the DM would have to roll d100 again for Troll B.

Vestiges of Race

Somewhat predictably, an infected person's race can affect the appearance of the werebeast's secondary aspect. For example, lycanthropes of races that possess certain special abilities or characteristics might retain those characteristics even after transfiguration.

Below, I have set out what little I have learned about this topic. Note that these observations are far from exhaustive, and far from categorical. I may well be mistaken on several of the points raised, or perhaps the situation is more variable than I currently believe it to be.

Bugbear: To the best of my knowledge, infected bugbears have no unusual characteristics in animal or hybrid form.

Drow: It would seem that drow lycanthropes retain something of their resistance to magic, regardless of form.

All drow lycanthropes have an innate 25% magical resistance while in animal or hybrid form. In drow form, they have the standard magical resistance described in the *Monstrous Manual* tome (50% plus 2% per level).

Dwarf: Lycanthropic dwarves retain their ability to detect sloping passages, regardless of the aspect they hold.

They also retain their bonuses to saving throws vs. magic and poison (if any), per Table 9 of the PHB.

Elf: In any form, infected elves appear highly resistant to *sleep* and *charm* spells.

Regardless of their aspect, infected elves are 90% resistant to *sleep* and *charm* spells.

Gnoll: No "gnollish" traces are apparent.

Gnome: The animal or hybrid form of an infected gnome is generally slightly smaller than the average for a particular phenotype. This size differential seems not to exceed the natural variability of werebeasts, however.

Lycanthropic gnomes also retain their saving-throw bonuses (if any) vs. magic, per Table 9 in the PHB.

Goblin: Like gnomes, goblins infected with lycanthropy tend to exhibit a smaller than average animal or "gnome-beast" form. Again, this differential is within the natural variability among individuals.

Half-Elf: Nothing distinguishes the infected half-elf from others of the same phenotype.

Halfling: Halfling-based lycanthropes are generally smaller than the average for a particular phenotype. However, this slight difference is not a telltale sign of race.

Lycanthropic halflings retain their saving-throw bonuses (if any) against spells and poisons, per Table 9 of the PHB.

Hobgoblin: No special hobgoblin traits are apparent after transfiguration.

Human: Human lycanthropes have no unusual characteristics (since this is the race against which all others are compared).

Kender: Kender-based lycanthropes are generally smaller than the average for a particular phenotype. As with gnomes and goblins, this differential falls within the natural variability among individuals.

Kobold: Among members of a particular phenotype, the animal or hybrid form of an infected kobold is always smaller than average. This size differential is slightly greater than natural variability.

Ogre: An infected ogre in animal or hybrid form tends to be slightly larger than other members of the same phenotype. The ogre werebeast also seems considerably more resilient and more resistant to damage.

Infected ogres gain an additional Hit Die in their secondary aspect.

Orc: Lycanthropes based on orcs appear to have no unusual characteristics in their secondary aspect, except, perhaps, an

unusual propensity for drooling.

Sahuagin: I've observed no unusual racial traits.

Troll: Troll lycanthropes are generally larger than average for their phenotype when in animal or hybrid form. Also, they seem at least partially able to regenerate damage inflicted by weapons to which the creatures are vulnerable. Thus, werehunters might face the daunting spectacle of a troll-based werewolf spontaneously healing wounds inflicted by magical or silver weapons.

Infected trolls regenerate 1 hit point per round while in animal or hybrid form. When they are reduced to 0 hit points, however, they are dead. (Their regenerative ability isn't that good.) In primary aspect, the normal rules apply. Thus, they regenerate their normal 3 points per round, and can be slain only by fire or acid.

Conservation of Phenotype

The vast majority of victims infected with lycanthropy will match the phenotype of the creature that infected them. I have heard, however, of the occasional "sport" - a case where this "conservation of phenotype" is not upheld. For example, a person infected by a werewolf might transfigure into a werefox, or into a wererat, or into another phenotype altogether.

Several explanations for such flukes are possible. First, the number of cases is so small (fewer than one in several thousand) that this could well be a mistake in observation. Second, it is possible that the victims were actually infected by two different lycanthropes. (This is discussed under "Multiple Infections" below.) And third, perhaps the maledictive form of lycanthropy was involved.

Conservation of Triggers

A person who acquires lycanthropy from another infected werebeast will share the same trigger condition as the monster that defiled him. This is common knowledge.

What, then about the victims of true lycanthropes? True werebeasts traditionally have complete control over matters of transfiguration, and thus have no trigger condition. Where, then, do their victims' triggers come from?

I propose that each and every lycanthrope, whether true or infected, has an innate trigger condition associated with it. However, this trigger is exhibited, or "expressed," only by infected werebeasts. It is a fact that victims infected by a particular true lycanthrope will share the same trigger condition, which argues to me that the infecting creature passes it on as part of the affliction.

Furthermore, true lycanthropes who are siblings pass on the same trigger condition to their victims. This does not mean, however, that a person infected by a true lycanthrope can expect to suffer the same trigger as victims of that lycanthrope's parents. The litter of two true lycanthropes may carry the father's trigger, the mother's trigger, or an entirely new trigger. It seems inescapable, however, that with any pairing of true werebeasts, all resulting offspring will transmit the same trigger condition.

Multiply Infections

Though rare, it is possible for a single victim to be attacked by - and be infected by - two or more werebeasts of a different phenotype. Personally, I know of five such cases. For example, both a werebear and a werewolf might infect a person. What is the result of such multiple infections? What animal aspect does the victim assume upon transfiguration?

It is interesting to note that virtually no folktales or myths discuss this matter, and those few which do mention the issue provide little detail. I know of only two exceptions. Both tales originated from the same region (Kartakass), but each presents a different solution to the puzzle. The first story claims that a multiple infection results in a deranged lycanthrope of mixed phenotype (an unholy blend of bear and wolf in my preceding example), which immediately and invariably flies into bloodlust upon transfiguration. The other tale asserts that the phenotype of the last lycanthrope to infect the victim is

dominant, and that the afflicted person will always transfigure into this phenotype, regardless of the time elapsed between infections.

My own research has proved to my satisfaction that the second tale is closer to the truth. Even so, there are complexities that are not even hinted at by this story.

The fate of a person infected by more than one phenotype appears to hinge on a single factor: whether or not the victim has undergone his first transfiguration. If he has not, the last contagion to enter the victim's system becomes dominant. Specifically, it determines the phenotype of the victim.

Let us imagine, for example, that a man is first infected by a werebear. Soon thereafter, before the man has ever changed shape, a werewolf attacks and infects him. The unfortunate will take the form of a wolf (or man-wolf hybrid), not that of a bear.

This does not mean, however, that the contagion transmitted by the werebear has no effect whatsoever. Though the man will never resemble a bear, the trigger condition carried by the werebear does apply. Instead of causing a change to bear shape, however, the trigger brings about the transfiguration into a wolf (or man-wolf hybrid). Thus a victim of multiple infections will be susceptible to ail{he triggers associated with the lycanthropes that infected him, though he will assume only the shape dictated by the most recent infection. (Again, this situation occurs only if the multiple infections were acquired before the victim's first transfiguration.)

And what if the victim is infected after his first transfiguration? Once I deemed such multiple infections impossible. In the overwhelming majority of cases, an infected lycanthrope simply cannot acquire another version of lycanthropy after the beast within has been unleashed. I have recently encountered an exception, however. A werewolf first attacked the unfortunate involved, and he became a wolf at the next full moon. Thereafter, he acquired a second infection from a wereboar, with the equinox as his trigger condition. The victim responded to that trigger too, becoming a boar, which was subsequently slain with an oaken spear, ending the boy's misery.

Note that an individual infected multiple times need only be cured once to be free of lycanthropy. It does not matter how many times he was infected. This is fortunate, considering how arduous the curative process is, and considering the unlikelihood of its success. All lycanthropes that infected the victim must be destroyed as part of this curative process.

Infecting a True Lycanthrope

In my travels, several people have asked me whether a true, or pathologic, werebeast attacked by another lycanthrope would suffer any effects akin to the infection that humans suffer. It is an interesting question, and one to which I do not have a categorical answer.

In alt likelihood, such an infection is not possible. I believe that any lycanthrope who attacks a true werebeast will inflict physical damage, and that is all. Yet, from time to time, folktales spark my interest in the subject. I have heard several stories concerning true lycanthropes that do not have complete control over their transfiguration. Like other true werebeasts, these creatures can change aspect at will. But sometimes they also will transfigure against their will, in response to some external trigger condition. They can regain whatever form they wish - if not immediately, then within a score of heartbeats - yet even a momentary shift can destroy a life-long masquerade.

Are these creatures true lycanthropes that have been partially infected by other lycanthropes, contracting their attackers' trigger conditions? I cannot say for sure. Perhaps the loss of control stems from another cause entirely. Yet, it is an interesting hypothesis, and one that I intend to investigate over the next several years.

Triggers

I have made something of a small study into the conditions, or triggers, that cause transfiguration in infected lycanthropes. Such triggers typically fall into two large categories, which I have dubbed "symbolic" and "physiological."

Symbolic triggers are events that have some allegorical or figurative connection to the nature of lycanthropy in general and to the transfiguration itself. Physiological triggers are events that cause some change in the lycanthrope's body - a change which in turn could reasonably be expected to initiate a more drastic physical alteration. Below I shall describe each

category, as well as those exceptional triggers which refuse to comply with either definition.

Symbolic Triggers

Many of the so-called "symbolic" triggers define or represent change. They symbolize a transition, often drastic, from one state to another. So powerful and so magical is this symbolism that when some facet of the environment undergoes a change, so too does the infected lycanthrope. An archetypal example is a sunset or sunrise - the transition from day to night or from night to day. Sleep is another symbolic trigger, for it represents an altered state of consciousness and the journey from reality to the realm of nightmares.

However, not every symbolic trigger represents a clear change from one strictly defined condition to its antithesis. Other symbolic triggers reflect a more general change or transition. For instance, in most lands the changing phases of the moon serve to measure the passage of time, and the moon itself has often come to symbolize passing time. Thus it should come as little surprise to learn that a particular phase of the moon acts as trigger for many werebeasts. According to popular legends, the full moon is the archetypal trigger. I have found, however, that virtually every phase of the moon, from new to full, through one-quarter waxing through three-quarters waning, successfully triggers certain werebeasts.

In like manner, other conditions symbolic of passing time can act as lycanthropic triggers. Some werebeasts respond to changing seasons. Others respond to astronomical events, such as eclipses or the movements of wandering stars. Even the first snowfall or another "weather landmark" may trigger a particular creature.

I must emphasize that in the previous examples, the victim need not actually witness the symbolic trigger for its effect to take hold. In other words, the stereotypical werewolf does not have to see the full moon to become a ravaging beast; the simple fact that the moon is full triggers the change. Thus, a werewolf could not prevent disaster by locking himself in a windowless basement for three nights each month - unless, of course, those locks were exceedingly secure.

Symbolic triggers also include conditions or events which somehow represent the death and destruction left in the wake of a lycanthrope. Such triggers are comparatively rare, however (that is, few infected lycanthropes respond to them). Examples include seeing the color red, which is symbolic of blood, or black, which represents death. Other examples are as follows: being plunged into total darkness, which is again symbolic of death; seeing or smelling blood; seeing combat or other overt violence; witnessing or experiencing emotional or covert violence; and passing through or by a graveyard.

I recognize that some of these triggers could alternatively be classed as physiological events. For example, is the scent of blood a symbolic trigger, or does it stimulate the hunger of the beast within and thus qualify as physiological? And is being plunged into darkness symbolic, or is the natural surprise and fear it enjoins the actual trigger? I do not have all the answers. Ultimately, however, such distinctions do not appear as important as the recognition that such triggers exist.

Physiological Triggers

Compared to symbolic triggers, these conditions or events are more direct, less metaphysical, and hence easier to understand. Many of them engender strong and clearly defined changes in the body, even when that body is not infected with lycanthropy. For example, both extreme fear and extreme anger are common physiological triggers. Even among normal humans, both conditions bring about profound changes in the way the body functions. Muscles tense, pupils dilate, and the heart quickens its pace. Breathing becomes shallow and rapid, and blood is redirected toward specific muscles or organs. In essence, the body undergoes significant changes to prepare itself for fight or flight.

It seems to me quite logical that such profound changes can and do trigger the transfiguration in some werebeasts. Perhaps one of the natural chemicals which flood the bloodstream reacts with the infective agent, causing it to initiate a metamorphosis. If my interpretation is correct, then the action of such triggers can be explained solely in chemical and biological terms.

Let us look at several other common physiological triggers. Strong emotions of any kind, as well as what we may euphemistically label "intense passion," cause noticeable physiological changes in the body. According to some sages, injury or even intense physical pain causes the body to release certain natural painkillers into the blood. I see no reason why any of these chemical changes could not trigger the transfiguration.

Perceptive readers will ask themselves a question that counts heavily against my arguments above: Why does each

lycanthrope generally have only one trigger?

I fear I have no answer. If, as I have argued above, predominately chemical processes trigger the transfiguration, it would seem logical that all such processes would trigger all lycanthes. In other words, since fear and anger have such similar physiological effects, why are some lycanthes triggered only by one and not the other? Why are so very, very few triggered by both? Obviously, there may be much more to the matter of triggers than simple chemistry and biology.

DMs can specify that any event acts as a trigger, from reading a book to being kissed, from hearing a thrush chirp to being struck on the head with a mallet. However, in the interest of game balance, Dungeon Masters should keep the following points in mind.

First, if a trigger event is very common (a sunset) or involves large numbers of adept people (mass combat), it's not likely that a lycanthe will survive for very long, unless it's exceptionally powerful. For example, if the local blacksmith becomes a werewolf every time he touches iron, it won't take the local folk long to realize that something's amiss and to do something about it.

Second, if the infected lycanthe is a player character, it's doubly important not to saddle the PC with a trigger that occurs too often or can't be avoided. Remember, each time the PC transfigures, the player loses control of the character. Frequent trigger conditions can get frustrating very fast.

As a guideline, triggers for infected PCs should probably occur no more than once or twice a month.

Other Triggers

I have recorded some trigger conditions that do not fit easily into either the symbolic or physiological groups. Some examples follow: seeing a particular animal, plant, or object; hearing a particular sound, word, phrase, or snatch of music; or casting or being the target of a particular class of magical spell (frequently healing magic).

To focus on specific instances, if a lycanthe were triggered by sighting its own phenotypic animal (for example, a werewolf sighting a wolf), that would qualify as a symbolic trigger. However, not all animal-related triggers are so cut-and-dried. Where is the symbolism involved in a wererat transfiguring when it sees a sea gull (as was the case with a merchant in Souragne)?

Similarly, if a lycanthe were triggered by a musical melody that had great emotional significance for him (perhaps bringing back happy or sad memories of childhood), that would be a physiological trigger. Yet I met one unfortunate fellow who became a raging boar each time he heard Vistani violin music, despite the fact that he had never heard such music before his first transfiguration!

Lycanthropic Control

There are many folktales describing how a true lycanthe automatically enjoys a form of innate control over all those infected lycanthes it creates. These tales tell of ravening packs of werebeasts marauding through the countryside under the control of their true lycanthe master.

Although tales attribute this power to all true lycanthes, my own research indicates that it is far from universal. Certainly, some true werebeasts seem able to enslave, or at least guide the actions of, those infected victims they create. But by no means all, and perhaps not even the majority, enjoy this dark ability.

For those lycanthes that can control their "infected progeny" (if I may use such a term), there seem to be several universal characteristics of this power. First, the true lycanthe can control its progeny only when they are in secondary aspect. The creature has no influence whatsoever on their behavior while they are in human form.

Second, the controlling werebeast must itself be in its own secondary or tertiary aspect - that is, animal or man-beast - to effect such a control. I can only guess why this might be true, a matter of perceived kinship perhaps, but it seems to hold in all cases I have investigated.

Third, the control seems very tenuous. The controlling lycanthrope can guide its progeny's actions only in very general terms. It can prompt an attack against a certain target, or prevent one. It can keep its progeny quiet and calm, or send them ravaging forth in a fury. Any more precise control appears to be beyond the true lycanthrope's abilities. As an analogy, the controlling werebeast has about as much control over its pack of progeny as a trusted leader has over a mob of humans. While such a leader can direct broad, unfocused responses, anything more specific is impossible.

These are the elements that all examples of control have in common. Now I shall discuss the factors that can differ from case to case.

In some cases, the true lycanthrope and its progeny can somehow sense each other's presence. As soon as a progeny creature transfigures into secondary form, it can sense where its creator is (as long as the werebeast is within some reasonable range, such as a handful of miles) and will head toward its master at its best speed. Similarly, the true lycanthrope can sometimes sense when its progeny have undergone a transfiguration, and roughly where they are within the same range limit. This ability obviously makes it easier for the progeny to gather into a pack. I would estimate that this occurs in perhaps twenty-five percent of cases where control exists. In an additional five percent of cases, this "locator sense" is unidirectional, not bi-directional (in other words, the progeny can sense their creator, but not vice versa; or the creator can sense its progeny, but not vice versa).

In certain rare cases, progeny will feel a kind of inexplicable kinship with their creator while both are in primary human aspect. Even though the victim does not know why, he will feel a propensity to trust and like the lycanthrope who infected him. Note that this is a propensity only; unless the creator behaves in an appropriate manner, the tendency will vanish over time. I have heard of one case where this propensity for trusting the creator werebeast was as strong and wide-ranging as a charm spell. This is based entirely on hearsay, however, and could well be incorrect.

Further tales describe how certain lycanthropes can trigger the transfiguration in all their progeny. The way most tales describe this ability, the true werebeast must be in the presence of its progeny, and then it simply has to will them to change. I have come to the conclusion that this is totally incorrect. No werebeast that I have studied can mentally command its progeny to transfigure. I can understand, however, where these tales come from.

Most true lycanthropes are intelligent, or at the very least, cunning in the extreme. It would not be difficult for a werebeast to discover what condition triggers its progeny. (Recall that each true werebeast seems to imbue all of its infected progeny with the same trigger condition; this was discussed earlier on page 163.) When it has learned what this trigger is, it can certainly use this knowledge to its best advantage. If the trigger happens to be something it can orchestrate, such as hearing a particular sound or phrase of music, it could arrange a nasty surprise for a village by organizing a concert to which its progeny are invited and then making sure the trigger occurs!

Even if the creature has no desire to cause such a catastrophe, knowing the trigger it imbues might well come in handy should it ever be hunted. After all, who has better motivation to hunt down and destroy a werebeast than one of its infected progeny? (Refer to the section "Exterminating the Root" below.) Again, if the trigger is something it can orchestrate, it can turn one of its most fervent foes into an ally. (Hunters who are infected lycanthropes are well advised to take precautions against this stratagem.)

Detecting Infection

For those who have recently suffered a werebeast attack, or believe they have, a single question becomes of great importance: How do I know whether I've acquired lycanthropy? The question is pressing, for no one wants to learn of his affliction after the first transfiguration, when the only signs may be the steady loss of family members.

Unfortunately, I can offer little help to such people. To the best of my knowledge, there is no outward sign of infection. Some infected lycanthropes report having experienced a swelling around their wounds immediately following a werebeast's attack. This suggests that their bodies might actually have been fighting the lycanthropic infection. However, not all infected victims experience this inflammation. More often, in fact, the individuals who experience such initial swelling never exhibit lycanthropy. I have therefore concluded that this inflammation is a symptom of some other infection, or some other mundane condition which may have been transmitted by the werebeast. (Werebeasts are, after all, often filthy, and quite capable of hosting vermin.) It even may be possible that these lucky individuals' bodies actually destroyed the taint of lycanthropy within them.

Folktales and myths are full of tests for lycanthropic infection. Some make a modicum of sense. For example, some people swear that dousing a werebeast-inflicted wound with holy water is telling; if the victim experiences intense pain, then he has indeed acquired lycanthropy. Other tests seem totally nonsensical, however. For example, I once saw an old hermit pass a red hen over the prospective victim's head, to see whether this would make him sneeze. My personal research has confirmed my initial suspicions; none of these peculiar tests has any efficacy whatsoever.

It is said that some powerful forms of divinatory magic can determine whether a victim has been infected. This seems to be a real hit-or-miss affair, however. Certain spells allow the caster to commune with his deity; yet, since in my experience only malign deities can be contacted, so any information gained by such a communion is immediately suspect. I have heard that powerful magics such as a wish may sometimes determine whether a victim is afflicted with lycanthropy. Yet, since the intents of wishes are so frequently perverted, again the information so gained is highly suspect.

Not all tests regarding a victim's condition are fruitless, however. Though it is difficult, it is not impossible to determine what event or condition triggers an infected lycanthrope's transfiguration, provided the first such change has already occurred. Once the individual has transfigured for the first time, some might ask, is the trigger not apparent?

I would say not. If a character's trigger occurs largely when he is atone - in the middle of the night, for example - then it's likely that nobody will be there to witness the transfiguration, and he himself will lose all memory of the event. (Such is the nature of the transfiguration; see Chapter One for a more detailed description.)

Also, even if the trigger occurs in public, the precise condition need not be obvious. Many environments and situations are complex, with multiple events and conditions occurring simultaneously. Which of these multiple stimuli is the actual trigger?

Let us take two examples. An infected lycanthrope encounters a large spider and transfigures to his animal aspect. The obvious conclusion is that his trigger is the presence of large spiders, particularly if this happens several times. Yet, some time later, he encounters a ghost and transfigures again. It now becomes apparent that the trigger was not the spider itself, but in all likelihood the fear he felt on encountering it (assuming he indeed has a phobia of spiders). What's worse, neither spiders nor fear may be the trigger, either.

Here is another example. Imagine a lycanthrope who, so far, has transfigured only during combat. Does this mean that combat is the trigger? Not necessarily. In just such a case, the infected character later changed shape when someone egregiously insulted his heritage. It became apparent that the trigger was not the combat as such, but the rage that combat initiated in the character's soul.

In general, the constraints for divining whether the infection is present also apply to determining a trigger condition. Yet it would seem that the agencies responsible for such matters are less loath to reveal information on trigger conditions. Divinatory magic may still yield lies, half-truths, or evasions; yet there seem to be fewer obstacles to finding the truth in this lesser investigation.

If the DM decides that, for story purposes, the condition of a victim should remain unknown, then so it remains. The enigmatic dark powers of Ravenloft may block any and all attempts to learn whether the victim is infected.

Alternatively, the DM can rule that the dark powers of the Demiplane somehow "release" the information, should it enhance the story at hand. Ravenloft is, after all, a place of great despair. If knowledge or one's condition brings about suffering - especially when that suffering is deserved - then the pivotal knowledge may be gamed. Note that such "deserved suffering" usually involves a domain's lord, or a character whose greed or shortcomings have somehow led to the infection.

Curing the Affliction

Curing an infected lycanthrope of its affliction is an extremely arduous task. Travelers who claim they hail from distant lands sometimes say the curative process is less taxing in those lands. Never having visited these places, I can say nothing to support or contradict their statements (except, perhaps, that I often view such claims with a healthy dose of skepticism, for I have met no shortage of lost, deluded souls in my travels). At any rate, in every land I have visited during decades of

research, the curative process comprises three distinct phases, which are outlined below.

Before there is even the slightest hope of curing an infected lycanthrope, it is necessary to hunt down and slay the true werebeast that ultimately started the chain of infection. If a true werebeast attacked the infected lycanthrope who is to be cured, then that chain has only two links, and it is sufficient to slay the attacker. Unfortunately, given the infectious nature of the scourge and the difficulty of a cure, the chain is usually much longer. An infected lycanthrope passes its contagion to other victims, and those victims pass it to still others. The person at the end of this horrid chain cannot be cured unless the true lycanthrope who originated the terror is found and slain. Unfortunately, since intermediate links may be killed, this task is never easy.

Tracking down that originator, which I shall refer to henceforth as the progenitor, requires a clever detective. Painstaking research is essential, and quite often, so is luck. The victim himself, and all those who know him, must be closely questioned to determine exactly when and where the person was initially infected. One must then track down the creature that infected him, and determine if it is a true werebeast, or itself an infected victim. If the latter, then the process must be repeated.

The task gets progressively more difficult as one approaches the progenitor. By definition, that creature is aware of its condition, as all true lycanthropes are. It can be expected to protect itself, initially from detection and eventually from destruction.

Even if the progenitor is unaware of the attempts to track it down, the sheer length of the chain can be obstacle enough, if only one of the links is something of a traveler - an adventurer, perhaps - then the progenitor could be located great distances from the individual to be cured. If one or more of the links has died in the interim, the chances of success are diminished drastically. The longest chain of contagion I have ever tracked to its conclusion comprised only three links, and that endeavor took several months of unrelenting effort. Ironically, when I eventually identified the progenitor, I discovered that the beast had already been destroyed several days before the individual to be cured had come to me for help. Although I had not known it, I could have proceeded directly to the next step of the cure without hunting the progenitor at all.

This irony brings up a very important point, however. It is vital to ensure that the progenitor has in fact been destroyed before attempting the next stage of the cure. An afflicted victim has but one chance to escape the blight. If any step has been missed, or imperfectly completed, then the cure will fail and the victim will be doomed to live out the rest of his days as a lycanthrope. There is no recourse, no second chance.

Individuals infected by multiple werebeasts pose a special problem. It is true that an infected victim need only be cured once; the successful cure removes all taint from his blood and soul. Yet the question remains: which beast (or beasts) is the progenitor? I believe that, for the purpose of the cure, the progenitor is the werebeast that last infected the victim before his first transfiguration. It is this beast - the one that determined the victim's phenotype - that must be destroyed. (Of course, if that creature was an infected lycanthrope itself, it is this beast's chain of contagion that must be tracked to its source.)

This is my belief about multiple infections, at least. While some evidence bears me out, I have no actual proof, since controlled experiments are out of the question. On both occasions where I have been involved in curing someone with a multiple infection, I assumed that my definition of the progenitor was correct. In one case the cure worked; in the other, it was a failure, although I attribute that catastrophe to another cause (specifically, a failure of will in the victim himself). Was I correct in my definition? I may never know for certain. In the former case, perhaps each werebeast that had infected the victim had to be destroyed for a successful cure . . . but only the one I defined as the progenitor still existed at the time of that cure. In the second case, perhaps it was the continued existence of another progenitor, and not the victim's weakness of will at all, that led to failure.

To be totally safe, then, one should theoretically hunt down and destroy all lycanthropes that infected the victim (or the originators of each chain of contagion). This obviously complicates matters considerably.

Revitalizing a Tarnished Spirit

The victim himself must perform the second stage of the cure. He must perform some kind of atonement for the evil he has caused while in secondary aspect. The exact nature of this atonement will vary from case to case.

Those individuals who are faithful followers of some religious tradition are often in a better position than others, in that their religion might specify a form of penance. Perhaps their faith has a pious ritual that is always used to atone for wicked acts. If

not, then it is my belief that the act of atonement should fit the crime (or crimes) in nature and severity. For example, making provisions to support the children of a man the werebeast has killed would be a good start.

Note that the clerical spell *atonement* cannot be used to speed this process. (The spell must be used separately in the third portion of the cure.) So profound is the curse of lycanthropy that there are no shortcuts on the road to a cure. The victim must determine what is necessary for atonement, and perform it himself. (Certainly others can provide input and even guidance, but the responsibility for success or failure lies solely with the one who would be cured.)

The requirements for atonement will depend on the amount and severity of harm wreaked by the werebeast. A lycanthrope who has suffered under the affliction for decades may have to spend several years atoning. Perhaps he will choose to seek out the surviving relatives of his victims and tend to their material needs while doing everything else in his power to wipe away the emotional and psychological damage he inflicted.

There is no means of determining categorically whether the required amount of atonement has been completed. To the best of my knowledge, no magic, divinatory or otherwise, will yield a solution. The only place an answer may be found is in the heart of the one who would be cured. If he truly knoivs that he has done everything in his power to correct the evil he has done, then the atonement is likely complete.

It is vital to point out, once again, that each victim of lycanthropy has only one chance to remove the contagion. If the cure fails because the victim has done too little to atone for his fell acts, then his punishment is to remain a lycanthrope for as long as he lives. Because of this, it is much better to overestimate the degree of atonement required than to underestimate it.

Removing the Blight

The third and final stage of the cure is the most demanding. It is also the most dangerous, and cannot be accomplished without the aid of others. The actions required severely tax the infected subject and all others involved, both physically and emotionally.

In order for the blight to be lifted, the subject must first assume his secondary form. Thus, the assistants who are actually performing the cure must await, or orchestrate, the subject's trigger condition. (Orchestrating a trigger condition may in itself be quite difficult or dangerous, and may carry with it certain regrettable consequences.)

What constitutes atonement for an infected player character? DMs should decide this matter based on the character's thoughts, beliefs, and emotions, as well as on the character's actions. A PC who cynically goes through the motions of penance is not really atoning for his actions.

DMs might decide beforehand what degree of atonement is required, then leave it entirely up to the player to decide when the character has done enough, if the DM judges that the character has met the criteria, then the cure can proceed; otherwise, the cure will fail. Alternatively, the DM can collaborate with the player - in effect roleplaying the character's conscience - to figure out a suitable penance.

The key issue is that characters shouldn't escape the blight too easily. Lycanthropy is a big deal, particularly in Ravenloft, and curing the affliction might turn into a fullfledged campaign all on its own.

Despite the subject's intense desire to be cured, his assistants will gain little cooperation once the transfiguration is underway. A subject in secondary aspect takes on the mentality of the beast... and the test thing the beast wants is to be "cured!" As a result, the subject should be suitably restrained before the next steps are undertaken.

Assuming the beast within is now the beast without, a priest must next cast three spells on the subject: *atonement*, *cure disease*, and *remove curse*. The spells must be cast in quick succession. (If necessary, more than one priest can cooperate in casting the magic.) The order of spells is symbolic, and hence significant. Atonement completes the spiritual revitalization described in the preceding section. Cure disease rids the body of the infective agent. And *remove curse* erases the contagion's intangible effects.

The moment the *atonement* spell is complete, the subject's mentality returns to normal, even though he retains his secondary aspect. At this point, he must be freed from all restraints. In addition, he must remain totally motionless until the cure is

complete. If he moves so much as one limb, then the cure fails, his animal mentality returns, and he is doomed to remain a lycanthrope until his death.

The *cure disease* spell can be cast without difficulty. As soon as the priest begins the *remove curse* spell, however, the subject's body is racked with agony as he begins a slow metamorphosis, returning to his normal human aspect. Regardless of the alterations which his body is undergoing, and regardless of the burning pain, he must remain completely motionless. This requires exceptional fortitude and strength of will.

If the subject conquers the pain and remains motionless, the transfiguration eventually completes and he is fully human once more. The affliction has been banished.

Van Richten states that the victim must remain motionless when the final transfiguration occurs. In game terms, the character must save vs. death magic. There's no way to alter or avoid this saving throw, either magically or pharmaceutically.

As always, the DM is encouraged to add customized prerequisites for effecting a cure, based upon the phenotype, the crimes committed, the individual campaign, and so on. The cure for lycanthropy should never be as simple as looking up the answer in a book, whether it be this or any other.

If the subject cannot adequately control himself however, and moves, then his human mentality flees, the beast within takes over, and the subject's body retransfigures into its secondary aspect. The werebeast immediately enters bloodlust. Its first act will probably be an attempt to slay the priest who was inflicting such hideous pain on him (or so the werebeast will interpret it).

What if some earlier portion of the cure was not completed correctly? Everything will appear to proceed normally until the final transfiguration begins. At this point, however, the pain will continue to increase until it becomes totally unbearable. No matter how strong-willed the character is, he cannot withstand the agony. Eventually he will move, and the cure will fail as described above.

I must stress that the agony of the transfiguration is an integral part of the cure, and must be experienced by the subject in its totality. There are certain magics and herbal concoctions that can lessen or even eliminate the sensation of pain. If any of these are used, the cure will automatically fail. The pain will increase sufficiently to overpower the magical or chemical precautions, and the subject will be totally unable to withstand it. For similar and obvious reasons, the subject must be fully conscious during this process.

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Before I came to this gell place, this land called Barovia, I considered myself a skilled hunter. In the hills surrounding my home, I was successfully hunted all of the naturally occuring predators - bears of various sizes and ferocity, dire wolves whose packs terrorize the local shepherds' flocks, even the great wyvern that wings over the peaks. Yes, I considered myself well versed in the art of the hunt. There was no beast that could get the better of me.

Or so I thought until I was engaged to lead that ill-starred hunting trip.

Was there any clue, any omen, that should have warned me that what I hunted was no ordinary bear? No, looking back on the events I have to say there was no indication. None, that is, until the members of the party began to die, and I realized that I was not the hunter, but the prey!

- From the journal of Darzin Morcantha

On the Hunt

Knowing the mind of the werebeast is the first rule of the hunt. Both forms of the lycanthrope - true and infected - are equally deadly. However, each has its own mindset, its own view toward mankind. Hence, recognizing which is which can be crucially important.

Pursuit of a true lycanthrope is as much a battle of strategies as it is a contest of blood; the true werebeast has lived with its mutable nature all its life, is accustomed to its predatory nature (if not comfortable with it), and remains ever cognizant of its nature. In contrast, tracking the infected lycanthrope is far more subtle, more cerebral on the hunter's part. The infected creature is either unaware of its bestial aspects or desperately concealing its murderous double life. As a result, seeking one of these pitiable creatures may seem like hunting two separate prey at the same time. To complicate matters, this lethal creature is curable.

If the two, contrasting mindsets of these monsters were not enough to muddle the hunter's strategy, I must pause and re-emphasize the fact that werebeasts are no more "typical" than vampires or ghosts or liches. Each lycanthrope has its own strengths and weaknesses, both of which are often quite subtle. Hence I return to the axiom by which I began this chapter: *Knowing the mind of the werebeast is the first rule of the hunt.* If this treatise can be of service to that end, so much the better, but the study of my work is not nearly sufficient to arm even the doughtiest enemy of darkness against the task at hand. Those who hope to survive such a quest must search out every report of the creature and follow up every clue. Werebeasts are some of the most violent and ruthless beasts to prowl the land of the Mists. No matter how powerful you are, and no matter how typical the werebeast may seem, failure to seek at least some inkling of the monster's strengths and weaknesses will deprive you of your throat and quite possibly your very humanity!

Enough said; on to observations regarding the two basic stages of a successful hunt: identification and entrapment.

Identifying the Beast

Knowing a werebeast when one sees it may seem obvious enough, especially if the monster occupies either its hybrid or animal form, but the mutability of the creature, plus its intelligence which is sufficient to counter-strategize, forces us to reconsider this issue.

Hybrid Form

Certainly the man-beast form, under normal circumstances, is unmistakable, if not singularly horrifying. Even the charming



and seductive werefox is terrible in her beauty, alluring yet cruel and sadistic. When the werebeast reveals itself in this form, blood is almost sure to follow whether the creature is a true or infected lycanthrope. In this aspect the monster entertains no thoughts of stealth, and in this shape it is the most effective killer it can be, calling upon the powers of both its forms to achieve its deadly objectives. In short, when one meets a werebeast in hybrid form, one should prepare to kill or be killed - the beast most certainly will.

Indeed, the hybrid aspect seems to be the form in which the lycanthrope most often kills. By far the predominant report of those who have survived an attack by a lycanthrope is that the creature resembled man and beast, and was thoroughly horrifying to look upon.

I have conferred with several sages on this matter, and I have arrived upon a few reasonable speculations as to why the lycanthrope might prefer to kill in hybrid aspect. Certainly the man-beast is a more efficient killer, for it enjoys the advantages of both human and animal forms, as I have already stated. Its claw and bite attacks are more instinctive and, thence, more accurate than the swing of a sword, and it can employ multiple attacks in the place of only one. The inhuman creature also threatens its adversaries with a fell disease, which is, or should be, fairly intimidating to even the most courageous hero. Meanwhile, the hybrid aspect has fingers and an opposable thumb, which are necessary for opening doors, jimmying locked windows, climbing trees and roofs, and wielding a weapon if it proves to be the most effective means to the creature's ends.

In spite of all these legitimate arguments for preferring the hybrid form, though, I think that the real reason lies below the surface. I have the chilling belief - not a certainty, quite, but close - that the beasts prefer this form because of the terrible fear it strikes into the hearts of their prey before they die. The beasts might relish this terror out of some unholy, sadistic joy, or perhaps they, like cats that play with mice before eating them, enjoy or even crave the taste of fear itself. Whatever the reason, I must return to my previous warning before proceeding: When you meet the hybrid werebeast, prepare for battle.

The DM can generate more fear in the PCs by withholding their interaction with the hybrid form until the climactic battle. Whether the creature dramatically transforms before their eyes or leaps out of the shadows in all its terrifying glory, for optimum horror save this aspect's role for last.

Animal Form

I do not believe it is practical to seek to identify a lycanthrope in the company of natural animals. If the creature differs in size or coloring from its natural counterparts, readily recognizing it is not beyond the scope of observant hunters, and most werebeasts realize this, including the infected ones, who are little more than beasts when the curse overcomes them. Conversely, if the lycanthrope is not readily discernable from its natural cousins, then a hunting party might be forced to kill entire populations of natural animals in order to ferret out the monster among them; this is plainly unacceptable, as any ranger or druid will angrily point out.

If the lycanthrope is pathologic, it is possible that the monster could lose so much of its conscious identity that it might actually believe it is a wolf or bear or badger while occupying that particular form. These poor creatures, who may be wholly ignorant of their ailment while they suffer from it, can be easy targets for those who hunt them. Any hunter with the ability to magically speak with, befriend, or control animals may quickly learn through any number of approaches which beast is the monster. However, I hasten to add that most infected lycanthropes retain enough consciousness to understand that they are not natural animals, so it is highly unlikely that the hunters will ever find a werebeast lounging carelessly among its distant relatives, heedless of discovery.

Knowing that the werebeast can and does take the form of an animal still has its advantages, though. Werebeasts commonly surround themselves with their natural counterparts and take that form while they do so. Hence, any ranger or druid who can track an animal can also lead a hunting party to the trail of a lycanthrope. That is often as good as place to begin the search as any.

Human Form

Ironically, this lycanthropic aspect is by far the most dangerous. Recognizing the true nature of a werebeast in human (or demihuman) form is frequently accomplished in hindsight, too late. Survivors of a close encounter with a werebeast

sometimes observe that they should have noticed the elongated forefingers or the abnormally hairy eyebrows before, and the common failure to do so leads all too often to bloody mayhem, as well as the spread of a cursed affliction and unbridled evil.

The hybrid form may be the more efficient killer and the animal form may move faster, but the human form is the beast among us; it is privy to our plans, a wolf in sheep's clothing, and as capable of killing in this aspect as any. Anyone, be they strange or familiar, friendly or hostile, may suddenly change to a terrifying monster before your unsuspecting eyes, or worse, when you are not even looking.

As the physical signs of lycanthropy are always there, visible to those with foresight as keen as their hindsight, an objective search for these features may prove invaluable. Certain features of the animal breed - the beady eyes of the wererat, the feral grin of the werewolf, the piggish nose of the wereboar, and so on - are inescapable to the human form. If the hunting party knows the phenotype of the lycanthrope, body traits can do much to eliminate some suspects and indict others. Even so, I hasten to add that these features are often subtle in the extreme, and no one can be blamed for missing them even when actively looking for them.

Perhaps the most important key to recognizing a lycanthrope in human form is to return to the first rule of the hunt and determine whether the creature is born or fallen to its condition. True lycanthropes tend to formulate evil agendas, while infected ones live in ignorance or shame of their other selves. The former takes the human aspect as a disguise, while the latter simply remains human until some circumstance beyond control sweeps him or her into a nightmare world where nightmares are reality. The reasons for occupying the human form are diverse, and therefore the means of identifying the two types are different.

True Lycanthropes: Born a monster, the hereditary werebeast's awareness of its identity and actions in any form enables it to use its mutability to deadly advantage. These creatures are more likely to spot the hunting party before it spots them. A true lycanthrope in human form engages in psychological warfare. Therefore, the hunting party must respond in kind.

If the true lycanthrope is aware of its enemies, the clever hunting party can turn this vulnerability to its own advantage. An alert hunting party should pay attention to people around them and note who is perhaps unreasonably interested in helping or hindering them. Watch for casual onlookers who turn up wherever the party goes, and most especially beware of people who offer a "sure way to kill a werebeast." They may be sincere or they may be agents of the monster, if not the beast itself.

The lycanthrope's shapechanging ability results in a preponderance of scenarios involving identification as a primary factor in the hunt, and many players expect this. The DM must, therefore, seek ways to muddy the trail without destroying it altogether. Van Richten suggests a number of methods by which the werebeast may be recognized, but the DM can easily use these tests to confuse the PCs or send them toward a secondary goal. For example, what if a young man were to leave town in search of his fortunes, become infected with lycanthropy, return home covertly, and begin to kill the members of his true family, even though nobody knows he is back? Or what if an unidentified true lycanthrope managed to convince the PCs that the werebeast in question was an infected one by killing off a family, one by one, in order to implicate one of its members?

If the lycanthrope has no idea of its bestial nature, there still may be some other NPC who knows the truth and becomes involved in the scenario for any number of reasons. He or she may be protecting the creature (out of love or evil plans), or the NPC may be using the monster to distract or occupy the PCs while other plans work themselves out. In other words, the lycanthrope doesn't even have to be the arch-adversary in the adventure.

Pathologic Lycanthropes: These poor fools are often completely unaware that they become monsters when conditions are right (or should I say wrong!) Others have made the painful connection between the blood they find on their hands when they awaken and "last's night murder by an animal of some kind": these sorry creatures are torn between the shock of committing actions over which they have absolutely no control and the consequences of a crime of which they have no memory. In either case, the afflicted werereciture generally lives in effective denial of its bestial nature and, in all likelihood, lives its human life as if it has no other.

If the affected person has no knowledge of his or her acts, a hunting party cannot depend upon suspicious behavior to identify the monster. Neither the werebeast itself nor any associate is likely to play any form of "cat arid mouse." In fact, I know of a few infected lycanthropes who have noticed the subtle emergence of telltale physical traits of lycanthropy (a

narrowing of the nose, excessive facial and body hair. etc.) considered them a cosmetic nuisance resulting from growing older, and took steps to hide them without ever realizing that they were protecting their inner beast from the outside world. In short, werebeasts who are ignorant of their bestial nature may be even better at hiding their identities than true lycanthropes.

I'm afraid that the most efficient way to identify an Infected lycanthrope is also the most tragic: by drawing a connection between the guilty party and its circle of murdered loved ones.

If a predator targets prey who are all members of a single family or social group, the odds are good that the hunter is a lycanthrope and a member of that same circle. Unfortunately, this kind of identification depends on the beast establishing a pattern of victims, which means that a number of innocents must meet their deaths before the pattern is established.

Tracks

Unless the werebeast you hunt possesses the capability of flight, it is unlikely that the monster can help but leave a trail (and even avians must land sometime). After all, how does a wolf pass without a trace as it lopes through the forest with the rest of its pack?

The rules of tracking werebeasts are much the same as those for hunting natural animals. Here are a few pointers for those who do not enjoy the company of rangers or druids:

- ☼ Naturally, you must find some tracks before you can follow them. There are always some particular places in the woods where tracks are much easier to see than in others. Once the trail of a lycanthrope is undeniably identified, it can be traced through some of the most adverse conditions if the tracker's eye is keen and heart is patient.

- ☼ Study the track at length, get to know it. Many hunters discover, too late, that they lost one set of tracks and picked up another. Suddenly, they closed in upon a beast that was only a beast while the monster they sought came upon them from behind... One druid suggested that hunters sketch the footprints they wish to follow. Doing so does not necessarily provide an incriminating picture of the track, but it does force the drawer to make note of many nuances that might otherwise go unnoticed.

- ☼ If possible, it is best to track the beast either early or late in the day. Even the trail of the largest lycanthrope may be shallow, and shadows cast by the sun will help the hunter find it.

- ☼ Take note of all signs of the creature's passing, not just its tracks. Broken twigs, bent branches and grass, even displaced pebbles can tell the alert tracker that the prey has been here, as well as which way the creature is heading. If the hunter is lucky, tracking a lycanthrope can be easier than tracking a natural beast. Since the size of the lycanthrope is often larger than that of a natural animal, so are its footprints. I myself have once successfully followed a trail of bear tracks virtually twice as long, wide, and deep as those of a grizzly (which did not result in a feeling of victory, believe me!) Unfortunately, most werebeasts' footprints are not nearly as dramatic as this, and some are not distinct from the natural animal's footprints at all, but those skilled in the arts of tracking still provide an invaluable service to the hunting party. Following such a lead may not always reward the hunters, it can still provide a fresh start when more esoteric trails have gone cold, and it can at least tell you where the monster has been.

As an aside, I would think that even a novice woodsman could recognize the footprint of a werebeast in hybrid aspect. Typically, such a mark is possessed of the padlike "toes" of the animal form, but the print is longer and narrower, in the manner of human feet. These tracks are most often found on and near sites of death.

Gory Leavings

Sadly, a lycanthrope may be tracked by more than its footprints. The beast leaves carnage in its wake, and such brutal evidence of its passing as would render a mad butcher sick to his stomach, in the company of its natural fellows or alone, the werebeast abandons a corpse terrible to behold. And more horrible yet is it to search that disfigured mess for some clue that may lead to the murderer!

Even so, examination of the werebeast's victim is important for two reasons: First, he or she may reveal something important from his or her possessions, position in death, state of decay, or any number of other things. Second, many other creatures

(natural or monstrous) may leave a body in shreds upon the road. The conscientious lycanthrope hunter must be sure of exactly what caused the fatal wounds or risk tracking the wrong killer.

The bite marks of a lycanthrope are wider and deeper than those of natural beasts, and I also have observed a certain viciousness in the making of the wounds, as if were not enough to simply bring down the victim and then eat of it. Agony and terror are often quite visible in both the eyes and the crimson, gaping rips of a werebeast's kill; it is not a sight that can be objectively described, but you will definitely know it when you see it, and I apologize in advance for insisting upon it.

When the hunt is just beginning, or when the dues have run dry, the PCs can always pick up the trail in the woods. DMs can use the werebeast's trail either to lead the PCs to their next important encounter or to false ends. True lycanthropes might even play games with PCs, leading them on a wild and lethal goose chase.

To track a werebeast, a PC should have the tracking proficiency. However, if no one in the adventuring party has it, the DM can still leave telltale footprints that provide bridges to the next encounter; the PCs simply won't be able to follow them for long. Be sure to consult Table 39 in the PHB for tracking modifiers.

Discovering the body of a lycanthrope's victim is definite cause for a horror check, with ascending modifiers proportionate to the extent of the mauling and the length of time before the body is discovered. However, the victim can be a convenient source of some important clue as to the monster's identity or whereabouts.

For example, the lycanthrope may have worn a chain that did not fall away when it assumed animal form, and the victim could pull it free as he was murdered. Or perhaps the victim carried some map or letter on his person which the animalistic lycanthrope left behind, soaked in blood. Of course, diabolical werebeasts (and the DMs who run them) might plant false clues upon the bodies of victims, too.

Identifying the evidence of a lycanthropic attack on a corpse can be considered a function of the animal handling, animal lore, healing, or hunting proficiencies. If the check is successful and a lycanthrope's involvement is indicated, it may be assumed that the PC had to conduct a very unappealing probe of the body, with horror checks are appropriate.

The Lair

Uncovering the lair of the beast certainly advances the identification process (especially if the monster is at home), but it also may provide some crucial insight into the beast's strengths and weaknesses. The best way to approach this den of death depends upon whether you seek a town or a wilderness lair, and I shall briefly address those two issues here. Note that I speak of the abode of a true lycanthrope in either case, since infected werebeasts do not normally maintain a lair as such.

Town Lairs

In the case of the town lair, finding the residence of a werebeast is mostly a matter of confirming the hunter's suspicions. When the search is narrowed to a short list of suspects, it's a good idea to penetrate the living quarters of those people and look for evidence. I am not suggesting that the intrepid hunter find a way to break into the home of anyone who was not accounted for the last time the lycanthrope made an appearance. When criminal activity is justified by the virtue of its intent, then the line between good and evil is lost and we quickly find ourselves hard in the company of those we despise. Rather, I am suggesting that the hunter enter into a, shall we say, diplomatic form of pursuit.

Pose as a delivery clerk, drop by unexpectedly for tea, even boorishly invite yourself into the suspect's home under the pretense of using the facilities, but find some way to insinuate yourself into the suspect's quarters, if only to take a quick look around. It's not necessary to find the meat larder in order to confirm your hunch. If you have reason to believe that someone is a werebeast, then a simple scan of their living room can condemn them. Do not look for overt signs of violence and cannibalism, but for subtler clues that fit into the puzzle you have already been piecing together. Observe the suspect's taste in decoration, for example. A dark and disturbing painting often reflects a similarly disposed character. Or seek objects lying about that link the person to the scene of a crime, like a possession of the deceased. I once identified a wererat when I coincidentally observed a shiny brooch on its coffee table that had belonged to a friend of mine, recently murdered.

Wilderness Lairs

My discussion of the wilderness lair assumes that the hunting party has already found it - whether they have followed a set of tracks to the monster's doorstep, convinced a natural animal of the beast's phenotype to lead them there, or bungled it be sheer luck.

Discovering the residence of the beast is a step in the process of both identifying the beast and learning a bit about it. If you are lucky, you may find some insight into the monster's habits, and maybe a record of what the lycanthrope knows about you. But best of all, a hunting party that locates the lair of a werebeast has just located the ideal place to set a trap!

When the place in question is located, first search it for all its entrances and exits and all its hidden nooks and crannies. Then learn what you can about the beast's domestic habits-where it sleeps, stores its food, hides if necessary, and so on. Finally, design a trap that will blend into the surroundings, avoiding the disturbance of so much as a pebble if possible. Don't forget that you yourself leave a scent wherever you go, which most werebeasts can detect as easily as a shark smells blood in the water. (Most druids and rangers are highly adept circumventing these problems - I highly recommend engaging the services of one of these folk before attempting to infiltrate a wilderness lair.) Remember, true lycanthropes are as cunning as they are lethal; suspicion is second nature to them, especially if they know they are being hunted.

Beware the sudden arrival of the werebeast while you inspect its domicile. Such forays are necessarily clandestine, especially when one seeks to prevent the monster from detecting the intrusion, so bringing along a complement of warriors for protection is impractical. If you are caught, know well that no fury can match that of the beast whose "safe haven" has been compromised.

A great way to turn a simple hack-'n'-slash adventure into a detective mystery is to very subtly wave clues of the lycanthrope's identity under the PCs' noses. Introduce objects or sounds or smells that readily blend into innocent backgrounds and then challenge the PCs by linking them to the murders, later on in the adventure. Sometimes the tiniest clue is the key that breaks the mystery wide open, and the werebeast's lair is the ideal place to plant it.

If and when the PCs discover the lair of a lycanthrope, particularly the wilderness location, the DM should pay close attention to how carefully they approach and search the area. Most animals can easily tell if their lair has been compromised, without even entering it, and the best-laid plans may be wasted by one PC footprint.

Always give the PCs a chance to find every secret door in the lair, but seek ingenious ways to keep them from turning the creature's home into a death trap; this is the monster's home turf, after all, and should not be easily used against it.

Multiply Monsters

Most of the creatures of darkness I have studied are more solitary than the lycanthrope, and more careful about multiplying their numbers. Vampires, for example, are careful not to create another of their kind with each feeding, if for no other reason than to assure that the general blood supply is not depleted. Liches consider the existence of even one other of their kind to be an affront. On the other hand, werebeasts, in their native savagery, are not nearly so concerned with their own numbers. Indeed, some of them actively seek to infect as many people as they can in the hope that they may command entire legions of murderous creatures. I have heard a tale of an entire city of lycanthropes which grew in leaps and bounds as its army, organized under a king who was himself the lycanthropic trigger, spread across the lands, killing and devouring every living being in its path.

Hunting parties who are attempting to learn the identity and type of a lycanthrope should consider the possibility that they are hunting any number of monsters. An intelligent pack of werebeasts may confound the most astute and scientific of hunters. I can say from personal experience that there is no shock as sickening as that which comes from learning you are surrounded when you believed that you were hot on the trail of a single monster!

Witnessing the Transfiguration

Perhaps the surest way to identify an infected lycanthrope is to catch it in the act of transforming. The secret to this is in learning what triggers the change, which comes from careful observation of objects and conditions that are repeatedly associated with the monster. Perhaps a pattern of killings emerges in conjunction with a time of day, or the lycanthrope's victims are repeatedly found in a patch of wild flowers. Discovering what triggers the change of an infected lycanthrope without actually witnessing the agent at work is but a slim possibility, but any prospect is worth considering.

If the catalyst is something that the hunters can manipulate, so much the better. However, be prepared for a singularly negative reaction if your hunch is right and your trigger device is effective. The hunter who forces a werebeast to change form becomes both a witness and an enemy with a deadly power over the monster; nothing short of murder will satisfy the lycanthrope's fear and indignation. Also be warned that some of these creatures can fight the change, if only for short periods of time, averting suspicion and removing any advantage of knowledge that the hunter may have enjoyed.

Stalking the Werebeast

The hunter of werebeasts faces a moral dilemma: If the monster suffers from a disease that was thrust upon it through a bite or scratch, then its condition is, first, not its own fault and, second, most possibly curable. What is the lycanthrope hunter's responsibility in this case? Should he or she slay the beast outright, and thereby prevent any further attacks by the creature? Or should he attempt to entrap the beast and effect a cure, even though such action may leave the door open for further destruction?

There is no simple answer. Certainly, if a victim is willing to undergo a cure, then every effort must be made to assist that person. If the victim is unwilling, however, destruction of the beast may be the hunter's only recourse.

Trapping the Beast

Whether the lycanthrope is born to its condition or acquires it, trapping the creature should be the ultimate goal of the hunting party. Unless the monster has special abilities, it cannot take gaseous form like a vampire or teleport away like a lich. As long as the bonds of a trap are strong enough, the captured beast may remain captured. This procedure is particularly recommended if the werebeast is a cursed one that may be cured. The method of trapping depends largely, of course, upon the form of the creature, and various parties might lay a snare for any one of the three aspects.

If the hunting party seeks to trap the animal form, it should probably mimic the traditional methods of trapping natural animals. I might recommend this approach if the monster in question has shown a definite predilection for its animalistic side. When such is the case, the creature tends to practice the habits of its normal cousins. These include following regularly traveled paths, frequenting a dependable source of prey, revisiting favored watering holes, and practicing predictable defensive patterns. Sometimes the hunters may find a commonly used path and then simply

A hunting party of good alignment should seek to cure an infected lycanthrope rather than kill it. This creates a challenging and exciting adventure while it demands more roleplaying from everyone, including the DM. It is sweet irony that the ideal resolution to a scenario involving one of the most violent of monsters is to avoid the common "hack-'n'-slash" remedy by which many adventures end.

Seeking a cure to lycanthropy can extend an adventure that otherwise might have come to an end with simple defeat of a monster. One of the best things about infected werebeasts is that they can be saved from evil and regain their peaceful existence, with the help of intelligent and heroic PCs. Some quick adventure hooks for this scenario are: an NPC werebeast who holds a strongly rumored key to the PCs' escape from Ravenloft; a time limit before the beast must kill an innocent or die himself; one of the PCs is infected, and the adventurers learn (perhaps from the Vistani) that the only way to cure the PC is to first cure the werebeast that infected him and then kill the true monster that began the chain of contagion. The DM is encouraged to think of a hook that affects the PCs personally or one that affects the overall story of the campaign (any recurring villains or quests to tie into the adventure?).

PCs who seek only to wipe out the menace are arguably committing an evil act, regardless of the victim's alignment, and thus are subject to a powers check. At the very least, the DM can impose an experience-point penalty for such irresponsible behavior. It's a good idea to introduce an NPC priest or other character early in the adventure who will warn the PCs that killing monsters is not as simple as following a trail of blood and executing whatever is found at the end of it. That way, there can be no excuses for PCs who hack first and ask questions later.

lie in waiting for their prey to come by. Other times the hunters must discern freshly tracks and then follow, remaining upwind and approaching the beast in utmost silence. In either case, patience always wins the day. You may be right about the path, but wrong about the time or day, or you may find the pack and be forced to approach it through dead leaves.

Snares are a tricky thing with lycanthropes. The hunter cannot depend upon limited intelligence and so it is unreasonable to expect the creature to simply step into a noose or fall into a pit. I recommend stalking the monster as if it were an animal, but snaring it as if it were a (very powerful) human. Magical traps are better if they can be deployed in such a way that will not alert the prey to your presence. The werebeast's senses are keen, and whispering half spell may be the last thing you ever do.

The psychological factor also comes into play here, and it may be necessary to create a feint of some kind, to distract the monster while it blunders into a real trap. I cannot provide any useful, specific suggestions for accomplishing this; there are too many factors to consider. The best advice is, once again, to first understand the mind of the beast and then use that knowledge to trap it.

Those who would trap the monster while in its human form may eliminate the need to crawl through the forest. If you are certain of your target as it moves incognito through the streets of a city, then you may perhaps lure the monster into a trap. This is more tricky than it sounds, though; the lycanthrope is most lucid in this form, and even if it is not aware of the PCs, it is instinctively suspicious and not easily fooled.

Of course, those who plot to trap the lycanthrope in its hybrid form must be doing so as part of a battle plan, but it is wise to plan the entrapment of a werebeast as if you expect it to be in the hybrid aspect. The monster is quite likely to assume that form as soon as the trap is sprung. This leads me to a final piece of advice for those who would snare the beast.

The hunters should strive to control the place where they will confront the werebeast. If they can do so, they can booby-trap the entire area against escape, then hope to force or flush the monster into one of several snares. This is rarely a simple task, but it provides the best chance to save an infected werebeast or to interrogate one born to its condition.

Especially if the PCs are intent upon trapping a live werebeast, the determination of the perfect spot for an ambush can provide the better part of an adventure. Here, the PCs first seek to learn the identity and habits of the lycanthrope, and then engineer the best possible trap zone and snare, magical or otherwise. Luring an intelligent creature into a trap inspires much more complex scheming than simply cornering and killing it.

Making the Kill

When destruction becomes the only alternative, and I know well that it does, then the processes described above should still be adhered to, except in this case it would lead expressly to a lethal trap. The hunting party should use whatever means at its disposal to incapacitate the creature before putting it to death. This is much preferred to meeting the werebeast in open combat, for it may pass on its disease and escape or even leave a person infected after it dies. Like the animal it essentially is, the lycanthrope is most ferocious when cornered, capable of surprising feats and deadly blows even in its death throes.

If it is the hunter's intention to kill the creature, then I would suggest first learning the lycanthrope's chemical susceptibility (discussed in Chapter Two). Then set the trap with innumerable blades or points, generously coated with the substance. Finally, find a way to flush the quarry into that trap and let the poison do its work. The hunters should coat their weapons with the toxin as well, but I strongly urge them not to meet the beast in combat! They may accomplish their goal in battle, only to give rise to yet another curse and the necessity of destroying yet another hapless creature.

When the deed is done, invite a priest to consecrate the remains according to the dictates of his teachings and then cremate the body as soon as possible - immediately if you can. While werebeasts are not known for regeneration or rising as undead, they do harbor disease, after all, and it is proper and necessary to eliminate the possibility of its spreading in any way, shape, or form.

Charlatans

Hunting a werebeast is a difficult task, one which many would rather leave to someone more skilled (or foolhardy) than

themselves. To the good folk seeking such assistance, I offer this caution: beware of charlatans. There are many who tout themselves as werehunters, self-styled "professionals" who claim to be skilled in the arts of detecting and destroying lycanthropes. These individuals travel throughout the land, hiring out their services to villages that believe (often falsely) that they suffer from a werebeast's attacks.

Few of these so-called professionals actually know what they're doing. In fact, virtually all the hunters I've encountered are scurrilous rogues. They charge exorbitant rates and leave town as soon as the money is pocketed.

The hoax perpetrated by such scoundrels is often simple. They visit a settlement, preferably an isolated one, and publicly claim to have found evidence of a lycanthrope in the vicinity. They frighten their victims with pseudoscientific babble about the "atmosphere of pestilence" and other intangible horrors. Some charlatans manufacture the so-called "proof by savagely slaying some farm animals before approaching the village. Then they can appear, claim they are "following the spoor of an itinerant terror," and offer to eradicate the scourge (for a fee, of course). I know of cases where the charlatans doctored animal remains by adding bits of shredded clothing and human bones to heighten the villagers' terror.

Creating the appearance of a successful hunt is easy. The "intrepid hunters" sally forth into the wilderness for several days. Then they return, looking exhausted and wounded (thanks to quantities of mud and animal blood rubbed into their clothes and skin), claiming to have destroyed the beast. The more brazen hunters proudly present the hacked corpse of an unfortunate animal, claiming it's the werebeast in question. (Trusting, of course, to the ignorance of the villagers, who may not know that slain lycanthropes revert to their human form.) The satisfied villagers bolster the charlatans' reputation, making it easy to repeat the ruse in a nearby locale.

While individuals like these provide no value for the money they receive, at least they do little enough damage. Unfortunately, other hunters take this fraud much further. The ruse begins as described above; a savaged corpse is found (usually an animal). But instead of claiming that the werebeast at fault resides in the wilderness, the charlatans declare that the culprit is an infected lycanthrope - and probably one of the villagers.

After a period of "research," for which the hunters are compensated, they name the "ravaging beast." This is usually a social outcast, a villager isolated by appearance, language, or eccentric behavior. By selecting a person already considered odd or not of the norm, the hunters can readily persuade the townsfolk to accept their supposition. To add further horror, sometimes the person identified as the lycanthrope will also accept the hunters' claim and beg for assistance in finding a cure.

Thus, the hunters can begin the process of "curing" the lycanthrope. Such cures have two things in common: they are impressive and flashy ceremonies, playing to all the base beliefs and misconceptions of the townsfolk; and they are very expensive. Most charlatans claim success, which is a simple matter given that no lycanthropy existed. Unfortunately, some evil few who claim failure have found this an easy excuse to commit murder.

Charlatans represent all manner of adventure hooks. For example, if murder is the villain's goal, the PCs must prevent it. Perhaps the PCs stumble across a less diabolical ruse, attempt to reveal it, and then a real lycanthrope enters the scene. Or the player characters discover that a member of a so-called "hunting party" is in fact a werebeast himself, unbeknownst to his companions.

Last Thoughts

A true hunter always has as much respect for the prey as he has for himself. This is as true for those who track werebeasts as it is for those who hunt deer and birds. It is not only a matter of understanding that the lycanthrope can kill at least as easily as it can be killed, it is more importantly a matter of recognizing the creature as a living thing instead of an object simply to be destroyed, it has drives and fears and a desire to live! When one understands the heart and mind of the beast, one becomes more attuned to it. When one knows what motivates the prey, one may anticipate its reactions. When the hunter puts himself in the place of his quarry, he comprehends what he would do if he were the hunted (as he may well be!).

That is the difference between hunting and murder. In the end, that is the sole distinction between a man who contains a beast within and another who becomes the beast without.

The werebeast is a fell opponent - intelligent, cunning, and fearfully lethal in combat. Detecting its presence, locating it, and

then hunting it down is a singular undertaking. Too often the task easily claims the lives of hunters, or curses them with the dread affliction, which is certainly worse than death.

Yet the task of hunting down and destroying the werebeast is an important one. Lycanthropy is a pernicious, insidious infection in the body of its victim and the body of society as well. It is a plague upon both the individual and the societal soul, for it erodes our ability to embrace our own neighbors for fear that they may not be what we think they are. Pitiably they may be, yet still they must be condemned.

As I draw to the close of this treatise, I must admit that studying the lycanthrope has been most disturbing. For all my condemnation of these monsters, I must pause a moment and reflect upon the reality of the beast within me. The werebeast kills because killing is what it instinctively does. It has no agenda, no point to prove, no hatred to vent. On the other side, I have no need to kill at all, instinctively or otherwise, yet I have pursued that objective with righteous tenacity. We are both predators, yet who is the more monstrous?

I must conclude that my agenda to destroy all creatures of darkness, my point to prove that they are indeed vulnerable in some way or another, and my utter hatred of all things evil renders my deadly intent a tragic necessity - and I am therefore no monster at all.

Let the werebeast look well to its hunting skills; I shall show it who is the superior predator!

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"We are not monsters," the werewolf told me in its rough voice. With a furry gray forefinger it scratched absently at the side of its snout while it spoke. The beast's long black lip curled under the claw as it scratched, exposing a row of yellowed canine teeth.

"We are not monsters," it repeated, calmly emphasizing the point. "We are like you, like the birds and the deer and, yes, like the wolves. We are all the creations of the gods. We all do that which is in our natures to do, following the natural imperatives incorporated into every fiber of our beings. None has any choice in the matter; but we werecreatures are really quite content with the reality of the situation, unlike most humans.

"We are no different, me and my kind, from any other predators. It is merely human arrogance that labels us with the term "monster." Since we have the temerity to feed upon the self-styled kings of creation, we are hated and feared."

The creature chuckled quietly. "If deer had the power of speech," it mused, "I wonder what horrible tales they would tell of that monster humanity..."

- From the personal journals of Dr. Van Richten

Dungeon Master Appendix

As Dr. Van Richten noted earlier, virtually any predator between the size of a small dog and a large bear can provide the basis for a lycanthrope phenotype. Most but not all werebeasts are mammals, and most but not all of them are pure carnivores. The Monstrous Manual tome lists the most common, and probably most useful, of lycanthropes, but it's always a good idea to throw new creatures at the players - particularly in Ravenloft.

So how does a DM go about creating a new lycanthrope from scratch? There are six attributes to consider: phenotype, appearance, gaming statistics, special abilities, vulnerabilities, and society. Each of these is described in the following pages. To render the process as clear as possible, a sample new lycanthrope, the werebadger, is developed concordantly. The finished monster is detailed in the official Monstrous Manual format on page 191. This procedure focuses upon the design of a true lycanthrope, but the process remains much the same for infected werebeasts.

Phenotype

The animal you choose will determine some of the creature's characteristics, including its most likely habitat. For this example, the lycanthrope is a werebadger (suitable for use in temperate climes both above ground and below).

Appearance

The next step is to decide on the appearance of each of the creature's three aspects: human, animal, and hybrid.

Human

The primary form of the lycanthrope is that of a human (or demihuman). Pick the race that's appropriate for the adventure or encounter you have in mind. The creature's appearance usually will be reminiscent of the animal aspect. A werebadger is most commonly a dwarf in (demi)human form. The lycanthrope may display one or more of the features commonly associated with werebeasts in their (demi)human form. For example, its forefingers may be abnormally long - the same length as its second fingers - or the lycanthrope's hair or beard might have a white stripe in it, like the pelt of a badger.

The demeanor of the human form is also a characteristic of its appearance. A wereboar might be extremely ill tempered while a werefox might be flirtatious. The werebadger is likely to be an unassuming loner until provoked, at which time it would show startling aggressiveness.

Animal

The secondary form of the werebeast - that of an animal - is easiest to design, as a lycanthrope in that form generally resembles a larger version of the natural beast - larger than average, but not so much larger that its lycanthrope nature is obvious. (Note that the wererat is an exception, for its animal aspect resembles a giant rat. This point raises the possibility that other werebeasts might be able to transfigure into giant-monster forms of animals. While this is left up to the individual DM, such cases should be very rare.)

The werebadger is one such case; this lycanthrope's animal form is that of a giant badger.

Closer inspection of various body traits may yet betray the werebeast's identity. For example, its eyes might show a faint spark of unnatural intelligence, or perhaps a bit of whiteness around the irises. In any case, this feature shouldn't be immediately obvious, and the creature might well be able to suppress such characteristics in order to appear a simple "dumb animal." The lycanthrope's eyes might glow faintly red at night, but in such a way that a player character would attribute it to the reflection of a light source like a fire.

Hybrid

The tertiary form of the lycanthrope should combine animal and human features. The overall shape is largely humanoid, yet animal features, subtle or conspicuous, render this the most identifiable lycanthrope form.

A werebadger in hybrid aspect is dwarf-sized, its hands might resemble paws, yet still retain opposable thumbs. Its face might have a pronounced, badger-iike face with whiskers.

Gaming Statistics

The easiest way to determine the werecreature's statistics is to extrapolate from those of existing lycanthropes. In general, a werebeast's attributes are proportional to the relative size of its animal aspect. A bear is larger and more powerful than a wolf, for example; thus, a werebear should generally be a tougher opponent than a werewolf. (Of course, those vulnerabilities specific to a bear, like a fear of dogs, can greatly alter the relative challenge of an encounter.)

Badgers are Small creatures but are very strong, due to the fact that they dig burrows in which to live. This strength should be reflected, despite the beast's small size and claws. Damage of 1d6/ 1d6/1d4 (claw/claw/bite) seems about right. THACO depends on Hit Dice - 15 for our werebadger.

Armor Class (AC) depends upon the innate toughness (thickness of hide, etc.), speed, and dexterity of the natural animal. Werebears have a low AC largely because they're such powerful, thick-skinned animals. However, a wererat's AC derives mainly from its quick, darting movements, which allow it to evade a blow. Since badgers are small, low to the ground, and have a thick, furry hide, an AC of 5 seems about right for our werebadger.

Don't forget that the Armor Class may alter with the lycanthrope's own change of form. A hybrid's AC should lie somewhere between that of the animal form and AC 10 (since armor owned by a werebeast would have to be donned after the change). Consider how much of the animal form's natural AC would remain with a hybrid. Our werebadger would certainly lose some of its advantages - namely, being low-slung and the thickness of hide in hybrid aspect - so AC 7 seems about right.

Of course, attribute scores and armor dictate the AC of the human form.

Most other attributes derive from the nature of the phenotype. Badgers tend to live alone, unless it's a mother with young. While they prefer to avoid confrontations with creatures larger than themselves, they are fierce fighters if cornered or protecting young. Badgers are not solely predators, but omnivores. Our werejaguar might have treasure class M, Q, or V, if any. While normal badgers are neutral in alignment, a werebadger (especially in Ravenloft) would have an alignment of chaotic evil. Number appearing would normally be 1. Badgers are aggressive fighters when provoked, so a Morale of Elite (14) is appropriate.

Special Abilities

Certain types of lycanthropes, by virtue of their phenotype, gain some special capabilities. For example, werefoxes have an ability to *charm* victims. A werebeast's special skill k might be magical or simply a physical ability. It might be arbitrary or

related in some way to the phenotype. DMs have a free hand in this area, giving them the chance to create unique (and PC-surprising) lycanthropes.

Our werebadger is a skilled digger and, as mentioned, can be quite ferocious when angered. Extrapolating from this, werebadgers are likely to do more damage with their claws than with their teeth, and they also may go berserk in combat.

Vulnerabilities

Each werebeast has at least one nonmagical vulnerability. Most, but not all, creatures of a particular phenotype share the same vulnerability (werewolves fear silver, for example). DMs should first decide upon a basic vulnerability for a new phenotype, and then decide whether the individual creature(s) in question conforms to the generic weakness. The vulnerability might be something traditional (wolfsbane, silver, etc.), or it might be symbolically related to the nature of the phenotype.

As noted elsewhere in this text, the oil of poppy seeds (and to a lesser extent, the seeds themselves) are poisonous to werebadgers.

Society

Social behavior should relate to the characteristics of the natural animal. If the animal is pack-oriented, the lycanthrope will be social. If it is aggressively territorial, so is the lycanthrope. These creatures are intelligent, however, so they can suppress their natural tendencies if necessary. The propensities will remain, however, even if they're not obvious, and they will tend to color the creatures' philosophies and behaviors.

Badgers are often solitary. Hence, the werebadger might be a lone adventurer or a hermit living on the outskirts of a settlement.

Sample Triggers

- ☼ Appearance of a comet
- ☼ Emergence of spring flowers
- ☼ Entering a specific locale or type of terrain (swamp, graveyard, mountains, childhood home, etc.)
- ☼ Exposure to a particular type of plant, animal, or mineral
- ☼ Extreme fear
- ☼ Healing magic
- ☼ Hunger
- ☼ Intense anger or embarrassment
- ☼ Intense passion
- ☼ Lunar or solar eclipse
- ☼ Necromantic magic (or magic from any specific sphere or school)
- ☼ Participation in combat
- ☼ Particular sound or music
- ☼ Phase of the moon
- ☼ Physical pain
- ☼ Seeing a particular image or type of image
- ☼ Sighting the phenotypic animal (a were-wolf changes at the sight of a wolf)
- ☼ Sight or smell of blood
- ☼ Sleep
- ☼ Snowfall
- ☼ Solstice or equino

- ☼ Sunset or sunrise
- ☼ Thunderstorm
- ☼ Total darkness

Sample Weapon Vulnerabilities

- ☼ Bone
- ☼ Bronze
- ☼ Cold iron
- ☼ Copper
- ☼ Flint
- ☼ Gold
- ☼ Lead
- ☼ Obsidian
- ☼ Silver
- ☼ Wood (specific type)

Sample Chemical Susceptibilities

- ☼ Aloe
- ☼ Amaranth
- ☼ Belladonna
- ☼ Camphor
- ☼ Chamomile
- ☼ Clover
- ☼ Fennel
- ☼ Garlic
- ☼ Ginseng
- ☼ Ipecac
- ☼ Juniper berries
- ☼ Laburnum extract
- ☼ Lotus
- ☼ Mandrake
- ☼ Mangrove leaves
- ☼ Mistletoe
- ☼ Mercury
- ☼ Poppy
- ☼ Quince
- ☼ Saffron
- ☼ Skullcap
- ☼ Sulfur
- ☼ Tamarind
- ☼ Wolfsbane

Sample Special Powers

- ☼ +2 bonus to resist bloodlust

- ☼ Breath weapon (as *stinking cloud* spell)
- ☼ Can enter bloodlust at will
- ☼ Can sense presence and location of "infective progeny"
- ☼ Charm by gaze
- ☼ Charm by voice
- ☼ Fear by voice
- ☼ Gaseous form
- ☼ Magic resistance (1d8 x 5%)
- ☼ Regeneration (1 hit point/round)
- ☼ Rogue skills (climb walls, hide in shadows, move silently: 50%-95% chance)
- ☼ Summon animal allies
- ☼ Super jump
- ☼ Two attacks per round
- ☼ Waterwalk

Werebadger

Climate/Terrain:	Temperate hills and underground
Frequency:	Very Rare
Organization:	Solitary
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Carnivore
Intelligence:	Average (8-10)
Treasure:	M, Q, V
Alignment:	Chaotic evil
No. Appearing:	1
Armor Class:	4
Movement:	6, Br3
Hit Dice:	5
THAC0:	15
No. of Attacks:	3
Damage/Attack:	1d6/1d6/1d4
Special Attacks:	Berserk frenzy
Special Defenses:	Silver or magical weapons required to hit
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	S (4' tail)
Morale:	Elite (13) or Fearless (20)
XP Value:	650 (975 magical weapon)

Werebadgers are dwarves that can transform into giant badgers or dwarf-badger hybrids. In humanoid form, they appear to be normal dwarves with a silver stripe in their hair or beards (not an uncommon trait among dwarves). In hybrid form, they stand upright but have the features of a badger: thick fur, enormous claws, and a badger's head. In beast form, the werebadger simply appears to be a giant badger. Transforming into this shape rips apart any clothing the creature wears.

The werebadger's claws are so large that they "clack" together when not flexed or clenched.

Combat: This monster attacks with its foreclaws, followed by a bite. Unlike the giant badger, the claws are actually more fearsome than the bite, but only the bite can transmit the curse of lycanthropy.

Unlike most lycanthropes, the werebadger has no qualms about using weapons. Their natural weapons are so potent, however, that only a magical weapon is of notable improvement. They favor axes and war hammers, and there is a 75% chance the creature owns a weapon (25% chance that any weapon carried is magical). In animal form werebadgers cannot use weapons. Only silver or magical weapons harm Werebadgers. The oil of the poppy seed is poisonous to them (save vs. poison or die).

Each round of combat, the werebadger has a 25% chance to enter a berserk frenzy. Roll before each round of combat. When this occurs, the werebeast froths at the mouth, its claw attacks gain a +1 attack bonus, and its bite attack gains a +3 bonus. Once in a frenzy, it will not break off the attack until either it is dead or until all its opponents have fled or died. To make matters worse, during the frenzy, all bite attacks have double the normal chance of causing the lycanthropic infection to be passed on.

Habitat/Society: Werebadgers tend to live on the fringes of society (when they choose to live among others at all). They choose professions that allow them to be alone or excuse bursts of violent anger. For example, many become scouts or skirmishers in dwarven armies. Werebadgers dislike physical labor as a rule. They typically do not work stone or metal.

Werebadgers dislike other forms of lycanthropes, but do not hate them. Those that avoid dwarven society tend to be loners, living in caves and tunnels, preying upon the unsuspecting. If one encounters another werebeast, the werebadger would fight only to defend its territory.

On rare occasions a werebadger will be found with a mate and young. Treat the young as common badgers with lycanthropic immunities. Any sign of hostility on the part of intruders will immediately throw both parents into a berserk frenzy (no die roll necessary).

Ecology: This lycanthropy affects dwarves more readily than other forms of humanoids. Gnomes, goblins, ores, and other underground dwellers are half as likely to be infected as dwarves. Humans, elves, and other surface dwellers are only 25% as likely to be infected.

Werebadgers do not live as long as dwarves. If allowed to die of natural causes - a Milton for the species - they can live to be 80 or 90 years old. Dwarves or other long-lived races that are infected with this form of lycanthropy have the remainder of their life spans halved. A prematurely old dwarf or gnome is sometimes suspected of being a lycanthrope.

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the **C**reated

Did I request thee, Master, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From Darkness to promote me?



- John Keats
Paradise Lost

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*No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.
But I know none and therefore am no beast.*

- William Shakespeare, *Richard III*

Introduction

As I once again set pen to paper, I am reminded of my previous works. Each of my guidebooks has been a tribute to the brave souls who have fallen to the evils inhabiting this Realm of Mists. So many courageous folk have given their lives in an attempt to cleanse their homeland! So many innocents as well, including my own beloved wife and son, have been forever lost to the dark instruments of evil.

Thinking back upon the life's work thrust upon me by my own bitter losses, I am ever reminded of my responsibility to the dead, to the living, and to those yet to be born. Until it is my time to join my dear wife and son, I will continue fighting evil in all its myriad forms. Thus I freely renew my task in the hope that others will be spared the stark pain and loss I have witnessed and shared.

Compilers' Note: And such are the dual reasons for which my sister and I have gathered together the good doctor's manuscripts: in the hope of sparing others' pain and aiding those who, like ourselves in this small way, have taken up the doctor's cause of fighting evil since his own disappearance.

- GWF

As I have previously written, knowledge is power. The work you now have before you, gentle reader, is a treatise touching on both madness and obsession. To those who would use this knowledge to feed the flames of their own obsessions, I offer a word of advice: Cast this work into your hearth fires instead.

I have come to believe that there is knowledge meant only for the gods themselves. The creation of life, the most sacred of all gifts, is surely knowledge of this type. Yet some have managed to "peer beneath the wrapping," as it were. Having glimpsed such wonders, they could not resist the temptation to seize the gift for themselves, whatever the cost. They cobble together bodies that should have long been laid to rest, or even substances that never knew life, and create a living being in the most unnatural manner possible. The horrid results reflect the perversity of their methods.

I am speaking, of course, of *golems*. These unholy creatures are a mockery of the human (or demihuman) spirit and form. Not one - not even the rare golem fashioned in the shape of a child - can ever know goodness, purity, or light. They are the Created as we are the Born. But where the birth of a true child is surely the greatest blessing a parent could ever know, the creation of a golem is just as surely the most hideous curse, as the new "parent" will shortly discover.

Some of these so-called parents are wizards and priests, bending powerful magic to their task. I have heard tales of distant realms where *only* powerful magic can give life to the lifeless golem. I must stress to you, dear reader, that this is not the case in the lands with which I am familiar. Many creators-perhaps the most dangerous of all-are common folk driven by needs so twisted that all else dwindles to insignificance. The very land about us appears to give their obsession a form, to imbue their constructs with life while imparting no trace of humanity.

The same wanderers who claim that a golem is a purely magical construct would also suggest that it has no more intelligence than a rabid dog. Such ignorance may cost them their lives. While a few golems might be dubbed "mindless killing machines," such creatures clearly are in the minority. In fact, the mind of a golem is most often keen. Unfortunately, it is always twisted.

Like natural parents, many creators of golems fashion their "children" in a familiar medium: flesh. As my knowledge of the Created comes mainly from experience with flesh golems, this treatise will focus primarily on creatures of this type.

However, if the accounts I have gathered can be trusted, it is possible in this world to construct a golem from virtually any material, from silver to straw. I will attempt to give what information I can on the destruction of other, less common forms of the Created as well. But I must first confess that what knowledge I possess in such areas is limited indeed.

I have often stressed the importance of understanding the mind of one's enemy. With the golem, the hunter must seek to understand not only the creature but also its creator. What would drive someone to meddle with life and death in such a foul manner? Obsession, yes. Madness, surely. But what else? Few of us are fortunate enough to ride life's course without claiming some sort of obsession or madness of our own. I myself might be considered obsessed by some. Over the many years of my fight I can think of any number of good people who have named me mad. Perhaps in some small way they are right. I acknowledge my life's work is an obsession to me. It has been one since the moment I held my wife, Ingrid, in my arms for the final time. Cradling her cold, still form against my chest; burying my face against her soft, perfumed hair; hearing the echo of her sparkling laughter in my mind; I swore vengeance on Baron Metus and all of his murderous ilk: the vampires.

Over the years, I learned of still other evils: liches, ghosts, werebeasts, and more. My work and the obsession governing it broadened. I gained an understanding of golems only recently. In studying these creatures, I discovered something about the nature of evil, and about myself. Here, now, I freely confess to sitting by my hearth, in my home empty of wife and child these many years, and toying with the idea of creating a new family in their image. This idea crossed my mind for but a moment before I realized the true horror of what I contemplated. Yet, for that briefest of times, I understood the need - the utter loneliness and the aching void within - that could drive one to commit acts which were previously unthinkable.

Looking upon the darkness in my own soul, I realized we all must be ever vigilant. Dark forces lie in wait for the unwary. They listen for our cries and call out to us in turn, offering to fulfill our deepest desires. They seek out the seeds of torment within us and strive to nurture them, bending them toward darkness rather than light. Every one of us, especially those who have dedicated themselves to fighting evil, must be on guard. The darkness calls to us from without, but it has no true power over us unless we allow it access to our hearts.

I consider these insights extremely valuable. No less valuable is the knowledge I have gained about golems. I have a dear friend to thank for both. But this information was acquired in the most difficult manner possible: through my friend's death. Indeed, *many* good people have perished to gain the information I shall impart throughout this work. I hope at least some few will be saved by this hard-won knowledge. As always, however, a would-be vanquisher of evil must remember this rule: Nothing in our world is absolute. Do not cling so hard to old beliefs and knowledge that you become blind to new evidence.

I shall now relate to you, dear reader, the tale of how I came to know of golems. It is my fervent wish that none of you will ever have to see the torment that accompanies the Created and their creators. However, if you are reading this at all, it is likely that the Created have already touched your life in some way, or may one day soon. I write in the hope that you too shall come to the same understanding and conviction as I: that all golems must be destroyed for our sake, and for theirs.

A Doctor's Obsession

Antonin Madren was twenty-two years of age when we first met. He came to me full of the enthusiasm and imagined immortality felt by the young. He also possessed a finely developed wit and poetic sense. We became friends in no time. When he told me of his desire to practice medicine, I quickly agreed to take him on as a student.

Over the years our friendship grew. Antonin's dexterous hands and alert mind were honed by years of practice and learning, and he soon overtook me in surgical skill. When he was thirty, Antonin traveled to Martira Bay to begin his own practice. From then on we corresponded erratically through letters, commenting on each other's latest books.

Seven years ago, Antonin wrote to say he had lost his sister, his only living relative, to heart failure. In his letter, Antonin cursed his inability to save her. He claimed to have been too preoccupied to notice the medical dues signaling her heart problem. Of course, I wrote back at once, and suggested that he was taking on far too much blame. These things sometimes happen. We doctors are not omnipotent; we cannot prevent every death. No letter came in response.

I did not hear from Antonin again until years later, when he arrived at my very doorstep. I remember it was raining steadily that night. It was not the dramatic maelstrom found in so many novels. There was no lightning, no thunder... only the relentless drumming of the rain. When I opened the door, I was shocked to find Antonin on the stoop. He wore only a shirt and trousers, and was soaked to the skin. Ushering him in, I immediately set the kettle on for tea and offered him a towel.

Without so much as a word, he accepted my ministrations. It seemed the silence stretched between us forever, until finally the cheery whistling of the teapot interrupted it.

Returning with tea cozy in hand, I settled once more in front of Antonin. By now, I was seriously concerned. His breathing was ragged, his eyes glassy, and there was about him the aura of fear. I know no better way to describe it. When I could stand the terrible silence no longer, I began to ask him questions. But he answered none of them.

Beginning to despair of ever reaching the man's once open mind, I quieted. It was then I noticed Antonin staring at the wooden model of a human heart I keep on my cluttered desk. Wordlessly, I rose and brought the model to my silent guest. It was as if I had touched flame to paper. Out poured the ragged, disoriented thoughts of what had once been one of the most disciplined minds I ever had the pleasure to know.

At this point, you must forgive me for being less than complete in my account. Antonin spoke of many things, none of them quite lucidly. But I will here record only those thoughts of direct relation to golems, only those rantings from which others might yet benefit. As to the other confessions he made to me that night, I shall respect his memory and confidence, and keep my silence. That said, here is our exchange, as best I can recall it.

"I tried, every sort of heart I could think to use," he told me. "Not even the lion's was strong enough.. "

"What did you try to do with them. Antonin?" I asked as gently as I could.

"None of them could help her. Every one failed my poor sister."

"Are you saying you placed other hearts in your sister's body?" I whispered. My stomach, so recently manned with hot tea, turned to ice at the thought.

Nodding distractedly, Antonin continued. "Yes, yes. But nothing worked. Until I used the living heart. It worked. I took it from that poor urchin, and yet it still beat. I placed it within her, and it still beat. But not enough, not enough. So I found other pieces to use, other parts to replace. Until every organ, every appendage, was functional."

Here Antonin paused, looking up from the wooden heart he still clutched to his breast. "Her eyes opened, Van Richten. And she smiled at me. At me."

When Antonin smiled I knew he was mad. Through my tears I asked him to continue.

"But it wasn't my sweet sister after all. She was so different, not at all herself. One day I arrived home to find all the crockery smashed. A week later I awoke with her hands about my neck, strangling my life away."

Tears had replaced his earlier smile, and we cried together as he continued. "I hit her, the mockery of my sister. Again and again I hit her. When it was over, I buried her. But the next night I again awoke to find her choking the life from me. That is when I fled."

"Then you have escaped your creation, Antonin?" I asked. The uncertainty in my voice stemmed from the madness still in Antonin's pale face.

"Oh, no. That isn't ever possible. I just keep moving. When I stop, she will find me again. She tells me so every day and night, inside my very head. She speaks of how she wishes to strangle me."

Rising slowly, Antonin straightened his tie and smoothed his pants. "I shall be leaving you now, doctor. She says she is near. and I have no reason to doubt my sister."

"But surely if you stay we can destroy her!" I cried. "I do have some small measure of experience with such things."

"Not with golems, doctor. 'She is not truly alive, and thus she cannot truly die. She is unstoppable, even by you.'"

Turning, Antonin headed to the door. Looking back at me, he tossed a small journal to the carpet. "You are the only person I could trust to read this, the only one who would not be tempted to follow the path laid out in this book and construct an abomination as I did. Should you ever run into that creature or others like her, use this information in your defense. The man who gave me this book is dead now. Killed by his own creation, as surely as I will be killed by my... sister."

With that, Antonin left me. Several weeks later I learned he was strangled to death in a small inn some two days south of my home. Although Antonin succumbed to madness, he did manage to bring me the knowledge I needed to begin hunting down the Created.

In the pages that follow, I will attempt to put forth all that I have learned of the Created. I have gathered this knowledge from Antonin's journal, my own researches, and my own experiences. It is my sincerest hope you will come to discern that the monsters and their creators are both, in some sense, victims. Should you ever confront a golem, perhaps this realization will aid you.

I say this, of course, so that you might better understand your foe. Never should such empathy keep you from using all means at your disposal to destroy it. For the Created *are* indeed monsters, despite their vaguely human appearance. And they are enemies to be feared. Golems do not view life and death as you or I do; they cannot share our joys and fears. Should you ever be so unfortunate as to fight a golem, do not rejoice too swiftly upon slaying it. You must be prepared to become acquainted with true horror as your victim rises again and again from its supposed death. It will take all your resources, and perhaps more, to free the world of just one of these unholy menaces.

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Wonderful news today! Last month I wrote of the beautiful young woman, Safira, who for several weeks had been battling a terrible case of pneumonia. After my brief visit yesterday, it seems she succumbed to her illness. Poor dear: But now my own child will have such a sweet, pretty face, and hair as soft as silk. It won't be long before my happiness is complete!

I must make haste, I have a funeral to attend. And then I must make my preparations for a more private honoring of the dead.

- From the journal of Thor Hessen

Assembly

In this chapter I shall explain the challenges faced by a madman who desires to construct a golem's body. I use the term "madman" expressly, for one of the most fearful aspects of a golem's construction is the creator himself. As I noted in the introduction, it seems that virtually any twisted personality can create a unique and intelligent golem in these misty lands, from a farmer to a scientist. All that seem truly necessary are an obsessive, driving need or desire and the ability to fashion the physical body.

Most golems are made of flesh. Due to the predominance of flesh golems among the Created, I will give a proportionately large amount of space to discussing the particular requirements of constructing a flesh golem's body.

It is conceivable, however, that a golem could be fashioned from almost any material. Of course, certain materials such as paper or ice would presumably be too unstable to form a lasting body. Furthermore, others such as diamonds and rubies would be difficult to acquire in large quantities, making their use in a golem unlikely. Even if one could acquire enough of such rare materials, they would be difficult to form into bodies. Still, anything is possible given a creator with the appropriate resources and skills.



Procuring Materials

Gathering the materials required for a golem's construction can be a difficult, expensive, and even dangerous prospect for the would-be creator. It can also be time consuming, depending on the material chosen.

A flesh golem typically requires no fewer than six corpses: one for each limb, one for the head and torso, and another for the brain. (I shall present my theory on why this is so in Chapter Two.) These parts for flesh golems must be gathered rather quickly, lest the tissue reach a state of decay too advanced for use.

A colleague once wrote to me for my opinion on a rather demented little taxidermist, who had to be kept under lock and key to prevent him from gathering up the bodies of dead animals and stitching together hybrids. Apparently, the man had succeeded in creating at least a few animal golems before he was stopped. Fortunately, the taxidermist was given to long periods of catatonia. A catatonic individual stares into space for hours, even days on end, lost to the world around him. Thus, this man would gather together most of the necessary materials only to find himself, days later, sitting amongst the stench and gore of rotting, unusable corpses.

Table 1: Assembly Time and Cost

	Flesh	Bone	Clay	Glass	Metal	Stone	Straw	Wood
<i>Preparation Time</i>	6 wks	1 mth	3 wks	3 mths	2 mths	2 mths	2 wks	1 mth
<i>Assembly Time</i>	2 wks	1 mth	1 wk	3 mths	2 mths	1 mth	1 wk	1 mth
<i>Cost of Assembly</i>	50,000	35,000	65,000	125,000	100,000	80,000	100	20,000

Notes

Preparation time is the period spent gathering materials and equipment. It does not include the many months or years of planning and research that some creators perform beforehand.

Time of assembly represents the actual number of hours the creator spends physically putting his creation together. (When added to preparation time, this equals the "construction time" presented in the *Monstrous Manual* tome.) in general, this is the minimum time required to achieve satisfactory results. When an obsessive creator is working toward perfection, additional time may be devoted to the task.

Cost of assembly includes cash expenditures for labor and incidental expenses, as well as the basic cost of materials and equipment needed - Repeated from the *Monstrous Manual* book, these figures should be viewed as basic guidelines for *Ravenloft* campaigns. As materials vary, so do costs (a stone golem, for example, would cost more if carved from granite than from sandstone). Other factors also affect cost. In general, DMs should let the story at hand determine how much a creator spends - and, if the creator is poor, determine how that person obtains those funds. Bear in mind that a golem created through obsession (as opposed to traditional magic) may cost far less than amounts shown; the creator serves as the craftsman. On the other hand, even a master craftsman might hire others for incidental or gritty tasks, so that he or she can focus on the "art." Remember too that those who are obsessed with creating life often spend everything they have to achieve their goal - be they a pauper or a prince.

Craftmanship

The table above reflects the minimum investment for an "average" golem. (Base statistics for such golems are presented in Chapters Three and Four.) A creator who invests more time and money - or less - can create golems of varying quality, as outlined below. These variations help DMs tailor a particular golem to the needs of their campaigns. For example, a poorly constructed golem may be just the foe for an inexperienced party.

Excellent: If a creator invests twice the usual creation time and expense, the golem gains +1 to physical attributes and an additional 2d3 points to its Charisma.

Good: If a creator invests 50% more resources and time, the golem gains +1 to two of its physical statistics (DM's choice) and an additional 1d3 points of Charisma.

Average: No bonuses or penalties apply.

Poor: If the time and cost are reduced by 25%, the golem suffers a -1 penalty to all physical attributes. Further, its Charisma drops 1d3 points.

Shoddy: If the time and cost are reduced by 50%, the golem suffers a -2 penalty to all physical attributes, and its Charisma drops 2d3 points.

Builders of flesh golems who have an ice-cold place available to store bodies and body parts have more temporal leeway than most. Deep snow, ice caverns, even large iceboxes may be used to prevent or stow decomposition. While searching for a flesh golem south of Viaki, I discovered a frozen lake with no fewer than three bodies wrapped in canvas and tied to the nearby dock - By stationing myself at the lake, I discovered the identity of the golem's creator.

Other materials can be gathered more slowly with little or no consequence, as decomposition is not an issue with metal, stone, and the like. But do not think constructing any form of golem body to be easy: far from it. Although some creators do not spend adequate time assembling their grotesque progeny and undoubtedly have poor results, most creators labor long and hard, using all resources at hand to "perfect" their dread creations.

Fleshly Concerns

Constructing a flesh golem presents its own challenges. As noted, no single body will do: six is the minimum number required. (Each arm, each leg, the trunk plus head, and the brain must all be taken from different corpses, though still more bodies can be harvested for smaller parts.) Furthermore, the flesh must be relatively fresh. Despite such requirements, flesh is by far the most common material used in the construction of golems.

Why are flesh golems predominant? Perhaps this is due to the natural proclivity of flesh to contain and shelter intelligent life. Unlike the other materials discussed so far, flesh is innately accommodating to the life force. Thus, for the very same reason you and I are not made from inanimate wood, glass, or metal, the animating force of the golem most readily enters a vessel grafted of once-animate flesh. Perhaps due to the very nature of flesh, far more would-be creators of flesh golems succeed at their grisly task than the would-be creators of other forms of the Created.

For the creator, flesh is also readily available, at least for those willing to rob the graves of the newly dead (or to murder the living). Flesh is soft and thus relatively easy to stitch together. The golem's patchwork of skin does not heal well when pieced together, however. The fusing of flesh in a golem serves to emphasize the bond, resulting in hideous, raised scars and conspicuous traces of stitching.

Such obvious deformities, along with the mismatched body parts, are a blessing to all who wish to hunt golems; they allow us to know the creature for what it truly is. When one hunts a vampire or werewolf, for example, it is possible to be a guest in the creature's very home and fail to recognize the prey. But there is no worry of attending a gathering hosted by a golem and not realizing who - or what - that person is! No, the true nature of these hideously formed beings is always instantly recognizable.

Although the tissue mass that constitutes a flesh golem is hideous, it is amazingly functional. These golems regenerate at an extraordinary rate. In short, the flesh heals many times faster than it did while sheathing other bodies (see Chapter Three for details).

At this point in our discussion, we must ask ourselves several questions. When selecting body parts for inclusion, how much tissue deterioration and decay is acceptable before the body part becomes too decayed for use? Can pieces of any body be used? For example, can animal or monster parts be used in the assembly of the body?

Before we proceed to examine these horrible yet medically fascinating issues, I must first warn more sensitive readers that the material next covered is of necessity rather visceral. If the following material disturbs or upsets, I apologize. Still, we must not allow faint-heartedness to keep us from knowledge.

Climate and Decay

In order for a body part to be useful in the construction of a flesh golem, the ligaments, tendons, and the like must not yet have rotted to the degree that they rip and tear when manipulated. Although a flesh golem's body is extremely powerful and resilient once it is animate, during construction the opposite is true. The creator must take great care to stitch the muscles, tendons, and ligaments of one body part to the corresponding muscles, tendons, and ligaments of its partner. This work is both arduous and exacting.

Due to the stitching and great amount of manipulation the body parts must withstand, I estimate that, given average conditions, body parts must be utilized within one week of death. Beyond that period, the part may have degraded to uselessness. Note that this is a very general estimate, and conditions are rarely "average." Several factors can affect the exact speed of decay. The most important are temperature and moisture.

The colder the temperature at which a body is kept, the longer the process of decay is kept at bay. Obviously, the reverse is also true; the warmer the temperature, the swifter the decay. Moisture in the air, or humidity, also affects the rate of decomposition. The higher the humidity, the more rapid the rotting. However, humidity levels are secondary in importance to temperature.

In an environment well below freezing, it is possible for a corpse to remain in virtually pristine condition for an indefinite period of time, untouched by even the slightest hint of decay. This is why a body found during a spring thaw at a northerly lake often appears to have died only recently, when in fact the victim has been frozen for months. Of course, the process of

decay can never be reversed, and any decay that occurred before the body was frozen will still be in evidence. Further, once the body part is exposed to warmer temperatures, decay continues.

What if the temperature is cool but not below freezing? In this case, or when the air is very dry, body parts can remain intact for quite some time. They do continue to decay, but the process is slowed. Under such conditions, it would seem reasonable that body parts would remain usable for perhaps as long as two weeks, although such parts would surely undergo some degradation.

When the air is warm but not hot- that is, in temperatures humans find most comfortable-flesh decays steadily. I venture to say that a body part would become useless after a period of perhaps nine days in such a temperate environment. If, however, conditions were particularly moist but not excessively hot (or vice versa), decay would set in at a faster rate than under so-called "average" conditions. In such climates, flesh might become unusable in perhaps as few as five or six days (This explains why the villagers living near the Great Falls wait no more than one day before burying their dead. Through experience, these villagers know that warm, moist air cause bodies to decompose quite rapidly, just as meat becomes rancid far more rapidly in the summer than in the winter).

I had been called to a small village in my homeland of Darken. The local residents were terrified that a plague of vampires was about to be called down upon them. Quaking with fear, the village leaders brought me to the hamlet's tiny graveyard. Along with the gray light, twisted trees, and chipped stone markers, freshly turned earth greeted my eyes. A trio of graves had been disturbed, with the ground hastily heaped back into place.

"You see, good doctor?" the milage elder cried. He was a stooped and slender man some ninety-odd years old, and his voice cracked with fear and age. "We laid these three young men in the ground only days ago, but they do not rest. How can we protect ourselves?"

Informing him that I must Investigate further before drawing any conclusions, I asked my companions, Gildred and Hauland-the famed Strickmund brothers-to aid me in searching the gravesites. It seemed odd to me that such a small village (of no more than fifty individuals) would suffer so many deaths at once.

Listening to the sodden shoveling sounds and grunts of effort of the brothers Strickmund laboring at the graves, I determined to delve further into the circumstances surrounding the three deaths.

"Did these young men die of some sudden disease, perhaps a wasting sickness or an illness of the blood?" I inquired of the elders present. The victims of a vampire's foul ministrations often appear to die in such a manner, before rising as minions of evil but a few nights later.

"No, Dr. Van Richten," the village leader replied, his aged hands shaking with sorrow and fear. "That is why we took no precautions with the lads' bodies. It was simply an accident that caused their deaths, just a terrible accident."

"I have found that accidents are not always what they first appear to be," I responded, as gently as possible. "Please tell me more about the circumstances...."

- From the journal of Dr. Van Richten

Under the most extreme conditions of damp heat, such as a jungle environment, decay sets in with amazing speed. If you ever visit the jungles of Sri Raji for example, note the rich loam of the earth, the quickly rotting logs, the amazing variety and number of insects. All are signs of both the speed and thoroughness with which death brings decay in such a clime. It would seem difficult in the extreme to construct a flesh golem under such conditions, but would-be creators are fantastically resourceful. At best, I would imagine the creator to have only two or three days' leeway before the flesh so degrades as to become nonviable.

There is an interesting side note on humidity and its effects on decomposition. When exposed to an extremely raw, arid climate, a corpse may not decompose in the normal manner. I observed this effect myself while journeying across a desert. My fellows and I, riding sturdy mules, were attempting to reach the lair of a lich whose sanctuary was supposedly hidden beneath the dust and sand. The wind was particularly fierce one day, forcing us to stop and make camp early. That night, I feared both my tent and my person would be ripped to shreds by the driving storm, or at the least that I would be

permanently deafened by the wind's titanic roar!

Fortunately my fears proved groundless. The tents held, as did my ears. In the morning we emerged, ready to set off once again. As I sipped cool water in a vain attempt to wash the gritty tang from my mouth, our guide, Atrawn, ran up to me. He dragged me over the facing dune, nearly causing to me to spill my water skin with his urgency.

He pointed to a small group of bodies, which had been invisible previously. Knowing the storm must have uncovered the corpses, I began an examination. It was as if all the moisture in the bodies had been drawn out. The dark skin was still wrapped firmly about the bones, but it was extremely thin and wrinkled. Along the necks, legs, and arms I could easily make out tendons, jutting stiffly outward from the shrunken forms. There was no odor of death or decay about the bodies, only the clean, warm smell of the desert.

By this point in my examination, my companions had gathered around as well. Torenor the dwarf carefully plucked a trinket from one of the bodies, wondering aloud if it was valuable. Glancing at the silver and onyx earring, I was startled to see it was a durasha, an item used by a certain nomadic tribe as a ward against evil spirits. However, the tribe had died off years ago, killed by rivals.

From both the condition of the corpses and the presence of the durasha, I estimated the bodies to have been at least a century dead. Apparently, the sere climate caused the moisture to disappear so quickly from the tissue that no true decay could set in. It would follow that similarly desiccated parts could be used in the construction of a golem. Despite this possibility, I have never heard of such a creature.

I'd like to close this section with a cautionary note. Do not make the mistake of assuming that because you are in a hot and humid region, the would-be creator will be unable to finish his work. Climatic limitations can be circumvented; as always, the truly obsessed will find a way if any chance of success exists, no matter how remote.

A colleague of mine once reported stumbling across a strange room located deep beneath the earth. Within the chamber, a gold miner had begun collecting and storing body parts in preparation for construction of a golem. The miner's story was one of loneliness and rejection, and the man apparently longed for someone who wouldn't mock or shun him. It was fortunate for the man that my colleague discovered his chamber, for the rejection he would have ultimately faced from his golem would have been far worse than any he could possibly have conceived.

The chamber was reachable only by arduously crawling through a network of small caves that followed a tiny underground stream. Although the outside temperatures averaged over 100 degrees and the humidity was always high, the chamber itself was extremely cool due to its depth and stone insulation. Thus, the collected body parts remained quite fresh even though the first of the limbs' "donors" was almost a week dead.

...Clearly my inquiry about the three youths' deaths caused my hosts great discomfort. The elders shook their heads in sorrow and confusion. An old woman stood among them, pulling her heavy woolen shawl closer about her frail shoulders, it was she who gave the only verbal response, "They were working on the new barn when it collapsed on top of them. We all worked fast as we could to get them out of there... but there was naught we could do for the lads, poor things."

Clucking her tongue in sorrow, the woman, one Nelly by name, turned to stare at the ruined building just visible through the trees while Haualand and Gildred completed their excavation. The villagers had been too terrified to search, the graves themselves, so they were quite shocked to see the mangled forms lying uncovered within the newly re-opened graves. All three of the men had been young and powerfully built. Now though, each of the bodies was missing one limb.

Asking as delicately as I could under the circumstances, I confirmed that each man had been whole when buried...

- From the journal of Dr. Van Richten

Effects of Decay

I do not wish to imply that a week-old body part and one that is but hours dead are of equal value. The fresher part would be much more valuable from a creator's perspective. While a piece of flesh may be usable, it does not follow that it reflects "peak condition." When partially decayed materials are used in the construction of a golem, the creature's structural integrity

is diminished. Further, if too many parts have degraded sufficiently, the creature as a whole may not be viable, no matter what the creator attempts.

Another possibility is that a member of the Created whose body contains partially decayed body parts is not as clever or powerful as a golem constructed solely with fresher parts.

Presumably, any lessening of skills would be those relative to the defective body part or parts (a slightly rotted brain might create a less intelligent creature, for example).

Indeed, I suspect that certain body parts - especially those upon which skills are based - might be more vulnerable to decay and damage than others. Eyes, brains, hearts, and other organs should become unusable at a faster rate due to their delicacy. Other, less delicate body parts - limbs, for example - would no doubt withstand greater abuse before they are rendered worthless.

A scientist with whom I am acquainted has suggested that the level of decay is not truly pertinent, save that a part must have enough structural integrity to hold together during the actual physical construction. I tend to dispute this idea; it makes little sense, given what we know of physiology. However, it is unwise to entirely rule out any possibility when dealing with the Created. Take this information, your own observations, and any other sources you can find and come to your own conclusions. It is your life at risk.

Nonhuman Body Parts

It is indeed possible for body parts from corpses of different races, and even different species, to be used in the creation of one golem. I myself was involved in the destruction of a particularly grotesque golem who appeared to have been constructed from no fewer than three different species. Its head and torso were human, but one of its arms was that of a brown bear, while its legs appeared to have been ogre limbs. It was a terribly disfigured monster, all out of proportion with itself, like a child's fanciful drawing come horribly to life.

What, if any, mental and emotional effect would this sort of merging have? That is a question which I shall explore later in this work. However, all my hypotheses and psychological postulations are as nothing to staring into the face of such a wretched being.

I speculate that only certain natural barriers would keep a creator from being able to cobble together a golem made from many different creatures. One obvious barrier is size. If the difference between two connecting body parts is too great, the creator cannot successfully stitch the parts together. Even if the stitching could be accomplished, a golem with, say, the body of a halfling and the arm of an ogre would have difficulty effectively using the outsized limb. In general, the supporting frame must be of sufficient size and strength to utilize its limbs. Some leeway may be assumed, however, due to the additional strength musculature appears to gain when reanimated as part of a golem construct. I shall delve further into the subject of odd parts-and the resulting physical attributes-in Chapter Three, "Constructions of Flesh."

Here it is probably wise to mention the tragic creatures known as broken ones. Educated readers may believe these sad beings to be almost identical in nature to golems. While they do have certain similarities, this is not at all the case.

Broken ones are the tragic survivors of both scientific and magical experiments. Humans once, their humanity has been inextricably mingled with the life force of animals. The shock of this transformation forever alters the wretched creatures. But there is an extremely important distinction between these beings and golems. Broken ones are alive. They do not die in the experiments, and thus the scientists and mages do not create new life in creating broken ones. Although terrible violation of the spirit occurs, no death is involved. This is a critical difference between golems and broken ones.

...At this point in the investigation I realized no vampire was at work here. Someone, perhaps even one of the elders standing before me, was attempting to construct a flesh golem. Far from easing my mind, this discovery only caused my heart to race. For once a golem becomes functional, it can be even more difficult to destroy than the dreaded vampire!

Fortunately, in this instance we were able to stop the creator before he completed his dread child. That very evening, I and my two stolid companions stationed ourselves around the tiny graveyard. We caught the grave robber attempting to exhume yet another corpse. The man himself was crazed with desperation and need - what had brought him to such a state we will never know. When it became obvious he would be unable to make good his escape, the man drank from a small vial in his

possession. Moments later he collapsed, a victim of the powerful poison contained therein, and the obsessions of his own warped mind.

As a doctor, I use all my humble skills and knowledge to fight death. Yet, standing in the bitter cold of that bleak cemetery, I knew this man's death was probably for the best. Had he completed his work - and I knew it would have been impossible to dissuade him - then he surely would have faced a more horrid demise at the hands of his own creation.

- From the journal of Dr. Van Richten

Body Parts and Decay

Van Richten has introduced the subject of decay and its effect on a flesh golem. This topic is covered in greater detail below. Such information can be useful in creating a history for a flesh golem, as well as in "customizing" a particular monster by giving it limbs that have decayed almost to the point of uselessness. This mechanism is particularly useful to DMs who wish to create a weaker golem for low-level parties.

Stages of Decay

The condition of the specific parts used in the creation of a golem can affect the monster's base statistics (see Chapter Three for a list of these statistics). For purposes of determining decay, there are two categories of body parts: organs and limbs. Organs are delicate and more vulnerable to such deterioration.

Body parts undergo four stages as they decay: fresh, good, usable, and decayed. Brief descriptions of possible game effects for each stage are given below. These are guidelines for DMs, who may use them to "flesh out" physical details for a particular golem.

Fresh: Fresh body parts come from corpses that have been dead for only a brief period of time. No significant decay has occurred.

Good: Body parts in this group have begun the process of decay, especially soft organs. However, their general condition is still good, and game effects are minimal. For example, a golem with a tongue in "good" shape prior to its animation might exhibit slightly slurred speech, but no other impairment- The most prominent effect involves the brain. If a brain has deteriorated from fresh to good condition, the golem's Intelligence score is decreased by 1 point.

Usable: Body parts in "usable" condition have truly begun to decay, and they will weaken the golem in some small way. This is particularly true if organs are involved. Some examples of the effect of using such parts during creation of the golem are as follows:

Eyes: Vision reduced to 50%

Limb: -1 to Dexterity, -1 to Strength

Brain: -3 to intelligence

Feet: Movement reduced to 75%

Decayed: This flesh is in an advanced state of decay. Organs and other delicate tissues in this state cannot be used to construct a viable golem. It is sometimes possible to use other body parts in this state, but they produce an inferior golem. Examples of the effect of using such body parts during the creation of the golem are as follows:

Limb: -2 to Dexterity, -2 to Strength

Feet: Movement at 50%

Once body parts pass this final stage, they are far too putrid for use in a flesh golem, although a zombie golem or bone golem might be constructed successfully. Anyone viewing such a golem should immediately make a horror check due to the hideous appearance of the monster (DM's option).

Climate and Decay

A body part's rate of decay varies by climate. The following table defines six different "climates" by their heat and humidity levels: arctic, cool, temperate, moist, torrid, and desert. The effects of each climate on decay are outlined below.

Of course, not every body part is exposed to the elements. Some may be stored in a cool cellar or even frozen to stow or stop decay. Would-be creators of golems usually attempt to preserve body parts in the best condition possible.

Table 2: Climatic Effect on Decay

	Sere	Arid	Average	Humid	Very Humid
Temperature	0%-10%	11%-40%	41%-60%	61%-80%	81%-100%
<i>Freezing</i> (<i>< 32 deg F</i>)	Arctic	Arctic	Arctic	Arctic	Arctic
<i>Chill</i> (<i>33-60 deg F</i>)	Cool	Cool	Cool	Temperate	Moist
<i>Average</i> (<i>61-80 deg F</i>)	Cool	Temperate	Temperate	Moist	Torrid
<i>Hot</i> (<i>> 81 deg F</i>)	Desert	Temperate	Moist	Torrid	Torrid

Arctic: Body parts kept below freezing will not decay further. If a fresh body part is frozen, it will still be fresh when it thaws. Likewise, if a body part was in usable condition when frozen, it will be in the same state when thawed. Decay will continue as soon as the part is exposed to temperatures above freezing.

Cool: Body parts that are stored in a cool environment decay at the following rate:

Fresh - Days 1-2
 Good - Days 3-5
 Usable - Days 6-10
 Decayed - Days 11-14
 Unusable - After Day 14

Temperate: The decay rate for flesh stored in a temperate environment is as follows:

Fresh - Day 1
 Good - Days 2-4
 Usable - Days 5-7
 Decayed - Days 8-10
 Unusable - After Day 10

Moist: Body parts exposed to a moist environment decay at the following rate:

Fresh - Day 1
 Good - Day 2
 Usable - Days 3-4
 Decayed - Days 5-7
 Unusable - After Day 7

Torrid: Body parts subjected to such conditions decay at the following rate:

Fresh - First 12 Hours
 Good - 13-36 Hours
 Usable - 36-72 Hours
 Decayed - Day 3-Day 5
 Unusable - After Day 5

Desert: When conditions are extremely dry and hot, bodies can become desiccated very rapidly. As Dr. Van Richten observed, the moisture is drawn out of the body so quickly it becomes mummified. In such cases, limbs and other visible parts are preserved indefinitely, and it is possible to use them in the creation of a golem. Such body parts are considered fresh. Note that this does not include organs, which are considered to be in a torrid environment for purposes of judging decay (see above).

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I see my Alice sit up, brush her hair, and smile. How wonderful! But most wonderful of all, looking into her deep blue eyes, canted upwards in reminiscence of their elfin donor. What matter the stitches beneath, the heaviness of the eyelids? My child, my Alice is at last alive and whole!

Every night I raise a glass of finest wine my cellars have to offer. It is a toast to the genius gifted me by the gods, allowing me to create life itself. Soon my old friends will humble themselves before me, and beg to have me as their teacher.

But they have already proven themselves unworthy by doubting my genius. Well, they shall soon doubt no more.

- From the journal of Thor Hessen

Animation

The "parents" of the blighted creatures called golems toy with a gift that most reserve for the gods: creating life. But how is such a thing possible? How can that which is dead or inanimate assume an existence that is not undeath as we know it, but life? Although I am far from certain as to the exact nature of the process, I do feel qualified to put forth several theories on this subject.

I would advise the reader while perusing this chapter to maintain a certain amount of healthy skepticism, as well as an intellectual distance. In the first place, although these theories of mine have grown out of many hours of research and firsthand observation (mainly of flesh golems), they are but theories. And they are highly speculative theories at that.

Secondly, I am certain it is unwise to delve too deeply into this realm of knowledge. Although information is certainly necessary to combat the Created, I fear that even a person of good conscience and moral fiber might be somehow *changed* by gaining some knowledge of the creation of life, no matter how limited in scope. From both a philosophical and emotional perspective, I have come to the decision that there is just some knowledge mortals are not meant to possess. Alas, if the world were as it *should* be, it would be very different indeed.

With those caveats in mind, we may proceed to my theories on the animating forces necessary to the creation of a golem.

The Source of Life

It is my firm belief that the force that animates a golem is not created *per se*. Rather, it is a pre-existing spirit, drawn to the empty vessel that is the golem body, and then trapped within it. Such animating forces may be of two varieties: a dark spirit or a stolen life force. Both are horrid in their own way.

Dark Spirits

It has been postulated, by both myself and other theorists, that there are numerous evil "spirits" about in our world - not ghosts, mind you, but beings who have never truly been alive, who have never maintained a corporeal existence. A few scholars assert that such dark forces must hail from another realm entirely. I myself believe they are in some way a part of our land, just as we are, existing at the edge of our nightmares in a manner we cannot fully comprehend. It can be assumed,



however, that these darkling spirits know neither life nor death as we understand it. And, unlike mortals, they do not have a cycle of life.

We can at best speculate on what such an existence might be like. However, it does not seem unreasonable to hypothesize that these evil, ethereal beings might experience the emotions of mortals as tangible qualities. We can further imagine that these creatures could be attracted by compellingly evil thoughts and deeds, especially when they are accompanied by intense desires.

When a powerful wizard performs a difficult magical working, or a priest pushes back undead minions, he calls upon skill and faith, yes. But these acts also require great force of will and conviction. Further, an individual whose heart and mind burn with an all-consuming obsession might exhibit an equal intensity of will, if not a greater one. Such emotion might well attract a darkling spirit.

Imagine now that this warped individual were to focus his will toward the creation of life, and that he had properly constructed a body which could receive the darkling spirit. Under these circumstances, the creator might be able to trap the entity in that vessel. The spirit - thus mired within a corporeal form for the first time in its existence - might lack the capability to extricate itself. As the wizard who creates a powerful item of magic can attest, the bonds shaped by a strong will can be powerful indeed.

I shudder to think that creatures incapable of true death - that are utterly devoid of morality, pity, and sheer humanity - are even now inhabiting our land and walking among us.

The Stolen Life Force

To my great sorrow, I am certain the life force animating some flesh golems is stolen from those already living. All who fashion this type of creature must steal from the *dead*, of course, seizing their limbs and organs. But a few creators-and fortunately they are unusual-commit an even greater atrocity: They rob the living of their very identity.

I can say this terrible thing with certainty, thanks to a long-time correspondence I have maintained with the Vistani wise woman, Cyrilla. Those of you who have read my other works may wonder that I have even one friend among the Vistani. It is true that I cannot help but find the Vistani, as a culture, loathsome. If not for the Vistani thieves who kidnapped my boy, Erasmus, he would never have come into the hands of the foul vampire, Baron Metus.

Yet, over the years, I have come to the conclusion that one cannot condemn an individual for the failings of an entire culture. While I abhor those who brought such personal grief to myself and my loved ones, I have managed to attain a level of respect and friendship with a few, individual Vistani. That stated, let us continue.

Although it is extremely unusual for a Vistani to exchange letters with an outsider such as myself, Cyrilla and I have been friends and colleagues for many years - ever since we joined forces against an especially vicious werewolf bent on destroying an entire village in northern Darkon. Cyrilla is a true sage, and I trust her observations implicitly.

Only last year Cyrilla wrote to me of a young Vistani woman, Cyrilla's own niece, whose impassioned dancing was the pride of the entire clan. The young woman, known as Vassa, had many suitors, but neither she nor her family found any of them worthy.

One particular young man seemed unable to accept Vassa's rejection. For days at a time he sat outside her family's wagon, praising the girl's beauty and dancing. She did not respond. After months, the young lad despaired and left the clan, cursing Vassa and her father. The boy left a note, vowing that somehow he would make Vassa his own.

Weeks passed and there was no sign of the lad. The Vistani assumed the boy was gone for good.

The creature dropped from the rafters, some thirty feet above, landing just behind poor Irina. Laughing horribly, the monster grabbed our companion by the neck, lifting her off the ground with a strength unbelievable in such spindly arms. Stili laughing, the thing broke Irina's neck before any of us, even the elf Darien, could move. Scampering away into the darkness, it left us with our dead friend and the echoes of its hideous, unstoppable laughter. I have never felt such unrepentant, alien evil as when we faced that laughing golem. I hope to never face such evil again.

If only this had been true. One month after the boy's disappearance, Vassa too disappeared. Exhaustive searching and the application of Cyrilla's formidable skills soon found the girl, but in body only. Although she yet breathed, nothing the Vistani attempted could bring Vassa back to consciousness. Eventually, the girl stopped breathing. Vassa was mourned and her body burned on a pyre, as was the custom of her clan.

The following year the clan was back in the section of Corvus where Vassa was kidnapped. One evening, the clan was celebrating a particularly successful trade when a whirling dervish appeared in their midst. Dressed in colorful skirts, adorned with bangles, the creature danced clumsily about the fire.

Cyrilla's own words best describe what next occurred:

The creature looked like some child's toy made of river clay and mud, and smelted much the same. With ungainly movement, it spun round and round the fire. I remember how the creature's ugliness intensified the gauzy beauty of its twirling skirts. Strange what we think of in times of true horror!

By this time the musicians had ceased to play, and all save myself had backed fearfully away from the monstrosity. But I stayed. Why? I believe I recognized something in the golem even then. The blood of the Vistani is strong, and I know my kin, Van Richten.

Awkward and out-sized, it lumbered up to me, until it stood within arm's length. Its stench was so foul my breath caught in my throat and my eyes began to water.

"Have you no kiss for me? No kiss for Katya?" it whispered tauntingly.

Oh, Van Richten, I had only called one person by that pet name. It was Vassa, she of the nimble feet and flowing hair. This lumbering form contained the spirit of the laughing, shining girl, but that spirit was now twisted into a hideous mockery of her former sweetness. I managed to speak to her only briefly before she struck out at me, but I doubt my words had any effect. I almost died that night, doctor. The strength embodied in that body was unbelievable. My magic protected me, but only just. I wish I could say I destroyed the golem that night, but I cannot. It was all I could do that night to drive the thing from our camp. Perhaps my powers were simply not sufficient, but I think my heart was also not in the terrible task. For although the monstrosity was intent upon my death, I sensed that some small shred of Vassa remained trapped within that lumbering body, aware of the horrible parody of life and beauty she had become.

I am convinced the boy who left our camp found some way to place Vassa's spirit in that hideous body. That one Vistani could do this to another is a great shame to our people. Van Richten, if you ever run into poor Vassa, you must destroy her. The human mind cannot even begin to comprehend the bleak horror of her new existence.

I have discovered several other occurrences in which a golem knows information only a particular loved one would know. We can only imagine the horror of finding oneself trapped in a golem's body, as one's humanity is slowly stripped away.

My only child, Erasmus, was placed in a similar situation when Baron Metus transformed him into a vampire. Erasmus came to me and asked me to destroy him, as he could feel his mind and his spirit twisting into some monstrosity. This I did for my brave, wonderful child. I can only believe that becoming a golem is just as horrible, if not more so, than what Erasmus experienced.

I have heard of but one instance where an individual was said to have been placed in a golem body, only to have the process reversed. The story was highly fragmented, and the source is suspect, but that does not mean the possibility should be discounted entirely. Where there is even a remote chance to save an innocent, people of conscience must strive to the utmost to reclaim that lost soul.

However, even if it is possible to reverse the procedure, I am certain there is an extremely limited period of time in which this could be accomplished. The reversal would need to be made before the original body died, although if the body could be resurrected it still might be possible to perform the reversal. An even, greater time limitation is the one imposed by the spirit

itself. It cannot be very long before all remembrance of the spirit's former life disappears and the individual's life force becomes irretrievably warped, or even dissolved utterly. I would assume that the window of opportunity for such a reversal would be anywhere between several days and a month in length, depending upon a number of variables.

Brain Transplants

When considering flesh golems, there is one more way in which a spirit might be placed within the creature's body. Though I know very little of this method and it is truly horrid to contemplate, I would be remiss if I did not present it: The creator may actually transfer the physical brain of a living being into the prepared vessel. It is truly maddening to think that the golem's mind may retain some knowledge of its former self - and know the great atrocity that had been committed.

When the creator of the golem transfers a living brain into the body of the Created, the spirit of the brain's donor is also transferred. Of course, without a brain to direct its function, the body of the donor soon perishes. Such a transplant cannot work if the donor perishes *before* the transplant is complete, however. A dead brain can serve only as an empty vessel for the dark or stolen soul, as described earlier. The operation on the living tissue is extremely delicate and must be performed quickly; else the brain will surely perish and the spirit with it.

If the operation is successful, the spirit of the individual is transferred. A significant jolt of energy is required to bind the spirit to its new form. I shall address this topic below. Note, however, that the energy required to bind a transplanted spirit may not be as great as that used to bind a dark or stolen soul to the abysmal prison that is the golem body.

Fusing Body and Spirit

Once the body of the construct has been prepared, and the spirit has been selected or attracted toward it, the most difficult and mysterious portion of the creation process is yet to occur. Somehow, through a massive surge of energy, the golem spirit is bound to the vessel. A metaphysically transfiguring fusion of body and spirit occurs, and the golem comes to life. The precise manner by which this process works is only guessed at by researchers more gifted than myself.

My own poor excursions into the realm of theory have convinced me that the required energy can be either physical or what I term *psychic* in origin. A third force - magical energy - may also suffice, though it could be coupled with another form. I shall address magical animations briefly below and focus on the other two energy sources first. Whatever the source, however, there is no question that animation is achieved on at least some occasions.

The exact amount of energy required is unknown, if not immeasurable. However, in the physical case, we can estimate it to be at least the amount of energy transmitted in a bolt of lightning. There have been several documented cases in which lightning has either animated a golem construct or reanimated a golem that was thought to be destroyed.

Other equally powerful sources of energy would presumably serve the same purpose. However, whatever physical energy is applied must come in the form of a *sudden* shock or jolt. A steady but less potent energy flow does not provide the catalytic energy needed to bond the spirit to the body.

The exact process through which the spirit, the life essence as it were, of a living being is removed from its natural body and placed within the golem is unknown. However, it is certain that the two bodies must first be positioned closely together. If physical energy is to be used, the jolt required for animation must then strike *both* physical forms either simultaneously or in quick succession. If the energy jolt does not affect the bodies simultaneously, the living body must be the first to be struck.

I have noted many instances of successful animation, including that involving my dear friend, Antonin Madren, where the available evidence fails to reveal any readily apparent source of physical energy. Given the absence of physical or magical energy, I believe that the body and spirit are fused and transformed by the sudden release of *psychic* energy.

The creation of a golem is an act of evil - this is my firm belief. Further, the creators are driven by obsessions which almost inevitably plunge them into madness. These obsessions serve to justify to the creator evil deeds ranging from the petty to the most heinous imaginable. The creators of these golems are in agony, and all too often they have placed innocent victims in agony as well.

I theorize that the mad obsession, the pain and suffering, and above all, the overwhelming evil associated with the creation of a golem coalesce as a crackling, swirling nimbus of psychic energy around the creator and his created. This energy builds

until the ultimate moment, when it suddenly reaches a transcendent peak at which it breaches the barriers between our material world and the darker world of spirits.

The surge of psychic energy draws the requisite spirit through the tattered barrier between the tangible and the intangible, into the vortex which is the Created. Whether the spirit is a dark and evil being which exults in its new-found form, or an innocent soul silently screaming against its fate, it has now combined with the physical shell prepared by the creator to form a golem.

I realize that at first blush this theory may seem radical, even somewhat wild, to some. Yet careful study and research will reveal that this theory in all ways comports with observed reality and provides a logical explanation for the otherwise inexplicable.

Every creator carefully chooses the materials used to construct his "child." Many choose the animating spirit, or personality, just as selectively. Some creators, such as the young Vistani man of Cyrilla's acquaintance, become obsessed with a specific individual and attempt to place that person's spirit within the golem.

The massive energy current causes the spirit to separate and transfer from its original body to that of the waiting golem. The transference understandably causes some degradation of the personality, including memory loss, confusion, and a return to a childlike state of being. I have heard tell of some very few people who maintained some memories of the experience and were able, with the help of their comrades to reverse the process.

I must say that the hope of such a reversal is exceedingly slim. Besides requiring the original body to survive another massive energy charge, the window of opportunity for such a reversal is very small for two reasons. In the first place, the original body will die in a matter of weeks without a personality residing within it. To keep the body functional for even that long requires near constant care.

Secondly, and most importantly, even if the new golem maintains much of its former personality, that personality is already degrading. Certainly within the course of a month the old personality will be utterly gone, replaced by a hateful, lonely, sociopathic creature with no hope of redemption.

Magical Energies

It has long been known that wizards, and to a lesser degree priests, can create certain types of golems, including flesh, bone, clay, glass, iron, stone. (The list of types animated through magic is actually longer, of course, but the permutations are not important to the discussion at hand.) The mages and priests who create these golems do so through a rigorous process of research and the casting of multiple spells. There are even rumored to be a few manuals holding the secrets of golem creation somewhere in this misty realm.

The "traditional" automaton created by a wizard or priest is the only golem a player character (PC) can create while in Ravenloft. In other words, only those PCs who are high-level wizards or priests can succeed. A player character may not even attempt to create the golems through obsession (the method discussed throughout this book).

Such an act hardly qualifies as a noble pursuit. The attempt to create life in this manner is suspect in any world. However, those who toy at such grand schemes in Ravenloft place themselves in special peril, for the powers of the Demiplane itself are apt to supply the spirit that will inhabit the vessel. Any character who does attempt to create a golem is subject to powers checks: one for every month of research or work. A powers check is also in order whenever the PC commits an evil act associated with the construction - robbing a grave, for example. The base chance for attracting the attention of the dark powers for making a golem is 10% in this case. (As usual, DMs should feel free to adjust this percentage to suit their campaigns.)

Thus, the PC who embarks on this course of action is following the path to self-destruction (DMs should make this clear to players). In no way should creating a golem be beneficial to a player character. It is an evil act, and usually proves fatal in time. Even if the PC succeeds, his creation will do everything in its power to free itself and turn on its creator (the PC).

I believe the creators of such golems enjoy more control over their progeny than the twisted personalities who animate a golem through their madness and obsession alone. This is not to say that these mages and priests do not risk their creation turning upon them, however. The risk is always present, and it grows over the course of time. Despite the research and methodical planning, despite the great intelligence of the creators, the eventuality is much the same. Even a golem created through magic grows to despise its creator. In time, the creator will lose control of the monster and face possible death at the golem's hands.

I take this to mean that the powerful magical workings involved in creating the golem and bringing it to life eventually involve the same dark forces that give shape to other golems in Ravenloft. The process may at first appear different due to the creator's greater degree of control, but this may simply serve to lull an incautious creator to his doom.

The Spark of Life

Astute readers may be wondering why the creators of flesh golems do not simply choose one body to house the darkling or stolen spirit that will bring it to life. After all, this is surely the simplest course of action. Instead of spending hours in dark graveyards and hospices, risking discovery many times over, the would-be creator could simply select an appropriate vessel that is whole. The vessel would also be seamless in appearance, physically impossible to discern from normal mortals of its species. Nonetheless, as I noted in the previous chapter, at least six bodies must be used in the construction of a flesh golem. I believe several reasons determine why no single corpse can suffice. Some involve the mindset of the creator himself. Others, which are alone is simply insufficient for this task. Furthermore, I suspect that the spark of life within a single body is too closely connected to the spirit of the person who once inhabited the vessel - and thus, the body automatically rejects an invading presence. Any portion of a corpse still retains that spark of life, although it is diminished. Thus, the spark of life within just one body may be insufficient, but when the life energy remaining in *several* bodies is combined, it may create a force great enough to allow animation. Furthermore, a body cobbled from multiple forms may not contain enough of any *single* personality's essence to prevent a new spirit from entering it. As I have stated, these are but theories; I have no proof to support my claims. However, one thing is assured: I have never seen, nor heard of, a flesh golem that was fashioned from fewer than six separate bodies (though some were assembled from more than twenty!). Thus, we can be reasonably assured that no single corpse may ever count itself among the Created.

March the Eleventh

To whomever may find this note:

I do not know how long I shall have before they come looking for me. But when I leave this world, I wish to hold the knowledge that I performed at least this one courageous act, however small, before my death. Would I had the strength to have opened my eyes sooner!

Now I must somehow set to paper the words which I can hardly bear to think. The child that my barren body could never bear has been brought into this world; even now it crawls through the halls of this fell place, somehow alive. But where a true child is a blessing, the thing below is a blighted curse! No child of mine.

Though he readily accepted my family's fortune, my husband could never accept my barrenness. His need for children was strong. But I neuer knew how strong, neuer thought of his need when the babies began to disappear from the neighboring morgue... until this morning when I discovered his journal.

He - a doctor, sworn to nurture and fight for the life of every patient - he took those poor infants and stole their chance for eternal peace. This very evening I followed him to his laboratory, and there saw a strange infant lying upon a table, wrapped in layers of dark blue wool. The smell of antiseptic was everywhere, the air so close I must have swooned. The next thing I remember was a horrid crashing sound and the scent of burning wool. Light dazzled my eyes, and it was a few moments before I could again see properly.

When my vision cleared, I saw him holding the infant aloft, exactly as I had seen him hold the babies of our acquaintances. But this - this thing was a deformed parody of those joyous infants, its arms and legs disjointed, its face deformed. And the silence! Such grave silence from a newborn. Then I saw the hideous eyes, the flesh, this child sewn together as a quilt is pieced, from the scavenged remains of -

Ah! He has found me... I write these final words even as he struggles to break down the door. He whom I took to be my husband but five years ago - he has determined to murder me to hide his secret. You who read this know that if I am gone, but my husband and his creation may yet live! I only pray this journal falls into the hands of good people who will use the knowledge to stop my husband and his child, and others like them if there is more such evil in this world!

- Evania Fairwind

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If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties.

- Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*

There are precious few certainties in this life; but too often we cling to them as two drowning men clutch at each other, each afraid to let go and swim for shore. Thus do they both lose what they most desired, and thus can we lose sight of the larger truths around us.

- Dr. Rudolph Van Richten,
excerpt from a letter to Cassien Attenberg

Constructions of Flesh

This chapter concerns itself with the fundamental physical and mental abilities of the flesh golem - the most prevalent variety of the Created, and the one with which I am most familiar. Following this, I shall address the flesh golem's more outwardly impressive traits. As we shall soon discuss, however, even a golem's most fundamental abilities are terrifying in their enormity.

When considering the traits of the flesh golem, we are faced with an immense task and little firm knowledge. Little, if any, properly conducted research has been done in this field. As a result, we are faced with a difficult situation. What do we believe and what do we discount? Too often we leap to embrace any information that only *appears* valid. Yet if we ignore facts not in evidence because they seem unlikely, then we may overlook some critical truth.

As I compiled research for this tome, I strictly ordered myself to proceed cautiously and with an open mind. I also vowed to be candid so that I might not mislead any reader into mistaking supposition for fact.

Thus, as I delineate the various characteristics of the flesh golem, I bid you to keep this caveat firmly in mind: *Golems are individuals*. While the term "mundane" may apply to a few unintelligent creations brought to life through conventional magic, in my experience such foes are the exception to the rule. True, each golem may share basic traits with others of its kind.

This chapter focuses on unusual golems made of flesh. Although there is no such thing as an "average" flesh golem, the statistics below reflect a golem's base ability scores. All statistical modifiers in this chapter build upon these base scores.

Base Statistics (Flesh Golems)

Strength 19	Intelligence 5-16	 Dexterity 18
Wisdom 3-6	 Constitution 20	 Charisma 6
Movement 12	 THAC0 11	Armor Class 6
No. of Attacks 2	 Hit Dice 9	 Damage 2d8/2d8

But it also may display unique mental or physical characteristics. Such unique qualities are especially apparent in flesh golems who were brought to life through the sheer will of their creators. Thus, one should view each golem as we do any villain who strikes from the shadows: a unique nemesis about whom we know little. In facing this lack of knowledge, we can, however, cling to one certainty: All golems are tremendously powerful.

Basic Physical Traits

In this section, I shall outline the physical traits of the flesh golem - specifically, its strength, dexterity, and constitutional fortitude - and describe how these traits may vary between individuals.

Do not allow any alarm you might feel at the brute physical power of the Created to overwhelm you. It is a temptation even I have succumbed to on occasion, falling into my old habits of over-intellectualizing to distance myself from the contemplation of such power. Ah! You see? I am still using my old defense even now. Do not be ashamed if you wish to do the same. After all, there is no shame in fear itself - it is an instinct that helps keep us alive. But when we are frightened, we must not deny it, lest our repressed fear cloud our thinking and keep us from properly assessing a golem's abilities. Such misguided thinking has brought about the death of too many good people.

Before we begin our analysis, I would remind the reader of the following: While all the information given reflects the typical case study, not all golems will conform precisely to this analysis. Some may be even more powerful, others less fearsome.

Strength

The profound strength of the Created can cause even the bravest of warriors to hesitate. I do not believe I exaggerate in saying that most golems are as powerful as some giants! This is all the more impressive considering the average flesh golem stands only seven to eight feet tall, and some individuals are much smaller. (Even the rumored-to-exist doll golems are said to be able to lift a full-sized human male and toss him about as if *he* were the doll. I would not be surprised to learn of a diminutive flesh golem who did the same!)

The basis for this immense strength does not seem to rely directly on the components used to construct the golem, although stronger limbs can certainly add to the golem's already formidable strength. Instead, it appears that the flesh (or other material) is tempered and strengthened during the tremendous energy surge that accompanies the creation process.

Big or small, all golems are strong. However, the size of a golem does affect its physical prowess-The average flesh golem is of Large size. But what of the golem built with a hill giant's torso? Or with a dwarfs bandy legs? Such modifications may result in unusual sizes, which affect Strength scores as shown on the table below.

Table 3: Size and Strength

Size Category	Strength Modifier
Huge (12 ft, or more)	+2
Large (7-12 ft.)	+1
Medium (4-7 ft.)	0
Small (2-4 ft.)	-1
Tiny (under 2 ft.)	-2

Golems with Strength greater than 19 can inflict more damage, as noted on the following table:

Table 4: Strength and Damage

Strength	Damage
20	2d8+1
21	2d8+2
22	2d8+3
23	3d8
24	3d8+1
25	3d8+2

Each cell burns with a new life, which apparently lends an unnatural capacity to the body as a whole. This tensile strength may in part aid the body in trapping or retaining an appropriate an animating spirit or essence.

Dexterity

Despite their often-lumbering appearance, flesh golems are surprisingly nimble and flexible. This account by my longtime scout, Markil, provides an apt description and warning:

"I'm takin' my shift at guard, sittin' in the tree near the fire like I do, when I see this big thing shufflin' towards me. I can't quite make it out, but I figure such a mashed-up lump of a creature can't be too much of a danger at the moment, being it's still fifty feet away. So's I turn my head to hiss down at Dr. Van Richten and get his attention, next thing I know, there's this pushing feelin', and I'm wakin' up with one mean headache. Guess it's just a good thing that golem hit me 'stead of tearin' me in two. You just never figure a thing like that can move so fast."

As noted in Chapter 1 of the Player's Handbook, Dexterity scores can affect a character's Armor Class (see the section titled "Defensive Adjustment"). The same modifiers can be applied to flesh golems whose Dexterity varies from the base score of 18. For example, a golem with a Dexterity of 21 has an Armor Class of 5 when defending against an attack that can be dodged.

Markil is correct: The deceptively clumsy appearance of most golems must never lull the hunter into believing his prey to be slow. I do not believe I have ever faced a golem who was not as fast or faster than the most dexterous of my companions, although I have read accounts of slow and fumbling golems.

The power of the creature was poetic, in the same manner as a hurricane or volcanic eruption achieves epic proportions. It seems I stood breathless for hours, gazing at the crags and fissures of the being's variegated features, It was as if the gods had decided this land of ours would not do, and thus sent this creature to tear it down so they could start anew. Those were my first impressions of the golem I had traveled day and night to confront, it was a monstrous thing, yes, but it had achieved a level of monstrosity so primal that it became as awe-inspiring as any force of nature.

- Astonby of the Oaks, as recorded by Taynesbert in *The Open Palm*

Once again, this remarkable dexterity does not seem dependent upon any particular parts or materials, although they may have some effect. If so, I do not yet have enough information to determine the relationship between specific body parts and quickness.

Constitution

Even more than it is strong or dexterous, the flesh golem is resilient. In fact, the fortitude of a golem is almost certainly the greatest of its physical traits, and I am yet in awe of it. These creatures rarely tire in battle, and they can resist many physical and magical attacks. Further, when they are harmed, their capacity to regenerate tissue is nothing less than phenomenal. The Created may well enjoy the greatest physical resiliency of any known creature. This much is true: Of all the foul and fantastical monsters I have fought, there is none - not even my especial foe, the vampire - that can match the golem in its sheer resiliency and physical fortitude.

The base Constitution score of flesh golems is 20. Such creatures can regenerate 1 hit point every 6 turns (i.e., every hour). A golem with a greater Constitution score regenerates at a faster rate, as listed in Table 3 of the *Player's Handbook* (see "Regeneration").

Mental Abilities

The mental capabilities of most golems can be impressive, though they certainly are not as formidable as the creature's physical traits. I shall address two aspects of the flesh golem's mind here: its innate intelligence and its telepathic talents.

The psychology of the golem - how it views itself and others - is a topic reserved for another chapter.

Intelligence

Travelers from distant lands often claim that a flesh golem has no more cunning than an animal. This is a grave mistake! Perhaps such people are fooled by the golem's often bestial, uncivilized appearance. Indeed, that appearance has led many an incautious hunter to underestimate his foe and pay for the mistake with his life.

Flesh golems do appear to lack certain advanced mental capabilities, however. There is no evidence that any member of the Created (flesh or otherwise) can appreciate art or grasp complicated philosophical or mathematical principles. On the other hand, I know of no reliable scientist who has spent any length of time conversing with a golem, much less making a serious study of its psyche or intellect. While the creator of a golem often attempts and even relishes such a study, he is incapable of impartial observation. Therefore, it is currently impossible to determine the precise mental limitations of the golem.

Where golems do excel mentally is in low cunning and the ability to manipulate and maneuver in order to gain what they desire. In fact, golems may well be as intelligent, in their fashion, as most humans. Further, it may well be that golems simply do not care about certain issues, and thus only devote their faculties to achieving their personal goals, whatever those might be.

I must offer one additional caution on the mental faculties of golems. Virtually all of the Created have indomitable wills. These monsters are capable of single-mindedly following a course of action for as long as it takes to succeed. Most assuredly, this is why so few creators survive once a golem decides it wishes its "parent" dead - the golem is relentless. My own departed friend and student Antonin Madren was pursued by his creation across several lands before that beast succeeded in striking him down.

The type of brain used determines a flesh golem's Intelligence score. As a general rule, the score is at least one rank below that of the brain's original "owner" (see Intelligence ratings in the monstrous manual tome). For example, a golem with the brain of a wereraven (genius) would be rated "exceptionally intelligent" (15-16), while a golem with the brain of a normal human would have a low Intelligence (5-7). This assumes, however, that the brain is relatively fresh and in excellent condition.

Note that even in Ravenloft, creatures built from a substance other than flesh are most often nonintelligent, following the standard presented in the *Monstrous Manual* book; they have no brain upon which intelligence can be measured. This is particularly true of golems created through conventional magic. However, any golem born of obsession and given life by the mysterious powers of Ravenloft could exhibit both great intelligence and a distinct personality; such exceptional creatures are described in Chapter Four.

If you ever discover a golem bent on a course of action involving the harm of others, you must immediately turn all your efforts to stopping the creature. Else you must find someone who is willing to do so themselves. Otherwise, who knows how many individuals could lose their lives to the will and power of such a creature?

Telepathic Talent

My brief conversation with Antonin Madren, the former student whose plight first introduced me to golems, indicated the golem he created was able to speak into his mind. Further, Antonin indicated that the golem seemed to always know where he was, and perhaps even what Antonin was thinking. Granted, Antonin was by no means in his right mind when he imparted this information to me. His feelings of persecution, hearing of voices, confused desperation - all are symptoms of paranoia, a psychological disorder.

Several times in the course of my research on the Created I have run across physicians' documents mentioning paranoia, delusional psychosis, and like diagnoses about an individual who (it was later discovered) had created a golem. Of course, the vast majority of individuals so diagnosed truly have the disorder in question, and are not the creators of golems. Nonetheless, I do feel it is always worthwhile to ask the village's physician, wise woman, priest, or other healer whether they have recently counseled anyone with such delusional or psychotic symptoms. At least once, an investigation of mine was solved by asking just such questions. On other occasions, when the creator had already been murdered by his "child," I

was at least given information helpful in tracking the golem in question.

The creation of a golem involves a sustained period of passionate, all-consuming commitment from the creator. Apparently, one element necessary to the success of the project is the need for a bond to develop between creator and Created. However, all evidence indicates that this bond is one-way only. The golem-child has great access to the mind of its creator.

A flesh golem maintains a unique telepathic bond with its creator. At will, the creature can see through the creator's eyes. This ability, coupled with an uncanny ability to know in which direction the creator lies, enables golems to track their makers with a skill no bloodhound could equal. The golem's telepathy is so invasive that the monster, in effect, knows its creator better than the creator knows himself. The creator can keep no desires, fears, dreams, or feelings from his golem. (In this sense, the ability resembles the psionic power of empathy, with no limit to range.) The golem's telepathic ability also enables it to "speak" into the creator's mind at will, regardless of range.

The telepathic power binding the golem and its creator lies solely with the golem. In other words, the creator cannot sense the thoughts or emotions of the golem. Nor can the creator intentionally send messages to the golem. This bond can be broken only if the creator is shielded by powerful magic. Even when the creator is so shielded, the telepathic "voice" of the golem can still reach him, though the golem may lose other benefits of the bond.

The bond seems to be a perversion of the special relationship an infant shares with its mother. As an infant draws sustenance from the mother, the golem apparently needs access to its creator's mind. However, the sustenance gathered from the poisoned mind of the creator inevitably drives the golem to hate its parent.

The Created seem to use their knowledge of their creators to torment and track their "parents." Most golems do not appear to read every waking thought of their creator precisely. Rather, they seem to gain fragmented images and emotions from their creator, enough to give the golems an uncanny ability to discern the creator's whereabouts and predict a creator's actions. This is undoubtedly the reason why so few creators of golems manage to escape the ministrations of their foul progeny.

When I state that the golems must have need of this perverse bond, I may be overstepping myself. Perhaps the only true reason the golem is given the "gift" of a telepathic bond to its creator is to punish the one who would bring such a horror to life.

Compilers' Note: This psychic bond does lend much credence to the good doctor's theory that at least some portion of each Created's "spark of life" comes from the twisted psyche of its obsessed creator.

- GWF

Creating Golems

As the DM, you may wish to create your own unique golem. This is highly encouraged; "personalized" golems are more interesting and far more frightening, since the players won't know the precise abilities of their foe without proper investigation.

The information in this chapter and the next provides a means for creating new, unique golems. It is assumed that each monster will be "fleshed out" as fully as any NPC, with enough depth to serve as the focus of an adventure. Although this book is mainly concerned with golems of flesh, Chapter Four offers suggestions for other types. In any case, a DM must make the following decisions when creating a new golem:

Who created the golem? It is very important to determine what kind of person created (or is creating) the golem. Each creator is driven by unique obsessions and needs. Deciding on a creator's background often determines many of the golem's eventual abilities and skills.

For example, if the creator is a physician, he might be obsessed with creating the perfect physical specimen.

Such a golem probably would be made of flesh, and might be more physically powerful than others of its kind. Or perhaps the creator is a writer obsessed with making a bizarre creature from his novel come to life. Such a golem might be a strange collection of animal and humanoid body parts.

What type of golem is it? Although most golems are made of flesh, it is possible to create golems from wood, stone, glass, and many other materials (see Chapter Four).

If flesh, what body parts to select? Traditionally, a minimum of six bodies must be used in the creation of a flesh golem: one distinct source for each limb, another for the torso and head, and one for the brain itself. It is certainly possible to use components from more than six bodies, however. Further, parts from exceptional humans or other creatures can give a golem unusual powers and abilities.

What are its extraordinary abilities? This chapter suggests unusual powers or skills that can set your golem apart from others of its kind. Such powers help keep the players off guard, and make the creature a more challenging opponent. Take care not to make your golem too challenging, however. In general, an individual creature should receive no more than one or two of these extraordinary abilities.

What are its peculiar vulnerabilities? *Monstrous Manual* entries for golems describe the common vulnerabilities of each variety. However, just as you may grant an individual golem an extraordinary ability, you should consider hindering it with an unusual weakness. The "zeitgeber" described in this chapter is just one example. Vulnerability to a particular form of weapon is another.

Most golems can be struck only by enchanted weapons. However, each golem type might also be vulnerable to a particular blessed weapon. Such weapons cause full damage to the susceptible creature. Note that the list below is optional; *Dungeon Masters* should feel free to devise a vulnerability tailored to a particular golem's history and physical type.

Table 5: Optional Weapon Vulnerabilities

Golem	Weapon Vulnerability
Bone	Blessed mace
Clay	Blessed pick
Flesh	Blessed pitchforks or spear
Glass	Blessed hammer
Metal	Blessed sword
Stone	Blessed pick
Straw	Blessed sickle
Wood	Blessed axe

Final Touches? The quality of craftsmanship and the physical state of body parts used can also have an affect on the golem's abilities - and it need not be for the better! For example, flesh golems do not age as a rule, but an improperly constructed body might well decay, presenting an ever more frightening visage to the PCs.

Biological Concerns

Issues normally addressed when discussing the biology of a species include essential bodily functions, nutritional requirements, and the like. Certain basic questions arise. For example, is the species mammalian, insectile, and so forth? Are they air or water breathers? I shall address such topics below.

Also of concern in a biological survey are reproductive characteristics, including mating rituals, gestation times, and the like. Golems do not reproduce (a limitation for which we may be thankful!), so these issues do not greatly concern us here. If a flesh golem were to seek a mate, it would be for purely psychological reasons, rather than a response to any physical drive.

In general, it can be assumed that flesh golems are closer to mammals in nature than any other type of creature. However, this is at best a loose association - a remembrance of the body's past, perhaps.

Odd Parts and Basic Traits

One of the easiest ways to create a unique flesh golem is through the use of unusual or exceptional body parts. Body parts taken from monsters, demihuman races, and even animals can affect the golem's basic ability scores and other fundamental statistics. (Unusual parts may also give a golem other extraordinary abilities, which are discussed below.)

The table to the right is organized by body part. Each subtable presents a range of creatures whose corpses might supply components to the adventurous assembler. However, the charts are by no means exhaustive. Further, they're provided as guidelines only; as DM, you should feel free to expand and adapt the information as you see fit. For example, if a maniacal MFC in your campaign creates a flesh golem using the arms of a hobgoblin, you could assume this option boosts the creature's Strength by 1 point, considering a hobgoblin is similar in Strength to a bugbear.

There is one restriction in regard to combining various creatures' body parts: *All parts used to create a particular golem must come from creatures within one size category of each other.* For example, the arms of a hill giant (size: Huge) could not be placed on the body of a human (size: Medium). However, the same arms could be placed on the body of a gnoll (size: Large). The monstrous manual tome lists all size categories for monsters and creatures.

Table 6: Effects of Odd Body Parts

Torsos

Hill Giant	+3 Strength
Ogre	+2 Strength
Bugbear	+1 Strength
Dwarf	+1 Constitution
Horse	+1 Constitution +1 Strength

Arms

Hill Giant	+2 Strength -2 Dexterity
Owlbear	+1 Strength +2 Damage (from claws)
Goblin	+1 Strength +1 Dexterity
Elf	+1 Dexterity
Gnoll	+1 Strength

Legs

Horse	MV 24; Extra attacks (2 rear hooves), damage 1d4/1d4
Elf	+1 Dexterity
Ogre	MV 9, +1 Strength
Huge Spider	MV 18, +1 Dexterity
Wolfwere	MV 18, +1 Constitution

Miscellaneous

Elf eyes	60' infravision, +1 Charisma
Giant Fly eyes	360-degree vision, surprised on roll of 1 only
Heart of a Lion	+1 Hit Dice
Heart of a Paladin	+2 Hit Dice +2 Charisma
Blood of a Bard	+1 Charisma

Life Span

By all accounts, golems do not experience physical development, nor do they age. It is possible that a golem's life span is so long that we, who live for but a moment by comparison, simply cannot recognize such gradual changes. However, for all practical purposes, we must assume that flesh golems can live forever. (Not surprisingly, this immortality applies equally to golems made of materials others than flesh.)

I base this assumption upon the experiences of others, as well as upon my own firsthand observations. There are legends of individual golems appearing and reappearing in a specific area over the course of centuries. (Most notable are those accounts of a powerful fiend who haunts the isles off the coast of Lamordia.) Of course, it is quite possible that more than one flesh golem might be at work in such tales. However, given the rarity of these creatures, and given further similarities noted by the witnesses, it seems likely to me that similar accounts spanning centuries do indeed describe the same creature. This certainly supports the notion of a very long life span.

It seems that flesh golems do undergo an initial period of mental development and are thereafter mature. Fortunately, there is no indication that golems gain power or prowess with age. On the other hand, neither do they seem to lose any power.

Golems do not age as a rule. Thus, they live until they're destroyed. Rare exceptions might include a flesh golem that was improperly constructed, or a creature condemned to aging by the mysterious powers of Ravenloft.

Respiration

It is still questionable whether golems have any need to breathe. Many observers have claimed that the creatures do; after all, most golems can generally speak and make other vocalizations, so it would appear their lungs are functional. My own belief is as follows: While many golems are *able* to breathe, few (if any) require air to sustain themselves. In short, they could suspend their breathing indefinitely without any ill effect.

I have heard of a peculiar flesh golem who has supposedly taken to haunting the seas west of Martira Bay, where his creator was a fisherman. Apparently, this golem can remain underwater for extended periods of time without sustaining any harm whatsoever. Of course, this ability may be a peculiarity of the particular golem, but I do not believe this to be the case.

Despite this phenomenon, if you should have an opportunity to bury a golem under an avalanche, for example, or to drown the monster, by all means attempt it. At the worst, such a tactic might afford you and your fellows some time to regroup? - a rare luxury when battling the Created! Perhaps the attempt will even be successful in disabling your enemy. Still, you must be ever vigilant. Never make the assumption your foe is truly defeated until all that remains of the fiend is ashes and nightmares.

All golems - flesh and otherwise - can survive without breathing. Thus, they cannot be harmed by being choked, buried, immersed in water, or by any other suffocating attack. Additionally, golems are not subject to spells that affect the respiratory system (such as *stinking cloud*, *cloudkill*, and so forth).

Nutritional Requirements

It is uncertain whether golems have any nutritional requirements whatsoever. If the creature needs no air to sustain its unnatural life, then is it not reasonable to assume it also can forego food? However, some few observers have noted that golems have the capacity to eat if they so desire. Of course, that still begs the question as to whether such golems eat out of necessity or for sheer pleasure. After all, many of us eat simply because we enjoy the act itself. Perhaps golems feel the same.

To my knowledge, only one golem has been held in captivity for any length of time. The danger of such a proposal is so prohibitive as to be almost unthinkable, yet I know of one group who attempted it nonetheless. May the gods look kindly upon their souls!

Apparently, the group included three brave individuals: the foreign mage Maya Junifell, the dwarf priest Taganaceous

Barrelfist, and the sage warrior Astonby of the Oaks (the same warrior-philosopher whose engrossing adventures are chronicled in Taynes-bert's epic saga *The Open Palm*). These brave friends and comrades managed to successfully battle the flesh golem into unconsciousness and place the creature within a specially prepared chamber.

Of the few scraps of notes later salvaged from the wreckage of their stronghold, one was an observation by Taganaceous regarding the golem's apparent hunger upon awakening. The monster almost immediately devoured two entire suckling pigs left within its enclosure. Taganaceous goes on to report that the golem refused all foodstuffs after that point.

Why did the golem eat the pigs? There are many possible reasons, ranging from fury and a desire to destroy to actual hunger and physical need. However, if golems do need to eat, it is apparently far less often than the vast majority of creatures. Unfortunately, no more than speculation is currently possible given our lack of solid information.

Flesh golems born of obsession need to eat flesh - that is, fresh meat or carrion - in order to replenish their physical body. However, only one meal a week is required. The flesh consumed is generally equal to that found in a suckling pig. If a golem goes more than one week without consuming flesh, it will begin to lose 1 point of Constitution per week. Once the golem eats sufficiently again, it will regain any Constitution lost at the rate of 1 point per day. (A smart party might be able to starve a golem under certain circumstances.)

Golems may also hasten their regenerative capabilities by consuming flesh, gaining an additional 2 hit points per turn spent eating. However, eating will *not* give the golem more than its initial number of hit points.

For further information on the regenerative abilities of golems, see below.

Zeitgebers

The parts making up a flesh golem's physical form may be seen as being fused into a single, living being. This fusing creates much of the golem's great strength and, in all probability contributes to their apparent immortality.

The golem's life appears marked by a monotony within as well as without. As I have stated, the creature's appearance and physical prowess do not change with time. Further, while some flesh golems are capable of eating and breathing, they do not need to do so - these processes seem but vestiges of the body's former existence.

Golems also lack any fixed cycle of activity and rest. In short, they do not require sleep. This information may not seem particularly relevant to our concerns, but in fact it is of great interest. Because the Created need no rest, they are able to pursue their activities relentlessly, without any hint of fatigue. This ability places golem hunters at a great disadvantage, as they most certainly need time for both rest and recuperation.

I can offer but one hopeful piece of information on this subject: Golems sometimes respond to *zeitgebers* (tsight-gay-bers). A zeitgeber is any natural phenomenon that triggers certain behavior in living creatures. For instance, many small mammals respond to the decreasing temperatures of winter by going into hibernation. Hibernation is thus triggered by a zeitgeber. In this instance, the onset of a season - with the accompanying drop in temperature and shortening days - is the zeitgeber.

The most common zeitgeber to which flesh golems respond is light. This response appears to reflect some fragile link to the past existence of the body parts - an unusual sort of "memory," as it were. In most cases, the zeitgeber causes the creature to enter a state of inactivity or comparative weakness. On several occasions, I have noted flesh golems suddenly ceasing their activities for a period of perhaps twenty or thirty seconds at sundown. It is an odd occurrence, and it certainly does not apply to all creatures. However, those that do exhibit this behavior are probably affected by this zeitgeber.

February the Third

This second day on the mountain, was perhaps the coldest I have ever experienced! Even wrapped in flue layers of silks, wool, and furs, my body became numb and I succumbed to a bit of frostbite. And the sun on the snow and ice: blinding! I feared I would stumble off the cliff face and tumble to my death before facing the thing that has terrorized the vilage of Uselix for twenty years.

The creature is rumored to be eight feet or more in height, rudely put together as if it were the cast-off plaything of some god-child. Its hands are said to be twisted and taloned, with the jaws and wicked teeth of the snow bear. Perhaps tomorrow I and my local hirelings will be able to bring down this terrible beast man, and I shall become famous!

- From the journal of Terrence Crannock

Of course, it is possible that certain golems may respond to other, more unusual zeitgebers. For example, I have heard one tale of a golem who was halted in its tracks by a particular melody, though I cannot be sure whether the effect was physical, psychological, or both. Such triggers, if discovered, can become useful weapons in the hands of a resourceful golem hunter. Although I would not count on your opponent pausing in such a manner, it is an interesting and possibly exploitable oddity of golem behavior.

The zeitgeber can become a key element in an adventure involving a golem. Golems *are* extremely dangerous foes, and providing an Achilles' heel in the form of a zeitgeber, or triggered behavior, can give clever players an interesting weakness to exploit.

A zeitgeber can also set a golem of your own creation apart from the ordinary. The list of potential "triggers" is endless. The sound of a certain musical instrument, the sight of an open grave, the scent of lilacs- these are but a few possibilities. However, a particular zeitgeber should not be chosen randomly. Rather, the zeitgeber should reflect some peculiarity of the monster's creator or the monster itself. This sort of zeitgeber is particularly atmospheric and emphasizes the twisted relationship between creator and creation that is at the heart of many golem adventures.

For example, imagine that the golem's creator is a musician obsessed with the notion of composing and producing the perfect opera. He creates a golem so that he might have the perfect tenor for the starring role. However, whenever the monster hears the strains of organ music, it begins howling uncontrollably in a parody of song. As for possible game effects, while "singing" the golem could suffer a -2 penalty to hit, or even be unable to initiate an attack (although it should remain able to defend itself).

The effects of a zeitgeber can be as unique as the zeitgeber itself. For example, the creature might attempt to kill anyone who brings the particular trigger into effect, or perhaps the golem would remember its former life for 1d4 rounds. Other possibilities for zeitgeber effects include the following: causing the golem pain; making the golem flee for 1d6 rounds; causing the golem to come running; making the golem unable to attack the person causing the zeitgeber; and causing the golem to take a particular action, such as dancing.

The DM creating a new golem is encouraged to devise unique zeitgebers for the creature, as well as the zeitgeber's unusual effects. A golem with unknown abilities and weaknesses will be much more exciting and horrifying than a monster whose abilities are utterly familiar to players.

Resiliency of Golem Flesh

The flesh forming the body of a golem is apparently greatly transformed during the creation process, becoming stronger, denser, and far less porous. It seems probable this is in fact *necessary* in order for the flesh to maintain its integrity. This process may be likened in some ways to the transformation certain trees go through in the forests of Keening. Some oaks in that desolate area petrify, their trunks developing a peculiar density similar to that of granite.

The transformed and strengthened flesh appears generally waxy in texture, save around the stitches. Such areas, traumatically sewn and fused together into a workable unit, appear reddish and angry. This effect may fade with the passage of time, however. Thus, a careful observer can guess at the relative "age" of a golem by observing the amount of inflammation around the site of any stitching.

Despite the great strength and density of the golem's flesh, there is apparently no loss of flexibility. In fact, Kenyard Brisbane, a former student of mine and devoted foe of evil in all its myriad forms, once told me he observed a golem who dislocated his own shoulder entirely - merely to reach a small rabbit hiding within a small hollow! According to Kenyard,

the golem appeared to have no qualms whatsoever about such self-mutilation, merely pushing the disjointed arm back into place after he had reached his quarry.

Of course, Kenyard's observations reveal as much about the golem's sense of pain as his flexibility. Given this and similar reports, I have come to believe that golems either do not feel pain or that pain does not affect them in the way it does you or me. The vast majority of humans and demihumans find it extremely difficult to function with a dislocated limb. This pain resistance (or lack of the capability to feel pain) is, of course, no boon to golem hunters. Though we may harm a golem, we can never be certain that such damage has impaired its capabilities until the moment the hideous creature actually falls.

All golems are utterly immune to poison and cannot be harmed by any toxin. Further, they are completely immune to disease, including magical maladies.

I'd like to end this section with an intriguing digression. Kenyard, my former student, noted another curious matter regarding the golem with the dislocated shoulder. Despite an apparent need for an occasional meal, the golem did not eat the rabbit once it attained it. Instead, the creature carefully ripped the poor creature apart and then stared at its remains for nearly an hour - as if the golem were performing some biological survey of its own.

Resistance to Toxins

The innards of the flesh golem appear just as rugged as the exterior tissue - as any hunter who has utilized poisonous gas (or poisons of any sort) against their kind can attest. Like all members of the Created, flesh golems are immune to toxins. This immunity serves as a further example that the flesh of the Created no longer functions in anything near its original fashion. Of course, this comes as no real surprise, since the flesh is "deceased" before being violently fused together during the reanimation process.

Weapon Immunities

The incredible density of the golem's flesh creates yet another difficulty for its foes. In most cases, weaponry must be magical to puncture or lacerate this tissue. A nonmagical blade or cudgel pushes into the yet-resilient flesh, but refuses to penetrate or draw blood. For instance, I once observed a fighter thrusting his sword directly into a golem's neck, but when the sword withdrew, the creature's skin was unmarred!

A flesh golem created in Ravenloft can be struck by weapons of +1 or better enchantment (see appendix for complete combat statistics). They are vulnerable to magical spells, except mind- or life-affecting spells such as *sleep*, *hold*, *charm*, or *finger of death*. Further, they can be struck by creatures with at least 4+1 Hit Dice (PCs do not qualify regardless of level).

Like all golems created in Ravenloft, flesh golems receive a +4 bonus to saving throws against physical damage, including spell effects. They are partially immune to cold and electricity. Cold or electrical attacks cause half damage, but do no harm if the golem makes a successful saving throw.

Fire and acid both cause full damage to flesh golems. Acid can be held only in glass or ceramic containers. A normal-sized flask of acid inflicts 1d8+2 points of damage.

A normal metal weapon that has been heated until it is "red hot" and glowing can also be effective against flesh golems. The weapon must be placed in a fire of considerable size and intensity - such as a large bonfire, raging furnace, or some other inferno. The heated weapon must be at least as large as a short sword; otherwise it softens and becomes ineffective. Further, the weapon must make a saving throw vs. magical fire each time it is heated, and a saving throw vs. crushing blow every time the hot metal delivers a blow. If the weapon fails a saving throw, it becomes too warped and/or blunted to be useful. Note that a weapon heated in this manner remains hot for 2 rounds only.

Flesh golems may be susceptible to *blessed* spears or pitchforks. As the DM, you should feel free to give an individual golem a unique weapon vulnerability. Try to tailor the vulnerability to the golem's story, however.

Moreover, to "draw blood" from a golem is at best a euphemistic notion. Flesh golems do not truly bleed. When the tissue such a creature is pierced, it oozes a watery, odoriferous liquid similar in appearance to plasma, though the smell is closer to that of rancid meat or a gangrenous wound.

It is interesting to note that nonmagical weapons do not *always* fail to harm the Created. Apparently, enraged mobs of peasants armed with mere pitchforks and firebrands have brought down a golem on several occasions. Nonetheless, if you ever plan on facing one of these monstrosities, I strongly recommend procuring as many magical weapons as possible. It may well mean the difference between suffering only a few losses and losing your entire party.

Basic Regeneration

*Power; like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches; and obedience,
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame,
A mechanical automaton.*

- Percy Bysshe Shelley, Queen Mab, III

One of the most horrific and yet fascinating aspects of the flesh golem's tissue is its capacity to repair itself at an extremely rapid pace. In a matter of hours, a golem can heal completely from a wound that would impair a stalwart warrior for days.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the regeneration rate of golems is based on their Constitution. Thus, regeneration rates vary between 1 hit point per 6 turns (20 Constitution) and 5 hit point per turn (25 Constitution). However, some flesh golems also have the ability known as *hyper-regeneration*, a phenomenal form of regeneration that takes effect when the creature's hit points drop to 0. Hyper-regeneration is explained later in this chapter.

Even more incredible is the sensitivity and adaptability of the flesh golem's system. In recent years, I have begun to believe that the Created have some unique form of regenerative capabilities, which are highly specialized. These powers of regeneration come into use when the golem is mortally injured. I can think of no other reasonable explanation for the uncanny ability of the Created to *fully recover* from horrendous wounds which had felled the creature only minutes before.

I have witnessed this phenomenon several times firsthand, but the first is yet the most vivid. I cannot begin to describe the depths of horror I felt on that fateful night. My battle - worn companions and I were celebrating the demise of our foe - when the very creature rose up in apparently perfect health! Alas, two more of our number perished before the golem fell again to our weapons and spells. Only my compatriot Nikita and I remained. This time neither she nor I rested until we had burned every piece of the golem's body to ash.

To this day Nikita refuses to hunt another golem, and in truth I cannot blame her. The wiry thief still claims the golem attempted to grab her hand and drag her with it onto its funeral pyre. Although I did not witness the event, being on the other side of the rather large fire, I do not doubt that the golem's great evil and tremendous will enabled such a final attempt.

Be forewarned, good friends! The creature you believe must surely be dead may instead simply be waiting for you to let down your guard before it resumes its attack, fully refreshed and functioning perfectly!

February the Fourth

Tonight I write from the confines of a tiny shelter, which my five remaining hirelings were able to carve out of the ice and snow. Outside, the storm that swept down on our poor group this afternoon rages still.

I grieve for the brave men of Uselix who lost their lives today. And all for nothing! Even as the first gusts of wind and snow

reached our group, the creature was upon us. I now know why the thing was so difficult to track. The monster was lying in wait for us, but not behind some rocks or trees. No, it was waiting beneath a layer of snow and ice precisely at the narrowest point in the mountain pass.

Our first man went down before we realized the creature's trap. From that point onward my memory is but a blur, a patchwork made up of dying men and that looming, rending, killing monstrosity. Worse yet, our weapons did not even seem to scratch the thing's hide...

- From the journal of Terrence Crannock

Reassembly

Even if you are fortunate enough to sufficiently damage a golem to the point where it can no longer regenerate, it would not be wise to leave any part of the creature intact. If the golem's creator is still among the living (or, the gods forbid, some other person attempts this!), he may well be able to repair his creation.

Any disassembled golem - be it flesh, metal, or otherwise - can be put back together and reanimated as long as at least 50% of its original parts remain available and intact (and in excellent condition). Assuming the body is repaired, the only requirement for reanimation is a simple bolt of energy; the life force of the golem is already within its body. The energy - typically a bolt of lightning - merely provides the necessary charge to the golem's "batteries."

This process of repair involves two stages: First, the creator reattaches the golem's body parts. Then, he recharges the golem through a burst of energy, which is normally a lightning bolt. Once reanimated, the golem is as powerful as it was before, showing no signs of the damage you and your comrades fought so hard to inflict!

February the Fifth

I have done it!

Sadly, however, I am the only remaining member of this expedition, and I owe my success to poor Tomas. It was, after all, his idea to place our weapons in the campfire.

As he stated in his simple, plainspoken manner: "It works with the wolves. Whenever there's a whole pack of them and only a few of us herders, we heat our weapons right up till they start to glow. You only do it with old weapons, on account of the blades sometimes break, but all you have to do is poke a wolf once and the whole lot of them takes off right quick."

I shall be sure to tell Tomas's family of his sharp thinking when I present my condolences to them. The lad's plan actually worked! When the horrid creature finally came upon us once more, we pulled our weapons from the fire and, our hands wrapped in wool, we faced off against the mighty creature. As soon as I struck the first blow I knew we could defeat the thing, for the weapons burned into the monster's flesh as if it were butter! The battle was bitter, but I prevailed!

Even now the thing's body lies just outside. On the morrow I shall attach it to the sled and bring home my trophy in triumph so that all might witness.

-Final journal entry of Terrence Crannock

Extraordinary Abilities

Golems are extraordinarily diverse creatures, each a unique reflection of its creator's obsessions and desires. As such, almost all golems have certain unusual abilities and powers which other creatures of the same type lack. Most golems have no more than two of these unusual or unique abilities, however. This is fortunate, as any power given to the Created beyond that

which they already possess is truly frightening. Such abilities can be very dangerous, but most particularly if they come as a total surprise to the golem hunter.

I have therefore attempted to compile a representative sampling of the extraordinary abilities that either I or a reliable witness has seen manifested in one of the Created. Most examples are not linked to a golem's physical body *per se*, but instead derive from the creator's particular reasons for creating the golem. I point this out by way of a warning: Such abilities might apply equally to golems constructed from a material other than flesh (although my research along this vein is admittedly less reliable). I shall also present abilities derived from peculiar body parts - the snout from a hound, for example, or the arms of two giant apes. Obviously, the abilities arising from such peculiar parts apply solely to creatures of flesh.

As you read the following descriptions, keep in mind that the list is only representative, it is by no means meant to be an exhaustive compilation of such abilities.

Gizella, the young girl I mentioned in my precious entry, lay curled on her straw pallet, the light from the flames bathing her flesh with the ruddiness of life. Relieved, I stepped forward, preparing to wake her: As I reached out, I noticed that Gizella's face. was turned toward the fire. But her body was turned toward the doorway opposite!

For the second time in as many days, I was too late. Being careful not to disturb the body, I noted the massive contusions and bruises ail along the girl's neck and shoulders. Brushing back her long, pale hair I found what I was seeking: the bruised imprints of the culprit's fingers, starkly malevolent against the pale flesh. Setting to work, I carefully measured the marks. It soon became obvious to me that the fingers belonged to no ordinary mortal. For what human or demihuman has the fingers of a human man on one hand and the fleshy claws of an owlbear on the other?

My horror at the untimely and particularly brutal murder of this unfortunate young girl, not yet seventeen winters old, has only strengthened my resolve. Tomorrow, I will send for Palovian and his group. After the evidence discovered tonight, I am conduced the golem created by Delona is murdering the youth of this village.

- From the journal of Dr. Van Richten

Animate Dead

I once faced a flesh golem who had the ability to animate any corpse it touched. The creature seemed to revel in animating the freshly killed bodies of its foes, and I remember with great sadness having to strike down the animated body of one of my companions in the very same battle in which he was killed.

The animated corpses were not golems, of course, but some sort of lesser undead creatures. Still, it would certainly be possible to be overwhelmed when faced by a large number of such animate dead.

A golem with the animate dead ability can animate and control a number of corpses equaling up to twice its Hit Dice. However, the golem can only give general, empathic commands such as feelings of rage. The golem cannot control exactly who its creatures will feel rage toward. (One exception: They never attack the golem.) Such animated corpses function as zombies.

Cause Despair

An encounter with any golem would bring about some degree of despair, of course. However, in the lower reaches of G'Henna, I encountered a flesh golem who could wield despair as surely as a warrior might wield a sword. This golem's victims were overcome with great melancholy and hopelessness, no matter how bold they might otherwise have been. To trigger the desired effect in a victim, the golem deliberately tore away chunks of its own flesh while moving toward its target. What made this terrible sight even more hideous was the creature's constant smile, as of some circus clown, leering evilly beneath its dead eyes.

Victims who succumbed to this despair would find themselves barely able to defend themselves, let alone cast spells or flee. I myself was fortunate enough to stave off this attack long enough to make my escape. Still, a wave of absolute lethargy and apathy came over me, and it nearly drowned my will.

Golems with this power can cause despair up to three times per day. To do so, the golem must consciously exert its will while simultaneously moaning, ripping at its own flesh, laughing, or performing some other action designed to horrify observers.

Anyone looking upon the golem must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or be overwhelmed by apathy and despair. Affected individuals can only defend themselves, and may not take any offensive actions or attempt to flee at a rate faster than a slow walk. This effect lasts as long as the golem remains in the victim's sight.

Cause Horror

Hataras the Quiet once told me of a golem whose hideous laughter nearly drove him to madness. The dwarf shook with fear as he related the tale, and he spoke in no more than a whisper. And this was nearly a year after the incident! indeed, he said he could not bring himself to leave his home for several weeks following the horrible encounter, and that the hideous laughter still echoed in his nightmares whenever his weary mind drifted into sleep.

I too have faced such a gibbering creature. No words could describe the chilling sensation that its maniacal laughter produced in me. Hardened warriors may faint and the most faithful of priests despair upon hearing such a sound, but all who do are sorely put not to give in to its debilitating terror.

Anyone hearing the gibbering golem's laugh must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic with a -2 penalty. Those who fail suffer the effects of a failed fear check.

Climb Sheer Surfaces

I have both heard and read accounts of golems who can climb sheer walls as easily you or I might walk across a room. While I personally have not witnessed such a phenomenon, the trait described reminds me of the vampire's ability to scale vertical surfaces, and I would not be surprised to learn that golems are equally adept.

Golems with this ability have an 85% chance to climb sheer surfaces (as would a thief). Some flesh golems also have other thieflike abilities. Such golems should be treated as 5th-level thieves when such abilities are gauged.

Disease Touch

It is possible for a golem to confer a highly contagious rotting disease with no more than its touch. Such a touch wreaks hideous results upon living flesh, and I am glad to say that I have witnessed the effects only once. If my experience and gathered accounts are correct, a golem with this ability secretes some sort of virulent pus from its pores. As a result, the creature's skin gains a moist, pustulant coating, which harbors the virus. The golem itself is immune to the effects of this disease, whose symptoms included blackened buboes (better known as pustules), high fever, delirium, and eventual death. The only treatment known to be effective is the priest spell *cure disease*.

I pray that you never run into such a creature yourself. However, if you notice that the skin of the golem you fight seems to constantly glisten, be extremely wary of touching the moisture - lest you contract this dread affliction!

Victims touched by the golem must make a saving throw vs. death magic. Those who fail this saving throw will be stricken ill, losing 25% of their original hit points per turn. When a victim's hit points reach 0, the character

falls unconscious. The victim will then lose 1 point of Constitution per day until cured (or until reaching 0 Constitution and death). Constitution loss is permanent. No normal or magical healing short of a *cure disease* or *heal* spell will cure this terrible affliction.

Energy Drain

This is one of many golem abilities that instill weakness and terror in those who face the creature. A golem with such a draining power weakens the victim by touch. The loss reflects a waning of the victim's spirit more than any diminished physical capacity. Yet this touch can be so devastating that the victim never fully recovers from the onslaught. Perhaps he will fall prey to illness more easily in the future, or simply feel a lack of energy and vibrancy. With hard work and tremendous discipline, however, much of the results of this touch can be relieved - as I well know from my own experience.

When the golem touches its victim, it can drain 1d6 hit points. There is no saving throw against this effect. Through both normal or magical healing, the victim can recover half the lost hit points (rounded down). Remaining hit points are permanently lost. The golem can use this ability up to 3 times a day.

Hyper-Regeneration

I have watched in horror as golems that were supposedly killed only minutes before have risen anew, in perfect health, to strike again. I can only assume that certain golems possess some sort of survival reflex, which causes a sudden upswing in their already rapid regenerative abilities. Thank the gods the monsters do not seem capable of this sort of healing at will; it only seems to occur after the creature is felled.

If what I surmise about golems is true, at least some of these creatures have a unique ability to "hyper-regenerate." This phenomenon might be best likened to our own bodies' ability to produce a sudden surge of adrenaline in a time of great stress. These surges can, at times, be so profound they enable us to perform heroic feats normally outside our capability. A young mother, for example, who otherwise struggles to carry a load of firewood, may heft a massive tree trunk if it has fallen and trapped her child.

Certain monks and other ascetics can learn, through rigorous training, to control their adrenaline surges and other physiological changes. However, I have neither seen nor heard of a golem able to do the same with its regenerative fail-safe. Pray to the gods that this is always the case. A golem with such abilities under its conscious control would be nigh onto unstoppable.

This accelerated rate of regeneration occurs when the golem's hit points drop below 0. At this point the regeneration rate rises to 10 points per round, and lasts until the golem is fully healed. The golem may rise at any time during this process (once its hit points are above 0); however, the creature usually waits until it has fully recovered before doing so.

Hyper-regeneration is one of the abilities that can be used for maximum scare effect on players. There is nothing more frightening than having the monster you just "killed" stand up in perfect condition a few moments later!

Spell-like Abilities

No golem can cast spells. However, the "stench of decay" described below is a prominent example of a spell-like ability - an extraordinary ability which mimics a particular wizard spell. It is only one of many, in a category that varies greatly in scope. Other possible spell-like abilities - those of which I am currently aware - are detailed below. Typically, an individual creature will boast only one or two such powers. Further, the golem cannot use a spell-like power as often as it pleases; three uses per day is the usual maximum, though some are limited to just one occurrence.

I believe such powers reflect the particular creator's skewed desires or obsessions. For instance, I have heard tell of a golem

who could cause darkness on even the brightest of sunlit days. Its creator apparently had a pathological fear of the dark. Additionally, I once read of a golem whose creator longed to be taken seriously by those who mocked him. The golem he later constructed could cause those who gazed upon it to begin laughing uncontrollably for minutes on end. Of course, this was not the laughter of harmless amusement - rather the racking, gasping sounds of a victim barely able to breathe due to the terrible laughter arising from his own throat.

It seems that a particular golem's extraordinary or unique abilities are more often than not mockeries of the creator's true desires. Ironic, is it not?

A golem's spell-like abilities can mimic any of a number of 1st- to 3rd-level wizard spells. The DM should feel free to choose any such ability that seems fitting for a golem of his or her own design. Though Van Richten suggests a maximum of three uses, that is exceptional. As a rule, a golem should be able to use any spell-like ability only once per day.

Stench of Decay

Cyrlia, the Vistani woman whose story I related earlier in this volume, told of the clay golem Vassa having a terrible odor. The stench was enough to make Cyrlia's eyes water, and she told me it was difficult to breathe while close to the golem. Cyrlia described the odor as a stench of decay, and I believe this to be an appropriate description.

When fighting a golem with such a stench it is wise to wrap a perfumed cloth about your nose and mouth; this can lessen the distracting and debilitating effects of the stench.

When facing such a stench, victims are allowed a saving throw vs. poison. Those who fail are affected as per the 2nd-level wizard spell *Stinking Cloud*.

Transferable Telepathy

As is described earlier in this chapter, all golems born of obsession have a profound telepathic link with their creator. This link is so deep that it allows the golem to know the creator better than he knows himself, sensing his deepest fears and desires. It also allows the golem to speak into the creator's mind at will.

The information I am about to relate stems from an extremely old tale, and I was unable to verify the source. Nonetheless, I find the possibility it presents so disturbing that I cannot in all good conscience ignore it. The fragmented tale describes a golem that could transfer its telepathic ability. Once the creature's creator was dead, it found another parental figure to latch onto! Of course, this unwitting individual failed to meet the golem's expectations, and he, too, met with a violent end.

According to the story, once the golem became linked to an individual, it would begin speaking into the poor victim's mind, causing that person to believe he was losing his sanity. Eventually, the link ended with the death of the new "parent," so being chosen by this golem was, in essence, a death sentence for the unsuspecting victim. How the golem chose its victims is uncertain.

A golem with this ability can sequentially use its power of specific telepathy. Once a golem connects to a new individual, it cannot simply decide to drop the link, however. The only way for the link to end is through death - either the golem's or its victim's.

Unusual Powers from Odd Parts

Flesh golems may also gain special abilities from unusual parts used in their construction. Whether from ego or as a result of twisted obsessions that we cannot begin to comprehend, some creators choose to assemble their golems from a variety of human, demihuman, animal, and even monstrous body parts - until the result makes an already startling creature truly

bizarre.

We were just bringing in the day's catch, and I remember spotting a particularly fine halibut in the net when the thing swooped down on us. At first I thought maybe it was one of those gargoyle things, but it didn't look like any gargoyle I'd ever seen. What it looked like was a nightmare come to life.

It's funny, but I can hardly seem to remember its face. What I remember best is the smell of the brine and the rush of the wind, and poor Neddie-boy's wide-open eyes right before it took him. I mean, the thing just snatched him up right out of the boat. Then it flew higher and higher. It had leathery wings, and its body was like something one of my kids would have stuck together. You know, like a doll made from the wrong-sized parts.! don't even know why It took Neddie, I mean - it wasn't for food. And it didn't even seem to want him. it Just flew up high and then dropped him onto a rock-like it had been some kind of experiment or something! Then it flew off. Neddie sure didn't deserve that... Heck, nobody does.

-Account of an anonymous fisherman

It is essential for the golem hunter to be able to accurately predict the abilities of the foe from an analysis of its appearance. To aid in this effort, the abilities derived from a representative sampling of the innumerable possible body parts are discussed below. Bear in mind that these examples barely scratch the surface of possible golem anatomy, and recall that it is always better to overestimate than to underestimate your foe!

Limbs. Both the number and the type of limbs that the creator attaches to a golem affect its powers and capabilities. This is particularly true of limbs that offered the "original owner" special abilities or provided modes of travel. For example, I have heard rumors of a peculiar creature inhabiting the jungles of Sri Raji. If the reports are accurate, the creature primarily travels by brachiating - that is, by swinging from tree limb to tree limb - through use of its long forelimbs, at an exceedingly rapid rate. These unusual limbs, presumably taken from some primate, grant the golem the power to utilize this swift and silent means of travel, and to attack its victims from above with little if any warning. Apparently, the creature even boasts a prehensile tail with which it hangs from above!

The potential combinations are almost boundless. I know of at least two tales of a golem with the wings of a giant eagle - these golems could fly. If a golem flies, we can assume this ability has a dramatic effect on the monster's choice of lair. Unfortunately, it also hinders our ability to both locate and destroy such a creature.

A golem with the body of a horse would move extremely rapidly and have the advantage of powerful rear-hoof attacks as well. Readers who use their imaginations can surely come up with a number of other possible abilities as well. What is important is that the hunter always attempt to remain open and flexible in his thinking about golem abilities.

Sensory Organs. A creator often chooses to use eyes, ears, or other sensory organs from nonhuman sources for reasons other than aesthetics. Those delicately shaped elf eyes which "grace" the golem's brow grant the golem not only visual acuity but the ability to see into the infrared spectrum as well. The use of ears from species with exceptionally keen hearing grant that same sharpness to the golem.

A golem that once dwelled near Dervich was reputed to have tracked its prey by scent, with the aid of the bloodhound's snout grafted to its humanoid countenance. The hunter should always assume that the golem's senses are far keener than his own.

Other Body Parts. In addition to these relatively mundane organs and limbs, many fantastical appendages could be attached to the golem.

Astonby of the Oaks once wrote of his encounter with a flesh golem equipped with the eyes of a giant fly and the stinger of a giant scorpion. These appendages gave the golem a nearly 360-degree range of vision, as well as an additional poisoned attack. I've also heard of a golem with the tongue of a giant frog. Apparently, the golem used the tongue to snag small prey, which it then proceeded to ravage. It also used the tongue to gain a stranglehold on larger victims.

While the list could continue indefinitely, these examples provide the reader with a good idea of the range of physical combinations possible among the Created. I find it ironic that a mad scientist might labor year after year, performing countless dissections in his quest for knowledge concerning life, then ultimately stitch together a creature about whose

abilities he knows almost nothing. Indeed, many creators die at the moment they first glimpse the true potential of the golem - at the moment their creation turns against them and strikes them down.

For DMs constructing a unique golem, peculiar body parts offer nearly boundless possibilities. The powers arising from such parts can truly surprise and frighten players. Below are several examples of the abilities which flesh golems might gain from exotic parts.

Gargoyle Wings: These wings allow the golem to fly at a rate of 15 (D or E). Additionally, the golem appears even more terrible, causing a -1 penalty to any fear checks made in its presence.

Monkey's Tail: This prehensile tail enables the golem to swing from tree limb to tree limb at a rate of 12.

Giant Scorpion's Tail: This tail gives the golem an additional attack. If the attack hits, it causes 1d4 points of damage and the victim must successfully save vs. poison or lose an additional 2d4 hit points. The venom of the golem's tail can be used only three times a day.

Mage's Brain: A golem with a mage's brain can cast one 1st-level spell per day. This is a variation on (or rationale for) the spell-like abilities of some golems.

Basilisk's Eyes: These eyes do not grant the golem the ability to petrify its opponents. However, they do manage to force anyone looking at the golem's face to successfully save vs. paralyzation or be unable to attack for one round due to a sudden, short-lived paralysis.

Blood of a Cheetah: This blood allows the golem to triple its movement rate for 1d4 rounds. This ability is usable once per day.

The untaught peasant beheld the elements around him, and was acquainted with their practical purposes. The most learned philosopher knew little more. He had partially unveiled the face of the Nature, but her immortal lineaments were still a wonder and a mystery.

- Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Unusual Materials

In this chapter I shall discuss those rare creatures made of substances other than flesh. I have reliable information that each of the materials herein has been used in the construction of at least one golem. In some cases, I can provide firsthand information. In others, I can only provide secondhand information and my own hypotheses.

Although I cannot be entirely certain of these secondhand sources, I firmly believe it is better to err by offering the reader some potentially false or misleading information. It would be tragically irresponsible of me to hold back some information just because I believe it may hold relatively little merit or even be entirely specious. I will not make for you a decision on which your very life, and the lives of your companions, may rest.

That said, let us begin our examination.

This chapter describes golems created by obsessive nonplayer characters (NPCs) in Ravenloft. As such, they should be rare and unique, like the characters who fashioned them.

These unusual creatures do not necessarily match the descriptions in the *Monstrous Manual* tome or the *Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium* appendices. For example, the golem made of metal as described below does not precisely match the description of the iron golem in the monstrous manual book, though strong similarities remain. Further, only a priest or good alignment can create the common clay golem. In contrast, the monster presented here might be the creation of a mad sculptor who fashioned his vision of the perfect woman, and then brought his sculpture to life.

Note that basic ability scores are given for each of the golem types in this chapter. These are base scores only. The DM is encouraged to modify scores as she sees fit, depending on the specific type of stone used in a stone golem, the pattern of glass used in a glass golem, type of wood, and so forth.

Potential strengths and vulnerabilities of each type of golem are also mentioned. The list is by no means exhaustive. In particular, any golem could boast one or two of the extraordinary abilities listed in the previous chapter (the only exception being an ability based on the use of flesh, of course). Further, a golem might be subject to an unusual zeitgeber, and be vulnerable to a particular blessed weapon. As always, you should feel free to create unique golems and adjust the experience point totals accordingly. Match your golem to the idiosyncrasies of its maker, using the suggestions in this chapter as examples of the wide range of possibilities.

Note that any material-specific strengths and weaknesses listed in this chapter are in addition the features common to *all* golems, which can be summed up as follows:

- ☼ Can only be struck by an enchanted weapon (+2 or better for every golem noted except straw and flesh)
- ☼ Immune to toxins and disease
- ☼ Immune to mind- and life-affecting spells
- ☼ Gain a +4 bonus to saving throws against physical damage
- ☼ Do not age or breathe

Bone

One might imagine that a bone golem is simple to assemble; bone is quite easy to obtain, after all, and it does not degrade as swiftly as flesh. However, while a flesh golem can be constructed from the dead, a bone golem must be fashioned from the undead (or bones formerly so). By all accounts, bone golems are only viable when constructed from once-animate skeletons that have been defeated in combat. Further, at least ten different skeletons must be combined to create the monster. I cannot say what necessitates such measures; I only know that without them, the would-be creator is unable to fashion a thing as powerful as a golem.

Bone has a number of drawbacks when compared to flesh (which, of course, might be viewed as advantages by a golem hunter). First, this material is not as adaptable or resilient. Thus, bone golems do not appear to have the same level of regenerative ability as do flesh golems. Second, I believe that bone may actually become somewhat brittle over time, which suggests a susceptibility to shattering attacks.

A devoted golem hunter and adventurer of my acquaintance, Hataras the Quiet, has noted that blunt weapons seem to have a far greater effect on golems constructed of bone than do swords and other slashing weapons. This makes sense, as most skeletal creatures are not particularly susceptible to slashing or piercing attacks.

Only a weapon of +2 or greater enchantment can hit bone golems. When struck, a golem has a 10% chance to trap the weapon within its rib cage. An opponent must make a successful bend bars check to withdraw the weapon.

Like skeletons, these golems suffer only half damage from edged or piercing weapons. However, a *shatter* spell makes a bone golem more vulnerable; for three rounds the spell is cast, damage suffered from weapon attacks doubles. (Thus, edged weapons cause full damage, while blunt weapons cause double.) The golem is allowed a save vs. spell to avoid this effect. Bone golems are immune to cold but vulnerable to fire. They regenerate at only half the normal rate from fire attacks, so a golem with a Constitution of 20 would regenerate 1 hit point of fire damage every 12 turns.

Bone golems animated by powerful wizards can emit a laugh so horrifying it prompts both fear and horror checks. Failing one check causes *paralyzation* for 2-12 rounds; failing both causes death. Most bone golems animated through obsession can also emit such a laugh. However, the creatures described in the *Ravenloft MC* appendices to the use this ability once every three rounds. Those animated through obsession are limited to three uses per day. Ironically, this can make them more powerful in combat, since they can use the power in consecutive rounds.

Golem, Bone: AL N; AC 0; MV 12; HD 14; THACO 7; #AT 1; Dmg 3d8; SA see above; SD see above; MR Nil; SZ M; ML Fearless (20); XP 18.000. Str 19; Dex 18; Con 20; Int 12; Wis 2; Cha3.

Clay

Clay can be found within many riverbanks and cliff sides throughout many lands. Normally, this material is used in the construction of pots, urns, and other items of great use to all. Unfortunately, this pliant material can also be formed into the body of a golem.

When used in the creation of golems, clay provides a strong, solid body. Several years ago, while battling a clay golem in the fens near Rivalis in the West, I and my companions were horrified to discover that traditional weapons have little effect upon the soft clay. Our swords and maces appeared to damage the golem not one whit. Fortunately for us, Antalya, our mage, used several fire-based spells on the creature. Although the flames themselves did little damage to the monstrosity, the heat from the fires apparently hardened the clay such that the creature's flesh did not dissipate the force of our physical attacks.

Setting to work with renewed vigor, we managed to shatter the golem. Our stalwart fighter, Porren, was still celebrating his shattering blow when I first noticed the clay begin to soften and reform. Several members of our group were greatly injured at the time, so we decided it to be the better part of valor to retreat and plan our strategy anew. Unfortunately, we could not

again find the Golem of the Fens, as locals call it, again. For all I know it is still wandering those very fens to this day.

The clay golems outlined in the *Monstrous Manual* tome are fashioned by lawful good priests. They are clumsy and unintelligent, and they may become rampaging berserkers should they break free of their masters' control. But a golem molded from clay by an obsessed creator can differ markedly, for it is given life and intelligence by the mysterious powers of Ravenloft.

Only blunt weapons of +2 or better enchantment can strike a Ravenloft clay golem. Due to the pliant nature of its body, the creature normally takes half damage from all weapons. On an attack roll of 20, the golem can envelop an opponent, inflicting 1d6 points of damage per round. Only a successful bend bars roll will free the victim. (If it should suit the creator, an unusual clay golem might also elongate its limbs, enabling it to attack opponents up to 20 feet distant.)

Ravenloft clay golems take *full* damage from both heat- and cold-based spells. These magic spells make the flesh somewhat brittle. For three rounds following such an attack, the clay golem takes full damage from all weapons of +2 or greater enchantment.

Like any clay golem, a Ravenloft creation can be driven back 120 feet by a *move earth* spell, suffering 3-36 (3d12) points of damage. *Disintegrate* slows the creature for 1-6 rounds and causes 1-12 (1d12) points of damage. An *earthquake* spell focused on the creature can halt it for a turn and inflict 5-50 (5d10) points of damage.

After a round of combat, a clay golem can cast *haste* on itself for 3 rounds. It can do this once per day.

Golem, Clay: AL N; AC 7; MV 7; HD 11; THACO 9; #AT 1; Dmg 3d10; SA hug; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; MR Nil; SZ L; ML Fearless (20); XP 11.000. Str 20; Dex 16; Con 20; Int 10; Wis 2; Cha 5.

Glass

According to some sages I have consulted, a powerful wizard or priest might fashion a golem out of stained glass. Such creatures take the form of a knight wielding a deadly sword. While I have never encountered such a monster personally. I have seen evidence of another unique creature of the same material, which was clearly the result of its maker's obsession.

When I began my quest to thwart evil long ago, I heard several legends about a terrifying "lady of glass." I never found any reliable evidence, however, so I discounted such tales as mere fancy. That was before I discovered a firsthand account of precisely such a golem, purely by accident.

I was visiting a remote monastery in Darkon to learn more about liches - those dreadful, undead mages. The monks had graciously consented to give me access to their old records. While the information I sought eluded me. I did discover an intriguing letter among some faded documents, it told of a master glass craftsman with a burning hatred for priests. Thus did I uncover the following description of a lovely golem made of glass.

... and thus we ended the holy service consecrating our new chapel to our most wondrous and revered lady of the Solemn Vacs. What happened next was so foul, so horrid, that my hand quavers even as I write to you. my lord. I beg you to forgive this tailing, but I have slept little since that dreadful dawn. and I can still see the terrifying beauty of the thing in my mind's eye. As I described to you in some detail in my precious missive, the entire front wall of the new edifice was a paean to our serene lady, She of the True Word. It was built entirely of glass by a single craftsman who worked ceaselessly to finish his masterpiece, forgoing even sleep. As the last notes of music faded to quiet that fateful morn. The dawn's light touched the wall of glass. The colors were dazzling. and I wept at the beauty I had been blessed to see. Now I wish that same beauty had blinded me, as then I would not have seen the deaths of so many good folk!

Seconds after she chapel was suffused by the colored light, the image of our Lady. some twenty feet in height, broke away from the wall and began her attack. Some of us cast ourselves to the ground, certain we had trespassed against our goddess in some manner.

But I saw the tiny form of the craftsman standing in the doorway - his face red, yellow, and green in the reflected light. Such an expression! His face was suffused with such twisted hatred that I could not bear to look on it. any more than on the violent deaths of so many of my fellows. I am ashamed to admit I fled in the face of such horror. but...

The tale of the golem ends there. I believe this to be a fairly accurate account. The chapel itself was surely destroyed in the attack. Although I have been unable to find its exact location. I believe it may have once stood in what is now the Mount Nirka region of Darken. It is probable that the golem is yet in existence to this very day. as there was a report of just such a creature being sighted no more than twenty years ago.

Although information is minimal, I would think it likely any golem of glass would favor slashing attacks. It might also be able to use certain properties of glass to its advantage, such as heat conduction and the like.

The *Monstrous* manual book introduces a golem of stained glass, which takes the form of a knight and can be fashioned by high-level priests and wizards. Like such golems, the glass golem born of obsession can unleash a prismatic spray (see the spell in the *Player's Handbook*) once every 3 rounds. Additionally, such a glass golem may be able to focus a burning ray through its body at targets up to 100 feet distant, causing 3d8 points of damage. A successful saving throw vs. paralysis halves this damage. The burning ray attack can be used only once per day, and the golem must be exposed to direct sunlight.

Regardless of their origin, only blunt weapons of +2 or greater enchantment can strike glass golems. Due to their relative fragility, glass golems suffer double damage from such attacks. Additionally, a shatter spell weakens them to the point where melee attacks have a percentage chance equal to twice the points of damage inflicted of instantly slaying the golem.

Golem, Glass: AL N; AC 4; MV 12; HD 9; THACO 11:#AT 1; Dmg 2d12; SA see above; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 20; XP 6,000. Str 18; Dex 17; Con 20; Int 12; Wis 2; Cha 12.

Metal

I have heard tales of golems made of iron, though I have never faced one. Presumably, almost any metal could be used. Yet the difficulty in procuring enough of a particular metal and then working it into a suitable form is prohibitive for most individuals. Thus, metallic golems are among the rarest of all.

It is fortunate, indeed, that the above is true. for it would seem plausible that a golem constructed of metal would be so tough as to be nigh unto indestructible. However, the former supposition may also imply that these golems are not as easily reanimated as the golems fashioned from other materials.

It you are ever so unfortunate as to face a metallic foe. I would advise relying on cleverness and trickery, as opposed to brutish physical assaults. to defeat your unnatural foe.

Unusual metallic golems can only be struck by weapons of +2 enchantment or better. (Only +3 or greater weapons can strike iron golems. See the *Monstrous Manual* tome for details.) All magical weapons inflict only 2 points of damage to the metallic monster created through obsession, not including strength and magical bonuses. Fire does not normally damage metal golems. (In fact, for the common iron golem, magical fire actually heals 1 hit point per Hit Die of damage; DMs may wish to adapt this ability for other metal golems, too.)

Metal golems are incapable of *hyper-regeneration*. Additionally, electrical attacks *slow* such creatures for 3 rounds. If the creature is struck by an electrical attack while touching water, triple damage is incurred.

Golem, Metal: AL N; AC 3; MV 6; HD 18; THACO 3; #AT 1; Dmg 4d10; SA Nit; SD +2 or better to hit; MR Nil; S2 L; ML 20; XP 15,000. Str 24; Dex 17; Con 20; Int 9; Wis 2; Cha 7.

Stone

This material suffers much the same strengths and weaknesses of metal mentioned above. However, if the constructor is both patient and skilled, stone is often a far less costly material with which to work.

According to the noted dwarven scholar Abordicus Slategrinder, several appearances of stone golems have been recorded in his homeland of Dubkelheit in Lamordia. Abordicus describes those golems as extremely slow, methodical, and almost invulnerable. Indeed, when faced with stone golem bent on their destruction, one dwarven clan became so desperate they triggered an avalanche to bury the creature. In the process, over half their town was destroyed.

Golem hunters must sometimes take such extreme measures to rid the world of the Created.

Only weapons of +2 or better enchantment can strike a stone golem born of obsession in Ravenloft. Further, slashing and piercing weapons cause only 1 hit point of damage, not including strength and magical bonuses. Unusual golems constructed from slate or other brittle stone take double damage from magical bludgeoning attacks.

Like any common stone golem, up to three times per day the golem born of obsession can use *slow* on its opponents. Stone golems built from igneous rock inflict an additional 1d8 points of damage per attack due to the stone's jagged edges.

A *rock to mud* spell *slows* the stone golem for 2d6 rounds. (The reverse, *mud to rock*, heals all damage!) A *stone to flesh* spell makes the golem vulnerable to all normal attacks during the next round - excluding spell effects that do not involve the loss of hit points.

Golem, Stone: AL N; AC 5; MV 6; HD 14; THACO 7; #AT 1; Dmg 3d8; SA slows opponent; SD see above; MR Nil; SZ L; ML Fearless (20); XP 9,000. Str 22; Dex 17; Con 20; Int 9; Wis 2; Cha 8.

Straw

Though magically animated scarecrows have been known to stagger through the countryside, bent on murder, straw is rarely employed in the construction of an intelligent golem. When such a material is used, it is always due to its peculiar significance to the creator.

I have heard of one such occurrence of a straw golem, however. The halfling farmers residing near Delagia in Darkon have long believed that an intelligent creature made entirely of straw wanders the plowed fields of their countryside. As legend has it, a farmer by the name of Casdin refused to pay the taxes required of him by local law. After months of this flagrantly illegal behavior, the governor sent several members of the local guard to either collect the monies due or take Casdin into custody. The men disappeared.

A larger group was immediately dispatched to apprehend the farmer, now suspected of the far greater crime of murder. Casdin reportedly went quietly, insisting all the while the men had never reached his establishment. This seemed unlikely, and Casdin was placed in a cell in the guardhouse for the night. That very night both the men guarding Casdin, the governor, and the farmer himself disappeared.

Enraged, the governor's lieutenant sent the captain of the guard and ten of his men to retake Casdin. When the group reached Casdin's farmhouse, they discovered it had burned to the ground. The acrid scent of burning flesh drew the guards to the barn, which was untouched by the fire. Within lay the body of Casdin, burned but still recognizable. His fists, cut and scraped, were tightly clutching a bunch of straw.

Though they were reluctant to unbar their door, the neighboring family was questioned later that day. They described what they had seen: a scarecrow carrying Casdin's limp form from his burning home. The creature's straw head was wreathed in flames as it headed into the barn, where Casdin's body was eventually found.

Later, it was also noted that several pieces of straw were found in the governor's bedroom. No other similarity linked the missing governor to the charred corpse of Casdin.

To this day, local farmers refuse to place scarecrows in their fields, lest Casdin's creature take umbrage and burn their own fields and homes to the ground.

As I noted at the onset of this section, the golem I have just described is not a magically animated scarecrow. The golem is a vastly superior opponent. To distinguish which foe you've encountered, I suggest you examine the head. In all likelihood, the straw golem born of obsession will be constructed solely of straw, though the material may be stuffed into clothing. In contrast, the evil scarecrow's head will almost assuredly be a pumpkin or gourd. Truth surely is stranger than fiction, is it not?

The creature outlined here should not be confused with the scarecrow described in the first *Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium* appendix (even though the scarecrow is classed as a relatively weak form of golem in the monstrous manual tome). The straw golem born of obsession is immune to all fire-based attacks. It can summon a flock of ravens, which will attack the golem's opponents. The ravens surround the golem's opponents, blinding and pecking at them. These golems also have a 90% chance to surprise opponents when hiding in a field or similar environment.

Weapons of +1 or greater enchantment are needed to hit a straw golem. (Note that most golems given life by the mysterious powers of Ravenloft are immune to +1 weapons; the straw golem is weaker,) Magical edged weapons cause double damage to these golems. Additionally, if a straw golem is hit by water, it is *slowed* for 3 rounds (as per the spell).

Golem; Straw: AL N; AC 5; MV 12; HD 9; THACO 11; #AT 2; Drug 2d6/2d6; SA raven flock; SD immune to fire, +1 or better weapon to hit; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 20; XP 3,000. Str 18; Dex 19; Con 20; Int 12; Wis 2; Cha 6.

Wood

The time-honored skill of woodcarving continues to be a common practice in villages and towns throughout the land. Most carvers use this skill to create items ranging from the most practical of bowls to the most fanciful of sculptures. Unfortunately, I have heard that some carvers have turned this same skill toward the creation of wood golems.

Although wood golems tend to be smaller in stature than most, they are still vicious opponents and should not be discounted in combat. Some wood golems are said to have a painful splintering attack in which they drive wickedly pointed shards of wood into the victim's flesh. The shards supposedly work inward, towards the victim's heart, inflicting additional damage upon the sufferer.

The wood golem introduced here is not the Ravenloft doll golem. The tatter creature is a toy that may or may not be made of wood. (Most doll golems, in fact, are stuffed animals or dolls of mixed materials.)

Wood golems do not bite or cause their victims to laugh uncontrollably, as doll golems can. However, the creatures do boast an unusual splintering attack. By smashing a limb against a solid object, a wood golem can cause 1d4 large splinters to fly from its body (range 30 feet). If a splinter hits its target, it burrows into the flesh, causing 1d4 points of damage per round until removed. Further, unlike doll golems, wood golems are not *slowed* by the *warp wood* spell. In fact, the creatures can themselves *warp wood*, three times per day.

Most wood golems can only be struck by weapons of +2 or better enchantment. If the golem is constructed of petrified wood, however, a +3 weapon or better is required. Magical fire attacks cause double damage. Additionally, these golems suffer twice the usual amount of damage from magically summoned insects (*summon swarm*, for example). Golems made from ironwood are *slowed* for 3 rounds by electrical attacks.

Golem, Wood: AL N; AC 6; MV 12; HD 12; THACO 8; #AT 2; Dmg 2d8/2d8; SA splinters; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 20; XP 6,000. Str 19; Dex 18; Con 20; Int 9; Wis 2; Cha 7.

Compilers' Note: Since Dr. Van Richten wrote the above text, he continued to collect stories regarding golems made of

other, unusual materials. Since his disappearance, we have collated these sparse notes into the following list. We have not, yet, been able to determine the degree of truth behind these "new" creatures, thus at present, we have no concrete details on the gargoyle, doll, zombie, or mechanical golem.

- LWF

All four of these golem types can be found in the collected Monstrous Compendium Appendices I & II (TSR #02162).

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The young priestess Irena was too naive for her own good. In an effort to understand the creature's torment, she attempted to look into it's mind. 'Twas then, I beleive, that she began to lose her own. Of course, when the object of her pity used it's hideous claws to pluck out her lover's heart, her miserable fate was sealed.

- Fragment of a diary

Golems & Magic

The magical abilities of golems are as diverse as the creatures themselves. Further, there is much variation in the effect that magic has upon them - so much so that I hesitate to put forth my observations on the subject, lest my words be taken as fact. Thus, the information in this section should be viewed as educated assumptions, studied estimation, and cautious advice.

Magical Powers

While some golems have innate abilities that mimic certain spells (see Chapter Three), I have never heard of a golem that could actually cast a spell of any kind. What an unspeakable horror such a creature would be! Fortunately, the Created seem physically and mentally incapable of the complex manipulation of magical energies performed by wizards and priests. True, golems can be extremely cunning in their thinking. Nevertheless, their brains lack the necessary flexibility, if you will, as well as the high levels of reasoning required to properly channel mystical forces.

Some sages have presented a second theory to account for this lack of spellcasting ability. This theory holds that the same energies which imbue life and superhuman strength in the golem's body actually "overcharge" the delicate parts of the brain and body which allow a mage to channel and weave magic.

Regardless of which theory (if either) is valid - or if, as I believe, some combination of the two is the cause - I feel it is safe to state that golems do not cast spells. However, as I have noted, a number of golems do exhibit certain limited spell-like powers, such as the ability to slow their opponents or cause paralyzing fear. Normally a golem will only have one or at most two of such abilities, if indeed it has any at all. Still, a pessimistic attitude is probably best when considering the various abilities of such diverse creatures.

On that note, I shall turn the tables on the golem, and discuss the possible effects that spells cast by would-be golem hunters may have upon it. Be certain that any spellcasters of your acquaintance are aware of this information, for it may prove vital in keeping you and your companions alive. Thanks for much of this material are due to several mages and priests - brave folk who generously shared their expertise in hope of aiding others embroiled in the war against evil.

Whatever their construction, golems are immune to spells affecting the mind (*charm, sleep, hold, etc.*). They are also immune to spells affecting the respiratory system and other life functions that are alien to golems. Exceptions are noted in appropriate monstrous manual entries. Remember that all members of the Created gain a +4 saving throw bonus against any spell causing physical damage.

Spell Effects

Due to the impenetrable nature of their minds and bodies, golems are immune to many spells. In particular, they resist all efforts to bend their will; they cannot be charmed or lulled to sleep. As they do not need to breathe, they cannot be harmed by magic affecting the respiratory system. And since they do not age, they are immune to most life-altering spells, including those which ordinarily cause disease. Finally, they sustain far less damage in combat than we mortals do, and are completely immune to cold-based and electrical spell attacks.

Nonetheless, magic is one of the foremost weapons in the golem hunter's arsenal. Certain familiar spells have particularly devastating results when used against the Created.

In the following section, I shall discuss selected spells that function in perhaps unexpected ways (or not at all) when applied to the Created.

Wizard Spells

It seems that "heavy duty" spells, especially flame-based castings, offer the most certain means of damaging the Created. However, spells should always be selected with care; the best magical arsenal includes a broad range of physically damaging effects.

The reasons for the caution above by now may seem obvious, but I would rather repeat myself than gloss over important information too readily. *All golems are different*. Although the details I shall impart here are given in good faith, dear reader, and seem to be generally true, this by no means indicates that the golem you face will not have capabilities, defenses, and even vulnerabilities different from those I explicate herein. Simply put, when faced with a specific threat, generalities do not make the strongest of shields.

Illusion/Phantasm: Magic spells relying directly on tricking the mind normally do not work on the Created. So spells such as *hypnotic pattern*, *spook*, and the like are utterly worthless against these foes. However, illusions that affect an area and are not cast directly upon the mind of the golem (*phantasmal force* or *phantasmal killer*, for example) do fool the Created.

Another exception to this rule seems to be spells causing *invisibility*. Although it is not exactly clear why such magic spells are effective against the Created when other illusions are not, I theorize that these spells in some way physically act upon the subject turned invisible, not the mind of the viewer. Or it may be - as the great mage Hermaine Gingold suggests - that the *invisibility* spell acts as a filter, physically enveloping the invisible subject and directing the viewer's attention around and away from it. Whatever the truth, golems cannot see invisible opponents any better than we do ourselves - which is to say, not at all.

Charm Spells: As with the illusion spells above, charm spells such as *sleep*, *hold monster*, *charm monster*, and the like rely on affecting the mind of the subject, and thus are useless against the golem. The minds of the Created seem impervious to all forms of mental manipulation.

Animate Dead: This spell does not affect the Created.

Contagion: Golems are not subject to disease of any kind; hence, this spell has no effect.

Detect Magic: Given their extraordinary powers, golems are often described as magical. However, the Created do not appear to be magical creations in the sense that enchanted weapons, caryatid columns, or such are magical. The nature of such items and "created" creatures is readily monitored when a wizard uses a detect magic spell. Most golems are not detectable by such a spell. I have only heard of one or two cases in which a golem was successfully spotted in this manner, and even then I am unsure as to whether the "golems" in these instances were true members of the Created. In any event, the wise hunter will not count on such devices to ferret out his quarry.

Unlike ordinary golems created by mages and priests through the use of spells and manuals, the golems born of obsession are not detectable by the *detect magic* spell.

Dispel Magic: Although this spell works admirably with some few golems, in general it has no effect. The only golems who are "stunned" by this spelt are the relatively stupid automatons created by mages and priests. However, such creatures are not the proper subject of this work.

ESP: This spell does not seem to work on golems. Additionally, I have seen mages faint with horror when making the attempt to contact such an alien and evil mind as that of the Created.

A wizard who attempts to use *ESP* on a golem must immediately make a horror check due to the incomprehensibly evil and frightening thought patterns. In any case, the caster will never receive useful information from the contact.

Irritation: This spell has no effect on golems.

Move Earth: If my research is reliable, this spell harms most clay golems. Other golems are unaffected.

Move earth inflicts 4d10 points of damage upon a clay golem. A successful saving throw halves damage.

Polymorph Other: To my knowledge, no wizard has ever successfully used this spell against a member of the Created. Even flesh golems are immune; it appears they lack the necessary qualities of the normal, living beings who are susceptible.

Protection from Evil: This spell does seem to offer some protection against the Created. However, as they are not summoned creatures, it does not keep them at bay.

When attacking, a character who enjoys such magical protection from evil, golems suffer a -2 attack roll penalty. Further, the protected character receives a +2 to all saving throws against the golem's attacks. However, once the character attacks the golem, the protection is lost.

Protection from Evil, 10-Foot Radius: This spell functions under the same restrictions as its counterpart (see above).

Reincarnation: Unfortunately, the spirit within the golem is too twisted and warped, or perhaps simply too trapped, to be removed from the golem body by this spell's force.

Stinking Cloud: This spell does not affect the Created.

Stone to Flesh: This spell can turn a stone golem into a flesh golem. The spell's reverse can transform a flesh golem into one of stone.

A stone golem is allowed a saving throw against the *stone to flesh* spell and its reverse. Failure indicates that golem has been transformed.

Trap the Soul: This spell does not seem to work against the Created. Either the golem simply does not have a soul to trap, or the soul is too strongly attached to its golem body to be removed by this spell.

Priest Spells

As I have mentioned in previous works, I have at times desired to become a priest. It seems that in the latter years of my life, this calling has grown stronger. Unfortunately, I don't believe I'll ever be able to answer it, for it seems my duties lie in other areas.

The information below relates to a narrower spectrum of spells, but I believe it to be of even more value than the details regarding wizard spells. I also feel more assured that this information can be relied upon due to the outstanding integrity, dedication, and faith of the good friends and colleagues who compiled it. Without folks such as these, and without their examples of exquisite faith and service, I might not have been able to carry on my life's work over all these many years. All those who battle the golem owe them a debt of gratitude.

Animate Rock: This spell can have an interesting and useful effect against stone golems. It seems to cause a tremendous struggle for control between the golem and the priest. Although none of the priests I have talked to has ever seen a priest actually gain control of the golem, they claim the struggle causes the golem to attack less efficiently for the duration of the spell.

If a stone golem fails its saving throw against *animate rock*, the casting priest gains partial control of the golem's body. When this occurs, the stone golem suffers a -4 penalty on all actions, including attacks, for the duration of the spell. The priest must maintain concentration on the spell, taking no other actions; else all spell effects are lost.

Earthquake: When a stone golem is at hand, this spell is extremely useful. Apparently, this magic makes such a creature shake so violently it causes damage to its form.

When targeted against a stone golem, the earthquake spell causes 5d12 points of damage. A successful saving throw cuts the damage in half.

Poison: This spell does not affect the Created.

Raise Dead: No golem - flesh or otherwise - is affected by this spell. In the case of the flesh golem, I would hazard to guess at two reasons for this utter failure. First, many bodies are used in the creation. Secondly, flesh golems are not truly dead (nor are they truly alive).

Regeneration: Against a flesh golem, this magic is extremely effective. The spell destabilizes the physical integrity of such a creature, eventually causing its death. However, there are two difficulties with the use of this spell. First, although the flesh golem is technically dead, it can still be reanimated at any time. This is rather inconsequential when compared to the second difficulty: the slowness of the spell effect, it takes several minutes for the regeneration spell to truly harm the golem. However, as soon as the spell is cast, it seems to cause the already vicious creature to exhibit a truly maniacal burst of violence which lasts as long as the spell's harmful effects.

One final note: If the priest who cast the regeneration spell is killed before the golem dies, the spell appears to cause no more harm to the creature. Further, the creature will begin repairing itself at once.

When *regeneration* is cast on a flesh golem, the spell causes no damage for 5 rounds. For each round thereafter, the creature loses 5 hit points. The golem becomes violent and combative for 3d4 rounds after this spell is cast-standing in battle even if it has fewer than 0 hit points. During this period, it receives a +2 bonus to all attack rolls.

When the golem at last collapses, it can only be revived through use of its hyper-regeneration ability (if available) or through a reanimating jolt of energy. If the priest who cast the regeneration spell is killed before the golem "dies," the spell ceases to have an effect on the golem.

Resurrection: Like *raise dead*, this spell has no effect on the Created.

Rock to Mud: This spell can be effective against stone golems, turning pieces of the creatures to mud. The reverse, mud to rock, affects clay golems in a similar manner.

Rock to mud causes 3d10 points of damage to stone golems. The reverse does the same amount of damage to clay golems.

Trip: Although this spell is considered an enchantment or charm, it is useful against golems, as it affects the object being used instead of the golem itself.

My child, my creation. No longer does she gift me with sweet smiles and flowers. No more does she greet me with pretty words and the music of her laughter. The trinkets that once pleased her so, she now hurls back at me, along with a torrent of foul epithets.

How could my Alice, she who I labored so hard for, treat me thus? It seems she grows more wicked and willful with every passing day. It is almost as if we are both she and I, slowly awakening from a beautiful dream where I played the part of the doting father, and she the loving daughter. But what we will find ourselves upon awakening I find too terrible to contemplate.

- From the journal of Thor Hessen

Psychology

The terror of the unknown is with us from birth. It is part and parcel of being alive. No matter how sophisticated, how strong, or how learned we become, the fear is always there, lurking somewhere in the back of our minds.

When facing a foe as terrifyingly alien as the golem, it is easy to succumb to our age-old fear of the unknown. This fear can cause our own minds and bodies to fail us, just as a weak heart can betray the strongest of warriors. How can we best overcome the mind-numbing terror and knee-weakening horror that is one of the golem's most insidious advantages? Knowledge, pure and simple.

One of the many reasons golems are so horrifying to most of us is simply that we have no psychological context in which to place them or their actions. When facing a mortal foe, we believe we have an understanding of his motives. Many desires and drives are universal to all peoples. The desire to live, to love, to raise families are wishes with which we can identify.

But the Created do not share our mortality. Nor do they share our life cycle. Theirs is a world alien to our own, with seemingly little in common.

Attaining some understanding of the psychology of the Created serves a dual purpose. In the first place, it gives those who choose to hunt these creatures a better understanding of their foe. This knowledge can provide a crucial, even life-saving advantage to the golem hunter. The second reason this knowledge is so valuable is far more primal: The more we know about the "bogeyman," the less power our own fear has over us.

Of course, the Created are no mere shadows under the bed. The truth may at first be more horrifying than the vague fears of ignorance. But the truth is far more likely to provide the light needed to find one's way to victory. Ignorance in those who would hunt the Created simply ends in letters of sympathy to their bereaved relatives.

Mental Development of the Golem

To examine the psychology of the Created, we must begin by discussing their mental development. (Of course, I exclude from this discussion any creature that might be described as a mindless automaton, for such golems are not the focus of this work.) As mortals, we grow and develop over the course of many years. Beginning as helpless infants whose only thought is



our own comfort, we gradually mature both physically and mentally.

Golems apparently undergo a maturation process as well. However, this process is solely psychological in nature, since the golem begins its existence in a grotesque body that is fully developed. Further, the golem's maturation takes place much more rapidly than our own mental and emotional growth. While our passage from child to adult spans decades, the golem's entire cycle of maturation can take place in a period ranging from as little as several weeks to no more than a year.

In order to better understand the golem's mental development, I have utilized the research of Dr. Wilhelm Kohl, a brilliant university teacher specializing in the workings of the mind. In his fascinating treatise, *Foundations of Morality*, Dr. Kohl outlined a system of five stages to categorize the moral development of humans.

I have taken the liberty of reworking Dr. Kohl's development theory to apply it to golems. I hope the good doctor will forgive my twisting of his concepts, but I believe this to be the best way to undertake an examination of the maturation process of the Created. The five stages below are given in order, beginning with the golem's initial, immature mental state and ending with the mentally mature golem. Each stage is illustrated by a passage from a diary I have in my possession, which neatly describes a golem's psychological advancement.

While reading this section, keep in mind that the stages presented are mere tools for developing a rudimentary understanding of the golem's mental maturation. The discussion is general in nature, and there is surely a wide degree of variation in the development of individual creatures.

Allow me to add one further note: What is considered development for the golem would most certainly be seen as mental disorder in a person. In no way are the stages given below meant to reflect normal human development.

Stage One: Dependence

Our first days together have been everything I knew they would be. Alice worships me, and today, for the very first time, she called me Father. Oh, I have so much to teach her! She is a tabula rasa, a blank tablet on which I can bestow all my vast knowledge and learning. I am certain she will appreciate me as those imbeciles at the University could never do.

At the beginning of its existence, a golem is childlike in its dependence upon the creator. The shock of fusing with the golem body has not worn off, and the golem's mind has not yet recovered from this experience.

If the golem's life essence was drawn from a living being, the golem may well experience nightmares. These nightmares are most probably warped memories of its former life.

In any case, the golem will also find it has an uncanny ability to sense what is important to its creator. This ability seems to be the first sign of the near-telepathic bond between the pair (see Chapter Three for further details). Why the golem has this bond is unknown, but with few exceptions it holds true.

The golem may well feel the need to be in constant proximity to its creator, its protector at this stage of development. Furthermore, the clumsiness of its new body may add to this feeling of need. For at least the first several weeks of its existence, the golem must learn to properly use its powerful physical form. This may cause some difficulties for the monster's creator, imagine a two-year-old human child suddenly thrust into the body of an ogre, and the inherent dangers become obvious.

The golem's view of its creator helps temper these dangers. New to the world and its plight, the golem probably sees its creator as an omnipotent, godlike being who is utterly responsible for the golem's life and well-being. To the newly created monster, the "parent" may be perfection, utterly infallible. The creator will be obeyed out of a mixture of fear and respect, and the golem typically craves the attention and approval of its master.

Is it possible for any creature, any living being, to be inherently evil? Such an assertion may itself facilitate the committing of evil acts. By viewing any person as inherently evil, we take away his ability to be anything else. All actions are seen as being motivated by the individual's evil. Even acts of kindness are questioned, and assumed to have ulterior motives. Thus the person is never rewarded for behaving properly. Similarly, by defining a person as evil we also glue that person free

rein to behave as he will. After all, he is not responsible for his evil nature and thus he feels no compunction to behave properly.

-Ansolm Haas, The Isolation of Evil

This stage of relative innocence and obedience can last anywhere from a few days to more than a month. However, should the creature confront a person other than the creator - and discover the horror and disgust with which a sane person inevitably views the golem - then the creature may quickly enter the second phase of development: confusion.

Stage Two: Confusion

Yesterday Alice was exploring the lower parlor, where she apparently disturbed the maid. The woman reacted poorly, shrieking and causing a scene. Since that time, Alyce has seemed almost pensive. I believe I shall remove the mirrors from this wing of the manor. The looking glasses seem somehow to upset my dear Alyce.

Within a relatively short period, the golem must begin to realize its repulsiveness to other beings. The golem looks into a mirror, or sees the horror with which all but perhaps its creator gaze upon it. Recognizing that it is somehow a different kind of creature than its parent, the golem may well grow confused. Ironically, by this time the initial shock caused by binding the spirit to the golem's body has certainly faded, and so too has the resulting disorientation. The creature's intelligence can be measured as average - high enough to understand its pitiful position within the society around it.

Think on how a foundling child often feels when he first discovers he is different from other family members. It is an isolating experience, although it is also one from which a healthy child soon recovers. But the golem does not share the healthy mind of a mortal child. Furthermore, the golem's isolation is much greater than the foundling's. The creature's own evil nature sets it apart. Soon the combination of its powerful body, feelings of isolation and confusion, and its inherent nature goad the golem into questioning the omnipotence of its creator. The golem may even attempt to get its parent to change its body into a more "pleasing" form, one similar to the creators.

In any event, it is at this stage the golem first begins to turn away from its creator. At some point, the creator will be unable to meet one of his creation's demands, or the golem will be rejected in its attempts at friendship with others. Then the golem's first feelings of betrayal begin to emerge, and it is on its way to the third phase of development.

The second stage represents the last period of "innocence" for the golem, if it is even possible for us to speak of an innocent golem. Beyond this, the inherent evil of the creature begins to truly manifest. The length of this stage varies greatly, but it is likely to be anywhere from one week to two months in duration.

Stage Three: Betrayal

Today I found the dogs - all five of my loyal wolfhounds. She left them by the grand fireplace where they so often, warmed themselves after the hunt. But today their bodies were as cold as the ashes from last winter's fires. Alice is growing more vehement in her outbursts, with unacceptable results. I shall have to have a long talk with her.

Now the true evil of the golem begins to surface. The creature senses its own perversity, and realizes how alone it truly is among mortals. The golem's creator - and thus the entire world - has betrayed it.

The creature suffers a fundamental lacking: It has no sense of continuity and connection to the rest of the world. The only person at all capable of understanding the fledgling golem is its creator, the golem's erstwhile parent. However, in my opinion, any person capable of constructing a golem is himself lacking in some fundamental manner. Furthermore, even if that parent still views the golem favorably, by this time the parent has inevitably failed the golem. And the golem, feeling it has little control over its own life and environment, begins to rebel.

This process may sound very similar to the distancing an adolescent normally undergoes in relation to his family. The

crucial distinction here is that the teenager moves farther from his parents in an effort to gain acceptance in society as a whole. In contrast, the golem rejects his only source of companionship and moves only toward an even greater isolation.

The creature's developing intelligence and intimate knowledge of its creator may compound the feelings of betrayal caused by the golem's isolation. As the telepathic bond between a golem and its creator strengthens, the golem begins to sense its maker's selfish motives. Consciously or subconsciously, the golem comes to realize that its welfare is not the creator's sole concern, and that it has been sentenced to an existence of monstrous isolation and rejection by all living beings.

As the creature examines the differences between itself and mortals, it discovers its great strength and abilities. It tests those abilities more and more. The creature comes to realize that it boasts the physical capacity to do almost whatever it wishes. The only thing standing in its way is its creator: the parent who refuses to let the golem have its way in all things.

Soon the golem releases its frustrations in various forms of destruction, from mayhem to murder. Through that destruction, the golem at last begins to realize its true power. At some point its creator will be forced to confront his creation. He may well find himself inadequate to the task. After all, he has created a being far more powerful than himself.

This stage normally lasts but a few days. The golem will escalate its evil acts until it forces its creator into a confrontation of some sort. Once this confrontation occurs, the next stage in the golem's mental development is inevitable.

Stage Four: Contempt

It seems I grow wearier with every passing hour. Even as I write this passage, I can hear her dainty footsteps in the bail outside my room. Soon she will begin singing that song again. Ah, yes! It begins again:

*Father, father, come out to play,
Father, father, come out I pray.
Father, father, do not cry,
Your dear Alice cannot die.*

How much longer I can tolerate her taunting I do not know. But I must not stand for this. She was made to be my sweet daughter, and daughters do as their fathers command!

When the golem provokes its creator into a confrontation, it discovers the relative impotence of its parent. The parent can threaten, but he has lost all true control over the golem. Once this realization sets in, the golem becomes utterly contemptuous of the weakling who masqueraded as its master. Within the golem's mind a synthesis occurs: The creature's sense of power combines with the awareness that it may live forever in a world that rejects it utterly, creating a scorn that burns more intensely than any natural flame.

The intellect of the golem is now fully developed, and it includes a penchant for manipulation as well as a facile cunning. The one-way telepathic bond the golem has with its creator now lends the creature an extraordinary understanding of that person. In the golem's own twisted way, it fully comprehends the pathetic weaknesses, selfish obsession, and madness that make up its creator's psyche.

All people, even the noblest of us, have private thoughts and feelings not fit for revelation to others. Most of us attempt to moderate and conceal these unsavory aspects of ourselves. We also keep within our hearts cherished needs, loves, and desires that we may not even share with our closest intimates.

The golem has access to the deepest recesses of its creator's heart, mind, and soul. This total knowledge inevitably breeds contempt. It also allows the golem to use its evil cunning to torment its creator. The creature cannot help but know what actions hurt its creator most. Soon it is not enough to simply deride the creator - the golem feels the need to flaunt its superiority to any who might fail to see the chasm separating the pathetic parent and his powerful child.

I have observed enormous differences between individual golems at this stage of development. However, all golems must surely grow to feel contempt for their creator. The more the creator attempts to control his creation, the sooner the final stage in the golem's development will commence - the stage in which the golem's contempt gives way to hatred and the creator's days become numbered. After that, it is simply a matter of time.

Stage Five: Hatred

I will go to her and make her understand. She is my daughter and must obey. If she refuses yet again, I will be forced to cast her out and begin the process of creation a second time.

After all my long months of labor; to be betrayed by such an ungrateful wretch - it is unthinkable! I made her; if not for me she would be nothing but molding flesh. She owes me both her obedience and her gratitude, and I shall have both in full measure. She shall give me what I have earned!

- Final journal entry of Thor Hessen

In this final stage, the golem's contempt for its creator deepens, becoming a dark, malevolent hatred. The creator must come face to face with the consequences of his own evil, embodied in the fury of his creation.

Just as contempt gives way to hatred, the golem's need to flaunt its superiority gives way to a desire to destroy the creator. The creature seeks to murder its parent, thereby severing its last tie to the living. This murder may not take place immediately, however. While most golems do attempt to dispatch with their creators posthaste, I have known of a few creatures who purposefully delayed the act. These golems took their time in planning or attempting the deed, apparently for the sheer enjoyment of tormenting their creators. Thus, even if a golem does not immediately succeed at patricide, the creator will always be in danger.

The creator is at a distinct disadvantage in such a contest. The golem is powerful foe against any mortal, but the creator is especially vulnerable. As noted earlier, the golem boasts an extraordinary bond to the creator's mind - a bond which enables it to know the creator better than the creator knows himself. Armed with such intimate knowledge, the golem may anticipate every action and reaction of its creator as it plots to destroy the puny, insignificant wretch who once dared to use and control it.

Summation

The information above details the mental development and separation process the golem experiences over the course of its "childhood." However, it does not address the actual psychology of the golem - its individual perceptions and feelings about itself and its new world. I shall address those issues in the following section.

Psychology of the Created

Psychology is an inexact science at best. Even the most learned mages and scholars do not truly understand the inner workings of a sane man's mind, much less the twisted psyche of a golem. This is not to say that a knowledge of psychology is worthless: quite the contrary. Just as we would not throw away an entire loaf of bread simply because a few bites were missing, so we should not dismiss the advantage that a knowledge of our enemy's thought processes can give us simply because that knowledge is incomplete.

Since we know so little about our own minds, readers may assume we must know almost nothing about the Created. That is not necessarily true. The mind of a golem seems much less complex than that of the Born. Perhaps the enormous shock the Created undergo upon their "birth" is the source of this relative simplicity. Of course, I do not wish to imply that these creatures are stupid, or that one golem's mind is the same as the next's. However, the creatures do appear limited in the scope of their thought processes. This may explain why many golems tend to fixate on a single driving obsession.

With these comments in mind, let us now turn to a brief study of the psychology of the golem. Much of the information I am about to share is derived from an exchange of letters between me and Doctor Cassien Attenberg, a noted specialist in nonhuman psychology, as well as an esteemed colleague and friend. I have included key excerpts from Doctor Attenberg's letters to help illustrate each point.

Views on the Self

... As to your inquiry on the matter of the Created and their concept of the Self: The answer must surely be that they do have this conception. However, the conception of Self possessed by a golem must be a terrible one, for it seems to me the golem is similar to a feral child - raised to maturity without benefit of an appropriate figure with which to identify (a parental golem). Thus its self concept derives from its own experiences and the warping influence of its creator...

- Cassien Attenberg

Many theorists maintain that one of the basic requirements for true sentience is that the creature or being in question has an awareness of the Self. By this we mean that the being must be aware of its identity as an individual - be self-aware as it were - in order to be considered truly sentient.

Through the evidence I and others have collected over the years, both first- and second-hand, it does indeed appear that the Created qualify as sentient beings. Although their consciousness is quite alien to our own, there is no question but that a golem is truly aware of its own existence as a separate being. And if a golem is indeed self-aware, then how does the creature view itself? That is the question I shall next address. However, before focusing on the Created in particular, I believe it would be helpful to briefly discuss a particular phenomenon occasionally found in human children.

Normal mortal children experience a series of stages in which they slowly develop their own sense of separate identity. If raised in a warm and loving home, a child will grow to appreciate his own worth. Such a child will, in all probability, grow up to become a productive member of his community.

However, a child who is raised in an abusive environment - and unfortunately I have seen far too many such cases - often fails to develop a sense of his own self-worth and acceptability. Such children often wind up spending their adult lives as criminals, hermits, or as other sundry social misfits.

But what of the children raised in loving homes - wanting for nothing, given education both moral and intellectual - who commit evil, despicable acts despite all the advantages a healthy environment can offer? Parents of such children often despair at their own, personal failings, wondering what they did to cause their child to behave so cruelly. When questioned, it often comes to light that the child began to behave in a selfish, cruel manner at a very early age. Such children are often labeled "bad seeds." It is perhaps an unfortunate label, and only applies to the smallest fraction of children, but in such cases it appears that the child is born with the ability to form a sense of self, but without the capability to truly care about and form attachments to others.

I mention such children for one simple reason. The Created may be the ultimate "bad seeds," incapable of identifying with others and thus incapable of true morality. Initially, golems appear to be simply curious about themselves. Like small children, they experiment and revel in new-found abilities and talents. However, as a golem grows to realize its true nature and how it came to be, the golem often begins to view itself with ever greater self-loathing. The creature realizes it can never be truly accepted by the Born and can never partake of the cycle of life (for, as I have mentioned, golems are infertile). It grows to understand how horrifying others find it, and how mortals look upon its cobbled-together body with revulsion and disgust.

Many factors in combination, certainly not limited to the ideation above, cause the golem's opinion of itself to shift. Where it initially viewed itself with mere curiosity, the golem becomes a creature filled with self-loathing. Perhaps this seeming incapacity for self-acceptance and love is at the base of the golem's evil. Perhaps when a spirit is forced into the waiting vessel - the golem body - any ability to truly love and care is lost in the process. Whatever the ultimate reasons, suffice it to say that the golem views itself with hatred.

Views on the Creator

... but how terrible it must be to always look into the mind of one's "parent." All parents occasionally think ill of their children, but good parents give only constructive criticism to their young. Children need to feel secure in that they are loved and deserving of love. It is inherently impossible for a golem to feel this way. Even worse, the mind with which the golem is in constant contact from the moment of its genesis is twisted and harmful. Children who are raised by abusive and mean-spirited parents so often grow up to be the same. Think on what such intimate contact must do to the golem's mind!

As discussed earlier, a golem's view toward its creator changes dramatically as it matures. When new to the world, the golem views its creator as an omnipotent parental figure, a virtual god. As the golem becomes more self aware, however, its opinion of its creator degenerates. In the end, the golem views its creator as the author of its misery and loneliness. Hatred and contempt replace the feelings of awe and respect. I have already asserted that this progression stems in part from the unique, one-way telepathy binding the golem to its creator. It seems that the golem is in near-constant contact with the creator's thoughts and feelings. The creator of a golem is an insane individual, obsessed and evil. Thus, it is my firm belief that this link contributes greatly to the golem's own warped psychology.

Some sages do not agree that all golem creators are evil madmen, noting that noble priests might also fashion a golem. I say there is nothing noble at all in such a pursuit. True, a kindly cleric may fashion a mindless automaton, and do so with the best of intentions. I condemn the act nonetheless. As I warned at the onset of this work, those who create life in this heinous fashion are toying with dark and deadly powers, and they will sacrifice their own humanity as a result.

Obviously, the golem cannot help but be affected by its constant, intimate contact with such depravity. Every time the golem fails its parent, it most assuredly feels the rejection of its creator. The fact that such rejection may not be outwardly expressed makes it no less acute. The creature, in turn, lashes out against the one who caused it pain, once more earning the disapproval of its parent. I am certain this vicious cycle is a central factor contributing to both the golem's self-hatred and its loathing for its creator. So closely entwined are these emotions that it is almost impossible to intelligently discuss a golem's feelings for itself or for its creator as separate topics.

Views on Mankind

The golem appears to understand that other beings have a concrete existence-that we are not merely shadows and smoke, but thinking and feeling creatures. Still, the Created may be termed a sociopathic race, for when a golem decides on a given course of action, it considers only the action's effects on itself: No other factors - such as the consequences to others - are considered valid. What is right is whatever the golem finds pleasing.

- Cassien Attenberg

Among the most evil aspects of the golem is its complete lack of empathy for living creatures. It views all other creatures as objects. In part, this is because the golem is incapable of feeling true pain, or at least it does not experience pain as we do. The golem's only experience of physical anguish is gained vicariously through its telepathic link to its creator, and even then there is no evidence the golem actually *feels* its creator's pain. Having no understanding of pain, the golem is unlikely to feel any qualms about inflicting it.

In a similar vein, the golem may not be able to truly comprehend death. To the golem, a life has no more value than a wind-up toy. We do not feel a toy has "died" simply because it stops working. If this occurs, we merely go out to purchase another toy.

I have encountered a few golems who appeared to form an attachment to a particular mortal, who even professed to love that person. But it is safe to say that such a golem cannot comprehend the true meaning of this emotion, much less experience it. Instead, the golem feels something more akin to obsession - a selfish, blinding desire not unlike the emotion festering inside its creator.

Views on Other Golems

In examining the relationship golems have with one another, I have often observed the psychological phenomenon known as *transference*. When this occurs in humans and demihumans, feelings about oneself and one's actions are externalized and are then ascribed to someone else. For example, an individual who feels that he is lazy may transfer this feeling onto, say, his son and accuse the son of being shiftless and lazy. Such individuals find it easier to take out their feelings on others than to confront their own feelings of inadequacy.

As stated earlier, golems grow to hate themselves. Such self-loathing could easily transfer onto any other golems encountered. Of course, this would not cause the golem to like itself any better, but it would provide another - perhaps fatal - target or outlet for its hatred and violence.

The golem is, in essence, a creature of isolation. It is cut off from the natural processes, removed from the cycle of life and death to which most creatures belong. As such, it does not necessarily feel the same need for others of its kind that we, as social creatures, feel. Biologically speaking, there is no reason for one golem to interact with another member of the Created. Such interaction never leads to procreation and the furtherance of golems "as a species," so to speak.

However, we must remember that golems are individuals, and it is dangerous to paint them in strokes which are too broad. Simply because there is no valid biological reason for golems to interact with one another does not mean they have no desire to do so. Some golems loathe their ultimate isolation and the constant, violent rejections of others with whom they come in contact. It is certainly reasonable to believe other golems would be more accepting of the hideous visage and terrifying powers of the Created, as they themselves almost surely possess the same.

The following transcription lends support to this theory. A priest of impeccable repute sent the text, which describes the experience of a chimney sweep in Lamordia, to me. At the time of this writing, I have no confirmation that this evidence is valid. However, the priest vouches for the witness' sterling reputation. Furthermore, the priest has also related persistent rumors and stories about Lamordia's "devil man" - stories that seem relatively consistent with the fellow's account below, or at least with the existence of one or more flesh golems in the area.

I were in the chimney when it all happened. How, I know that might sound sort of crazy, bein' in the chimney, but it weren't. I'm a chimney sweep by trade, so I spend iots of time in lots of chimneys. I'm a good sweep, too - ask anyone. Never had a single complaint.

Course'n the poor fellow whose chimney I was in when it happened has got a right to 'is complaint, which I'm sure he'd make if'n he could. After all, I didn't help him none. I feel real bad about that, but it just didn't seem like there was much I could do, so' why get myself nicked too? Truth be it, I was too scared to move anyways. Just kept hopin' I wouldn't sneeze. Garson's chimney was a real sight of a mess, it was! Course, now so's Garson, poor sod.

Anyway, I was up in the chimney, but there was this piece of a brick missing, so's I could peak into the room if I put my eye to the hole. I was just pokin' on that broken brick to see if the whole thing weren't loose when Garson got a knock on his door. He was Just getting around to it when ! heard this splinterin' thud of a sound. It was like the sound of splitting a thin slice o' hardwood.

Well, Garson was up like a rabbit and I could just make out this look on his face, worse'n if it was the tax collector or somethin'. Then these arms... these arms Just reached out and grabbed his neck. I couldn 't make out the killer too well on account of he was wearing this dark, hooded cloak, but his arms and hands ... Well, they was in worse shape than any blacksmith's I've ever seen. It was like you took some body parts and stitched 'em together - only they worked!

The whole thing must of only taken a second. Then Garson's neck snapped and I knew he was dead. And then I saw the other two. They alt three wore the same type of hooded cloak. One of 'em had a good-sized bundle in his arms, and I suppose now that must have been Garson's wife, since she's missing too. Anyway, just as these three was leavin', ! caught a glimpse of the first one's face. f ain't afraid to say f fainted right then and there - but lucky for me I got stuck in the chimney when I slumped down. Anyhow, that first one's face was all pieced together and weird. It's probably a good thing I did faint, else ! think I would've screamed me head off. Would've been the end of me too, then...

Creator and Created

A golem and its creator are uniquely linked by their bizarre parent-child relationship. Any person who creates a golem is, by nature, a twisted and obsessed individual. The obsessions that drive the creator to make his golem do not disappear upon the monster's animation. In fact, the creator usually slips further into madness and evil after his "success."

Due to the powerful and complex connection between creator and creation, a DM may wish to consider not

only the golem, but the golem's maker when designing adventures. In fact, discovering the creator of a golem and attempting to discover the nature of the creator's obsessions, as well as his construction methods, can be an adventure in and of itself. Such creators can themselves be dangerous foes, often extremely protective of their evil progeny, as well as their dread knowledge. Adventures of this kind can range from destroying a creator's laboratory to spying on the deranged creator in order to gain information on the golem and its particular strengths and weaknesses.

The best and most memorable villains are not mindless, snarling beasts. Adding history, goals, and personality to your monsters (human and otherwise) will create far more interesting foes to challenge your players.

The witness goes on for a while longer, but the most likely assumption here is that the individuals in question were flesh golems working together. It certainly brings up the possibility that there might be a small group of golems living and working as a team in Lamordia. If so, they might have formed the rudiments of a society.

It would not be illogical to suppose that a few flesh golems have formed some sort of family unit and are attempting to find a means of propagating their species. We can only pray that such is not the case, or at least that it is ultimately impossible for one golem to create another. Even a small army of golems could obliterate whole cities with little effort.

One final note on the story above: The chimney sweep in question apparently disappeared himself less than a week after giving his testimony to the priest. It is unfortunate, as I would have liked to personally question the man. At least his story went on record. I wonder how many such stories have gone untold?

Goals of the Created

No creature can go through life without goals. Even the ant and the toad have goals, however simple they may seem to you and me. But to the ant digging its tunnel, or the swallow feeding her hatchlings, our goals are as irrelevant to them as theirs are to us. What is important, what is precious, is all simply a matter of perspective.

- Cassien Attenberg

Humans and demihumans, like all creatures, can be seen as having a number of different goals, some more important than others. First and foremost we need sustenance, shelter, and other basic necessities of life. Once these basic needs are met, we can concentrate on our more individualistic or esoteric concerns.

The Created do not share the basic needs for shelter and sustenance confronting the Born. Thus, a golem faces an existence in which goals can be seized almost at random. Yet in my experience it is almost invariably true that the golem's main goals and concerns are either similar to their creator's or, even more common, a perversion of such goals. The ultimate twist, of course, is the most deadly: The creator wishes to live, but the golem, in time, wishes to destroy that life. This murder is often the golem's overriding concern so long as its creator survives. Golems have numerous other concerns, however. As mentioned above, many golems do seem to have a great and unfulfilled wish to be accepted by others. Thus, another common and ultimately unattainable goal is the desire to propagate their species. Beyond this, goals may vary widely between individual golems, and often seem inscrutable to sane mortals.

Knowledge of a particular golem's specific goals can aid those of us who seek to destroy them. It is at times possible to stage a combat in the time and place of one's own choosing, instead of a situation favoring the golem. This advantage can be gained only through shrewd guesswork and observation, but such groundwork may provide the key to determining what is important to the golem, and thus what might move the creature to come to your chosen place of battle.

Whatever their individual desires may be, it seems that all golems have a tendency to fixate on one particular goal at any given time. Unlike humans and demihumans who constantly strive to achieve numerous goals, the golem focuses its indomitable will on one goal at a time. This single-mindedness is a double-edged sword to the golem's foes. It makes the golem more predictable, but it also makes the creature unyielding, and perhaps even unstoppable.

The Golem as NPC

Golems are unquestionably powerful villains. However, in any roleplaying game, an NPC is not brought to life by a simple set of statistics or nifty abilities. This is particularly true in the fantasy-horror setting of Ravenloft.

Golems are creatures of nightmare, and to fully utilize these monsters the DM must create an NPC the players feel is both unpredictable and dangerous.

When roleplaying the golem NPC, the DM should try to convey to the players the relentless intensity of the creature. For example, you might answer the PC's actions by repeating the same description again and again ("It just keeps coming toward you..."). This sort of repetition, if used in an appropriate situation (such as when the party is trying to flee from the golem), can add greatly to the drama. Another unnerving tactic is to have your golem maintain a particular expression no matter what. You might stare impassively for periods of time, or smile. It is amazing how unnerved players can become when faced with a continually smiling foe - especially when they are doing their best to kill the thing!

Whatever your particular golem's goals, never allow anyone or anything to deter it from its particular task (unless it is killed, of course).

A Creature Built of Hate?

Although it is extremely tempting to assume that a golem is such a hate-filled creature that it despises everything, caring about nothing save itself, this is perhaps too simple a position.

I do not believe that any creature fueled only by such an emotion can function. It has been suggested by some that, while a golem does not hate everything, it at best feels apathy toward a being or subject. This too seems inadequate. Both of the above opinions suggest we may be incapable of understanding what such a creature as a golem cares about. Their concerns are surely different from our own.

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to put forth possible concerns and needs of the Created. What the psychology of the golem may most nearly mirror is the psychology of the sociopath who suffered trauma or abuse as a child. Although I feel sympathy for such an injured youth, I cannot feel the same for an adult who expresses his needs through violence and pain, placing his concerns above all others. The golem may well be such a creature, abused by its "parent," shunned by society. The golem may well wish for acceptance, may even yearn to please. So, in some manner I grieve for this creature brought into our world only to know hate rather than love. But this does not excuse or lessen the golem's evil actions and its basic inability to truly care about others.

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Someone once asked me why do I risk my life in service to others. The question struck me as odd, which in itself perhaps best serves as the answer to the question.

- The musings of Astonby of the Oaks
as recorded by Taynesbert in *The Open Palms*

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

- Friedrich Willhelm Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Pursuit

The latter part of my life has been devoted to the hunting of evil. At first, my mission was simple; I wished only to destroy Baron Metus, the vampire who had murdered my ear wife and son. But once my eyes had been opened to the horrors lurking in the shadows of this land, my resolve to combat the forces of evil grew stronger. Occasionally, I find myself questioning the vocation which fate has thrust upon me - especially when I am alone in the wild, wrapped in little more than the damp night air, huddled beside my horse for warmth. But such moments, however filled with doubt or self-pity, have never swayed my course. For myself, I can only agree with the sentiments of Astonby of the Oaks and echo his words: "How could I do otherwise, having been given the knowledge, abilities, and commitment to do good?"

I do not mean to imply that such doubt-filled musings are of no consequence. When a person commits to a course of action involving the death of another being - no matter how foul and evil that creature may seem - then he or she must strongly question the motives. If, upon introspection, this individual discovers expectations of glory, wealth, or similar gains, then he or she would do well to put aside all notions of becoming a hunter, in the first place, such personal rewards are seldom found. It is far more likely that loneliness, struggle, and anonymity will be the wages of this work. Secondly, and most importantly, when our motives turn toward personal gain and away from the welfare of others, we risk becoming the very beast we seek to destroy.

So, good reader, think carefully on your motivations for taking up your sword and stepping into the fray. And if - after such introspection - you truly believe that you take on such dangers to aid our land and its people, then gladly do I welcome your aid!

This chapter is designed as a tool for those who would hunt golems. To successfully face and defeat such a powerful foe, you must proceed carefully and make full use of all your faculties. I shall detail the basic steps in the hunt below. Do not take these steps to heart as unalterable law; each situation differs, and therefore may require improvisation. Still, I would suggest following my method whenever possible, for I've found it reduces casualties among golem hunters, and offers at least some chance at succeeding in this heroic task.

Throughout this chapter, I shall illustrate key points by examining a particular expedition I conducted recently. This hunt for the gibbering golem, as the creature was called, was extremely dangerous. It should adequately depict the horrors one faces while stalking one of the Created.

In order for the reader to better grasp the nature of the situation, I will begin by relating the story of the gibbering golem's creation and the onset of its reign of terror.

The Gibbering Golem

Fressen Woodhall was born into one of the oldest families of Il Aluk, the principal city of Darkon. Once, the Woodhalls enjoyed a considerable fortune. But Fressen's grandfather had lost much of the family's resources in some speculative business ventures, in a manner fraught with scandal and shame.

Fressen's father, Edward, found it difficult to support his family. Too proud to accept any handouts, Edward was away from

his family for months at a time as he struggled determinedly to rebuild the lost fortune. Fressen was a lonely child. He idolized his much absent father, and desperately strove for Edward's praise and affection. The boy often became jealous of the attention Edward paid to Fressen's own mother, Danalie. Upon returning home, Edward brought her small trinkets and talked with her for hours at a time. Edward and Danalie were much in love, and they found their time together all too brief.

As the years passed, Fressen's jealousy grew. Finally, he resented even the smallest amount of time that Edward would devote to Danalie at home. Fressen's parents strove to make him understand that Edward could love and pay attention to both mother and son, just as Danalie could love them both. Unfortunately, this did no good. Fressen soon stopped speaking to his mother altogether whenever Edward was home.

By the time Fressen was ten, his parents feared he had a serious problem - one which he might never outgrow. Nothing they did seemed to ease his jealousy, and Fressen's behavior became violent. Finally, on the night before Edward set out on yet another trip, Edward gave his young son an ultimatum: Be kind to his mother or be sent away.

When Edward returned from his trip, he found the life he had known destroyed. Danalie had died from injuries suffered when she fell down a staircase. Although the death was officially ruled an accident, Edward feared a darker truth. When Edward confronted his son, the boy confirmed his fears: Fressen had pushed Danalie to her death. Horrified and anguished, Edward sent the boy to an asylum for the insane, where he hoped some help might be found.

Although he had read reports of his son's condition at first, Edward lost interest in time. He continued to travel in the pursuit of his business, and eventually all his years of hard work brought financial reward. He took a new wife. Choosing to leave the terrible memories of his past behind him, Edward finally abandoned his son completely. He sent a letter to the asylum, stating that his son was to be told that Edward was dead.

Despite all the doctors' efforts, Fressen never recovered. He grew up in the asylum, alternating between short fits of violence and long periods of delusion in which he spoke of his father as if the man were omnipotent and perfect in every way.

The only positive interaction the doctors were able to have with Fressen involved his fascination with anatomy, physiology, and psychology. When poring over books on these subjects, Fressen would become quite agreeable and even lively. His intellect was sharp, and as long as he was given new reading material, he behaved civilly.

Eventually, Fressen was even allowed to work as an aide to the doctors. He cleaned the medical facilities, including the room in which the bodies of recently deceased patients were stored. One night, while working within that chamber, a particular cadaver commanded his attention. Fressen stared at the face of a corpse on the table before him. The profile was uncanny; the man was the spitting image of his father- Upon examining the corpse, however, Fressen realized that only the shape of the face was satisfactory. The rest was all wrong - even the eyes, which were green instead of blue. Fressen feverishly examined the cadavers around him. He was struck with a brilliant idea: If he took parts from different bodies and placed them together, he could recreate his father's form! Once the body was prepared, surely his father's "spirit" would return to it, and they would be reunited as father and son.

Working frenetically, the deranged young man began to cobble together a body, using surgical tools and the knowledge he had gained from his studies. The hands of the creation posed the greatest challenge; in his effort to recreate exactly a peculiarity in his father's left index finger, Fressen inadvertently exaggerated the size difference between the two hands. When he was finished, the self-taught surgeon gazed adoringly at his work. His father had indeed returned to him, to live again in the body he had prepared. But something was wrong - the figure on the table lay too still. Fressen pondered the problem. He imagined that the shock of the transfer into the new body must have placed his father in a catatonic state. Fressen chose a treatment which he had seen the asylum's doctors use upon other catatonic patients: shock therapy. This, he reasoned, would bring his father back to awareness.

Fressen placed the metal restraints and electrodes on the golem's body. Then he turned the wheel of the apparatus again and again, faster and faster, lending every fiber of his being to the task of generating the required electricity. Finally, a jolt of energy surged into the cadaver. Fressen stood over it, anxiously awaiting a sign. Alas, his "father" refused to stir.

The mad surgeon tried one final, desperate measure. He gave his father an infusion of his own blood. This, he reasoned, would seal the bond of kinship between them, and welcome his father's spirit fully into its new home. As the blood seeped from Fressen into the corpse, the surgeon could feel himself growing dizzy. But his need for his father to be with him once more drove Fressen on, and he called out to his father over and over, urging him to wake.

When the doctors found Fressen, he was barely alive, lying beside the horrible corpse he had sewn together that night. The chief physician locked Fressen in a private cell, and then ordered the hideous creation destroyed. But when the doctors returned to the morgue, the thing was gone.

Confused and alarmed, the doctors instituted a search for the body. Unfortunately for them, they found it. Or rather, it found them. The new "Edward" proceeded to kill each and every doctor at the asylum that night. Skittering through the bleak halls by torchlight, hooting and gibbering, the golem returned from its first bloody night of existence to free his "son" and creator, Fressen.

For some few months, Fressen and his golem controlled the asylum. Located perhaps ten miles from the nearest village, the isolated asylum rarely received visitors, and thus no one discovered the doctors' tragic fates.

As the months passed, Fressen's "father" began to challenge and mock the young man. Finally, the golem ignored him. Instead of playing with Fressen, the golem became interested in finding a perfect mate for itself. Once again, as long ago, Fressen felt a rage burning within.

When he confronted the golem and demanded its full attention, Fressen was horrified to discover he no longer had any control over his creation. As Fressen stood before the golem, "Father" began to laugh - creating a gurgling, gibbering sound in which Fressen heard only mockery and hate. Turning to flee from the terrible rejection and that hideous laugh, Fressen found himself unable to escape the sound. Wherever he ran, he heard the terrible laughter and the words of Father's scorn.

Overwhelmed with pain and exhaustion, with his creation's weird, gibbering laughter still echoing within his mind, Fressen collapsed. Slowly, surely, the echoing footsteps and maniacal laughter of his father approached. When his father stood beside him, the laughter quieted. Fressen felt his father pick him up and cradle him in his arms - finally, as his creation was meant to do. Fressen felt he had won his father's unswerving affection at last. Moments later, the boy was hurled down a tower staircase to his death.

The gibbering golem lived on in the asylum, but could find no appropriate mate there. Exploring outside its home, it discovered the nearby village. It was there the golem found his first new "bride". Staring at the woman, the gibbering golem discovered he could feel her feelings, taste her thoughts, exactly as he could Fressen's.

Delighted at the thought of being with his chosen mate, the golem presented himself to the woman, declaring his love for her. But his initial happiness changed to fury as he felt his mate's horrified rejection stabbing into his mind. Enraged, the golem seized the woman as she turned to flee. He shook her furiously for minutes on end, gibbering hideously all the while. Finally, his rage abated, and the creature brought the now quiescent body of his bride back to the asylum.

So begins the tale of the gibbering golem, as I have come to know it. Much of the story, of course, is surmised rather than known. However, one thing is clear: The tale did not end with the golem and his dead bride living happily ever after. Unfortunately, the gibbering golem claimed many a new wife before I and my comrades were able to hunt him down. In the pages to come, I shall share with you a letter I penned to a fellow comrade in the war against evil, describing my encounter with this dreadful creature. This letter illustrates perfectly the many stages of the hunt.

Discovery

Before it is possible to begin your quest to destroy a golem, you must obviously first learn of its existence. However, unlike with many other creatures such as lycanthropes or ghosts, tales of possible golems terrorizing a region tend not to describe the terrifying creature as a golem. It is rare indeed to hear a story using the term golem at all, as the vast majority of the populace are not aware such creatures exist, even in myths and legends.

Admittedly, this lessens the number of completely unfounded tales that must be sorted through when determining the veracity and accuracy of a given story. However, it also makes it entirely possible to hear a report involving the Created and not even realize that you have done so.

Due to these problems of reporting, the devoted golem hunter must ever concern himself with analyzing and evaluating reports and stories to determine if one of the Created might be responsible. Nine times out of ten, there will be nothing but gossip or entirely human atrocities behind a report, but occasionally such a story will lead you to one of the fell creatures you seek.

My dear Astonby,

Just a few short days ago, I attended a party hosted by the noted philanthropist, Simon TolUuer. I expected an evening of idle entertainment, as per chance I was not in pursuit of any foul creature. Before the evening was out, that had changed.

One of the guests, a young man by the name of Jeffrey, had just arrived from the town of Covering. He told of the recent unexplained wave of disappearances among the young women of the town. Apparently, the investigators were at a total loss until two nights ago, when the body of a young woman was found lying on the road, underneath the shattered window of her bedchamber. It seemed that every bone in her body was broken, and there were multiple bruises around her neck.

At first, of course, one might assume the girl had simply jumped or fallen, and that her death, while tragic, was in no way linked to the disappearances of the other young women. However, upon inquiring further, I discovered the door to the dead. Girl's home had been literally ripped off its hinges. As a final piece of information, Jeffrey noted that some residents were claiming a hideous man-thing was traveling the streets at night, making weird gibbering sounds. Rumors abounded. The most popular? That a giant ape was somehow the culprit.

- Dr. Van Richten, a personal letter

Discernment

In the search for evidence that a golem is active in an area, clues generally adhere to several different patterns or themes. For ease of discussion, I have grouped these themes as follows: sightings, grave robberies, unexplained murders, and other physical evidence.

Sightings

This is clearly the most straightforward pattern of report. In such a story, at least one person actually sees the golem. However, as noted, the witness almost never calls the creature by that name. Instead, look for reports of "deformed" or "hideous" creatures with tremendous strength or powers. In particular, pay attention if a story mentions strange limbs and body parts, a horrifying visage, strange scars all over the body, or a creature made of metal, glass, and so forth. Such reports are quite likely to describe golems, particularly when they include information about a creature's amazing powers and strength. Grave Robberies If ever you hear a series of reports regarding disturbed graves, missing or mutilated bodies, or peculiar disappearances, you must pay especial attention. Immediately attempt to determine whether these occurrences are still going on, or whether they appear to have ceased.

If the strange events are still occurring, you must move as rapidly as possible, for there is a reasonable chance someone is attempting to create a flesh golem and may *not have yet succeeded*. It is always preferable to stop the creator rather than confront his vastly more powerful creation. When hearing of such a report, it is often wise to immediately begin your investigation, even though it will probably prove to be a false alarm. The time before a golem is animated is often brief, and moving too slowly at this point may result in great tragedy for all concerned.

On the other hand, if the reports of such strange disturbances seem to have ceased, it is better to take a more cautious approach to your investigation. In all likelihood, either no golem is present, or the creature is already animate and thus extremely dangerous.

Unexplained Murders

Reports of unexplained murders, especially those of a particularly brutal nature, may also be evidence that a golem is on the rampage. When hearing such stories, try to determine whether the murderer used a weapon of some sort, or whether the attack was completed without resorting to such a device. If the attacker used a weapon of any kind, it is quite likely the killer is not a golem. The Created almost invariably prefer to kill using only their hands and brute physicality.

On the other hand, if the murders involve broken necks, beatings of amazing brutality, or other such extreme physical violence, one of the Created may well be the killer. In such cases, if at all possible, examine the bodies firsthand, barring

that, study the crime scenes, as you can often pick up valuable clues as to whether the deaths were caused by a golem.

Other Physical Evidence

There is, of course, other physical evidence pointing to the activities or mere existence of a golem. First and foremost is the testimony of a golem's creator. At times the work notes, diary, or other record of a golem's creator are discovered. Such records are invaluable for both their information on the specific golem and its powers, and on the creation of golems in general. Unfortunately, it is extremely rare to have the creator's notes to assist you. I have seen just four such records myself - and only once did the information involve the golem I was then attempting to destroy.

As noted above, evidence of great physical destruction may also indicate golem activity. Sometimes such destruction involves multiple deaths, as with the church destroyed by the glass golem mentioned in Chapter Four. Be on the alert for patterns in the place or type of place where the damage occurs (churches, farms, or hospices). In addition to identifying the creature, such information may later prove valuable in your hunt, as it reflects the golem's (and quite probably the creator's) particular hatreds and targets.

Investigation

Once you have decided that there is a reasonable chance that the story or report you have heard involves a golem, you must go about discovering whether or not this is actually true. Now, I want to make it clear that I am not advocating rushing off to investigate every strange tale of a lurking figure or a disappearance. But you will seldom find conclusive evidence that a golem is behind the stories without investigating personally. Therefore, you must decide whether the particular situation bears investigating.

Once you have committed to the investigation, you must proceed to interview all witnesses. In addition, you must carefully observe any physical damage or evidence. If possible, examine the area's official records. Look for the same indications illustrated under "Discernment," above. Be diplomatic with the local officials; they are often suspicious of outsiders and disinclined to cooperate. This will be especially true if you have no credentials of your own to present. Do not be offended by such an attitude, however, for the officers are merely trying to do their work efficiently. Your best chance at attaining their aid is to appear as professional and responsible as you can.

If your investigation does not reveal that the perpetrator has extraordinary strength, or if you fail to locate any reliable witnesses, your trail may prove false. After all, the majority of cases are in actuality the work of mere mortals, however deranged or evil.

... I thought Jeffrey's tale was definitely worth investigating, so I asked the bright young lad if he would mind my accompanying him back to Devering. He readily agreed. In fact, he even said he'd read some of my books and had often considered becoming an investigator like myself!

When we arrived at the town two days later, I immediately set to work. Jeffrey proved to be an invaluable aide, introducing me to the local investigators, as well as to several witnesses who claimed to have seen a strange figure skittering through the dark streets at night while making strange gibbering sounds.

I was able to examine the body of the unfortunate young woman who had plunged from a window. As always, the sight of a young person who had been brought to such a terrible end filled me with both sorrow and anger.

It was her body that convinced me there was a golem at work here for not only was her neck crushed, but the attacker's left hand print was significantly smaller than the right print. This is one of the more certain indicators that a golem is at work, as such a large size differential (nearly four inches in this case) is almost never seen in nature.

By the time I turned away from the body, I had resolved to stop the malevolent monster that had stolen this woman's life so callously. Looking up, I saw my own conviction mirrored in young Jeffrey's pale face and set lips. I knew I could count on his aid as well.

Preparing for the Hunt

Once you have established that it is likely your enemy is indeed a golem, you must immediately gather all your resources, both mental and physical. Every preparation must be made as swiftly as possible, but not at such speed that you sacrifice quality.

Reinforcements

If you do not already have a team of skilled and brave individuals with you, now is the time to send for them! It would be the greatest of follies to attack a golem without as trustworthy and powerful a group as you can manage assisting you.

When sending for reinforcements, be certain to include magical talent. If possible, ask at least two priests and two mages to join your group. You must always assume a high casualty rate (unfortunately perhaps as high as fifty percent or more), and a party with no magical support is almost certain to meet with a grizzly end.

... Once I had established the culprit to be some sort of flesh golem, I immediately had Jeffrey bring me pen and paper so I might send for allies to support us in our mission. Fortunately, I knew that a certain adventuring party known as the Hand was currently working in my home city of Rivalis. I had worked with the Hand before and found them to be highly skilled. Most importantly, four of the group's five members were magic wielders.

Within hours of confirming the golem's existence, a hired messenger was speeding toward Corvia with my urgent missive. If all went well, the Hand would be here within the week...

Research

It is imperative at this point in your mission that you learn as much as possible about the golem and, if possible, its creator. Question and request witnesses, read and reread documents pertaining to golems, such as the one you now hold. Go to every site the golem was said to have attacked and search the area for clues as to the monster's abilities or weaknesses.

Forming a Hypothesis

Once you have gathered as much information as you can regarding golems in general and your foe in particular, you must take some time to hypothesize. If possible, discuss the situation with one or more of your associates; people analyze information differently, and you will surely cover more possibilities if you have assistance.

Go over the information you have and determine what type of golem you face. Any information you are certain of should be used as a springboard for your hypotheses. Additionally, it is wise to make estimations as to the possible upper extent of the golem's powers. Never assume that your foe is anything but the most powerful of creatures, for to do otherwise only places yourself and your companions at even greater risk than necessary.

... the next few days and nights passed in a blur as Jeffrey and I pored over our extensive notes and discussed what little we knew of our foe, including where and when the thing might make its next attack. Although we knew we were at a disadvantage, we decided it was highly likely the golem would return to this town within the month. For the disappearances happened approximately once every four weeks, and there seemed to be no particular reason why the "gibbering golem," as we had come to call our enemy, should change its established pattern.

Jeffrey's intimate knowledge of the town was particularly useful; he pointed out that all the women targeted by the golem had lived or worked near the town's southeastern edge. Thus we decided that the golem probably made its lair somewhere to the southeast. I asked Jeffrey whether any buildings lay in that direction, as many flesh golems prefer to inhabit the dwellings of mankind. Jeffrey immediately told me of the asylum. A smile came over his face as he realized what a critical turning point we had reached. Now we had a place to investigate...

Provisions

For any mission in which you plan to face one of the Created, it is imperative that you have the proper equipment. First and foremost, you must gather as many enchanted weapons as possible. It is inadvisable to invite anyone to accompany you in the hunt if they cannot wield such a weapon. Else, they have little chance of causing the golem any harm, much less of surviving, themselves.

It is also of vital importance to decide on a method of destroying the golem once you have felled the creature. The means must be swift and sure. If possible, you should form at least one contingency plan for the golem's destruction. Acid and magical fire are two good possibilities, as they both act swiftly and are harmful to the flesh golem. If you do not believe you will be able to utterly destroy the creature, then you can attempt to hack the golem's body into numerous pieces and scatter them widely. While it is true that such a dismembered golem might live to rise again later, you will at the least have removed its threat for the immediate future.

In addition to magical weapons, be certain that you have adequate first aid available to your group. Assume that some members of your hunting party will be seriously injured during the confrontation - for despite your best efforts, this is likely to occur. As noted earlier, at least one priest should accompany your hunting party. Two is an even better number. In addition, you should obtain bandages, antiseptics, and other medical paraphernalia. Finally, if at all possible, carry some magical, fast-acting medicines that anyone can administer, such as healing potions.

Reconnaissance

Unless you are already absolutely certain where the golem has established a lair, you must perform a reconnaissance mission prior to your actual attack. Two or three individuals at most best perform such a task - more can hardly proceed with the necessary stealth or secrecy. The risks are great at this stage. If the golem should discover those who would seek it out, blood will surely flow. (I speak, of course, of the hunters' lifeblood ebbing away, for the golem itself cannot truly bleed.)

Usually, such a reconnaissance mission is best performed at night. Be certain to remind all involved that there is to be absolutely no contact with the golem! For this reason, it is never wise to include an inexperienced or arrogant person on this particular team.

During the mission itself, attempt to position yourselves as far as possible from the suspected lair, while still maintaining a good view. You must then be patient and observe. If you have indeed found the creature's home, the golem will almost certainly show itself at some point over the course of the evening - and if not, then over the course of the next.

It is my experience that most golems are restless, however. They tend to move around their chosen abode quite a bit, rarely staying still for long. Additionally, most reside alone, for golems are generally solitary creatures by both force and habit. Thus, if a steady stream of revelers flow from a house, it is not likely to be a golem's abode. If you do not spot your quarry the first night, I would advise watching the suspected abode for up to three or even four nights before checking closer or moving on. Once you confirm where the golem resides, you can complete your plan of attack.

... With the Hand not due to arrive in town. for another two days, Jeffrey and I decided to investigate the asylum. At first I had objected to Jeffrey's accompanying me on this delicate task, but he argued so persuasively and calmly that I relented. Besides, I had no desire to spend the night alone, and two pairs of eyes are much more efficient than one.

Our vigil lasted well through the night. Just before dawn, we spotted our foe. He came skittering out of the forest, hooting and gibbering eerily, not two hundred yards from our position. I noted the thing's blinding speed and agility as it darted toward the asylum. In the predawn light, it was difficult to discern specifics, but even my weary eyes could make out the golem's misshapen, bulging form. I could feel poor Jeffrey shuddering beside me, and I am certain it was not from the cold. Despite his obvious horror, he was completely silent and did not flee. With the golem's lair confirmed, we returned to the town and awaited our fellows of the Hand.

Planning the Assault

As your final preparation before attempting to face your enemy, you should devise a plan and be certain that every member

of your party knows his or her appointed tasks. This plan should be as detailed as possible, but should by no means be rigid. The expedition's members should also attempt to talk through the various things that might go wrong during your mission so that you will be as prepared as possible, should your plan start to go awry. In addition to providing contingency plans, this sort of discussion allows the expedition members to express their concerns and renew their commitment to the mission.

In addition to the general contingency plans made, you should always have an escape plan. It is no sign of virtue to remain fighting if your current battle is a lost cause. If you do not live through the battle, you will not be able to return to complete your task. If at all possible, such an escape plan should not be contingent on any one member of the group, in case that member should fall, inadvertently trapping your entire party.

The Attack

When all is in readiness, your party armed and prepared, your plan set and reviewed, and you have gathered your resolve, it is time to face your foe. Despite your desire for a surprise attack, it is wise to make your assault during daylight hours, as you will almost assuredly be more hampered by the darkness and shadows than your foe.

Once you have set forth on your mission, move swiftly! This point is absolutely essential when fighting a golem. Throw all your power and resources into the assault immediately. If you hold back, you are surely doomed. Every second that you face the golem brings you closer to death, for the golem is capable of doing such extreme amounts of damage that few men can withstand more than a few of its mighty blows.

You must also realize that, despite all your attempts at speed, there is a very high likelihood that your opponent will rise again before you can destroy the golem utterly.

... It was a brutally cold morning, especially so for Darkon in October, but the sky was clear and the sun just slipping over the horizon as we set out on our mission. The five members of the Hand were as follows: the two priestly twins, Jamiilica and Serena; the elven warrior and mage Damien Lochwood; the Hand's indomitable warrior, Torus the Red; and the ever-quiet wizard, Corum of G'Henna. Counting myself and young Jeffrey, we were seven strong. As I looked over our group, I noticed the new blade gleaming by Jeffrey's waist, purchased just yesterday from Torus.

We proceeded to the asylum at an even pace. Entering the building was simple, for the door stood open to the elements. Proceeding cautiously, we stepped into the dank interior. My first thought was of the ruined hospices I had visited in Stangengrad. The shattered remains of bottles and jars littered the hall, and the smell of antiseptic mixed jarringly with the odor of decay. Steeling myself for the coming battle, we proceeded.

As we turning the corner of that gloomy hall, I had to grab Torus's arm; a man suddenly stood before us, and Torus was prepared to swing. But the man was no golem-though he looked to be near death. Gaunt and staring, his arms poised before him, the man stood as still as a statue. Even as we took in the sight of the catatonic fellow before us, I noticed other men, who were shuffling aimlessly about in the shadows. Obviously the golem ignored many of the asylum's now freed inmates. So far, none appeared dangerous. But I feared an encounter with a murderous madman could weaken our party before we even met the golem, and I hoped our luck would hold.

By the time we actually encountered the golem, we were all feeling the strain of constant readiness. It did not help that we had been wandering through a maze of lunatics, dead bodies, and general filth. Before we could get our bearings, the golem came tumbling down upon us, landing on top of poor Damien's back. With a brief laugh, the thing snapped the elf's neck and dropped to the floor. Then, screaming and hooting, it attacked again.

Immediately Serena began to chant, her spell of regeneration twisting and tearing at the golem's form while it battled on. As Serena's powerful prayer took effect, the intensity of the golem's hooting increased, and I could feel the terror pulling at my heart. Shaking, I saw Torus turn to flee - only to be struck down by the golem before he could run!

Moments dragged by as we struggled with all our might to deflect the golem's mighty blows. Although I knew the creature must soon fall to the power of Serena's spell, every passing second seemed an eternity, and my arms were growing leaden with fatigue...

Destroying the Golem

It is essential that all is in readiness for the attempted destruction of the golem. Once the golem falls, you will have an extremely brief window of opportunity to accomplish this goal.

If, for whatever reason, you do not believe you will be able to destroy the golem utterly within a few minutes of its fall, *then you must flee immediately.*

If you do not, be prepared to face a fresh and unharmed foe, while your party is almost assuredly possessed of serious injuries. Fighting a golem under such conditions will inevitably result in failure, and in failing there is certain death for you and your companions.

... As Jeffrey blocked a final, swiping blow by the golem, the creature slumped forward - its awful, terrorizing laughter echoing in our ears.

Three of my companions lay on the ground, wounded but miraculously still alive. Damien, of course, was dead. Only Serena, Jeffrey, and I had any fight left when the golem fell. Immediately, we withdrew our phials of acid. We carefully poured the contents over the creature, then stepped away from the fumes, dragging our companions to their feet. We would not know for a few minutes whether we had acted quickly enough. I bade Serena to help the others outside - and to flee, if necessary. The three of us remaining waited. I cannot tell you how deeply it shook me to see the golem's hand rise, but it seems we were just in time, as it moved no more after that.

When we were certain of its death, we burned what tittle remained of the gibbering golem so that there would be no chance of its being reanimated once more.

As a final note, I am happy to report that Jeffrey has joined the Hand and is currently studying to be a mage. We need such young people to take up the fight against evil, for none of us will live forever.

When the madness and terror of the fight is concluded, you must tend to the wounded and bury the dead. If you have been so fortunate and skilled to have utterly destroyed your foe, you should be very proud of your great accomplishment.

Unfortunately, this sort of total victory is a rarity when fighting the Created. So do not be chagrined if you have but temporarily driven off the creature. This too is a worthy accomplishment when faced with such a deadly foe as the golem.

As a final word to you, my readers, I wish to salute you for your dedication and sacrifice in the service of others. It is no small thing to strive to be a force of light in the face of such fiendish, burning evil as is embodied in the Created!

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Horror really can't be talked about because it's alive, because it's mute and goes on growing: memory-wounding pain drips by day, drips in sleep.

- George Seferis, *Last Stop*

Appendix for the DM

Seferis' quote captures an important quality of horror and the horrible. What is truly horrifying cannot be conveyed by mere words. In the face of our worst nightmares, language fails us. We are stripped of all civilized conventions, of our secure knowledge of what can and cannot be, and we are left alone, incapable of trusting what we have always relied on.

Golems are horrifying creatures on many levels, not the least of which is their strange parody of humanity. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the villagers see a hideous monster and immediately leap to the conclusion that it is a monstrous being both inside and out. At first this may not be the case, but as the monster is rejected again and again by those it meets, as Dr. Frankenstein fights to control its body and soul, the monster indeed becomes what the villagers have condemned it to be: a creature of irrefutable evil.

The Created's closeness to ourselves brings the horror into our very laps. It is difficult to ignore or escape. In the movie *Halloween*, a murderous child known as Michael Myers returns to his placid middle-class suburban neighborhood to wreak mindless, unstoppable violence on the teens living there, and he does so with unnerving calm. (Myers is the prototype of a new wave of Hollywood golems that includes Jason and Chucky.) At the end of the movie, despite the best efforts of the film's heroine, and despite the fact that he should have been dead many times over, Michael disappears into the darkness.

There is no reasoning with golems, no understanding their true nature. They do seem to have a perverse understanding of us, however. Still, this understanding never leads to compassion. Rather, it only imbues the golem with a greater capacity for tracking and tormenting its victims.

Golems are the true bogeymen of the AD&D game. They are the creatures lurking under the bed, the things that go bump in the night. When a golem is handled to its best advantage during play, no other monster can equal the sheer heart-stopping terror it creates in a campaign.

Golem Adventures

There are four basic elements of particular importance to golem adventures: obsession, terror, intimacy, and tragedy. The whole tenor of an adventure can change by focusing upon a particular element or elements. For instance, using Dr. Van Richten's gibbering golem as an example, if the DM focuses on the tragic situation of the creature, born into a chaotic world with only the insane for company, desperately searching for a soul mate, the PCs may see their mission as one of release: freeing the gibbering golem from its mad and doomed existence. However, if the relentlessness of the golem is the focus of the scenario, the PCs may well begin to think *they* are mad as effort after effort fails to stop the horrid thing that laughs at them from the shadows and seems to be waiting around every corner, behind every door.

Before a Dungeon Master begins to work on a scenario involving golems, each of these four elements should be considered and their importance to the particular story determined. By taking just a little extra time and effort, the DM can provide the players with a scenario that is not just scary, but magnificently horrifying.

Obsession

Almost without exception, the creation of an intelligent golem involves obsession. Only through the obsessive drive of its creator can such a golem achieve life. Would-be creators who lack this obsession simply never succeed.

Obsession, as both a creative and destructive force, is an integral element of any golem scenario. The DM may use a creator's obsession to show the PCs the danger of such all-consuming drive. The creator reaches his goal, but at a horrible

expense.

Conversely, in order for a party to defeat a golem, they must give up a great deal and devote their energies almost obsessively to the task at hand. The DM can easily slip in an encounter or two where the PCs must choose between temporarily backing down or sacrificing their principles to more easily reach their goal. Obsession is purpose without balance. It involves an inability to see any viewpoint save one's own. Such a powerful emotion can create great good, pushing people to new heights they thought were unattainable. However, it can also become an end in and of itself.

Shakespeare often used obsessive characters as villains in his tragedies. Lady Macbeth would stop at nothing to gain power and position. Both golems and their creators are consumed by obsessions, and through these monsters we see our own faults grown to epic proportions.

Terror

The golem is the ultimate bogeyman. It is an unrelenting foe, seemingly unstoppable. This element of primal terror is particularly relevant to scenarios involving the Created.

From the time we are children, we fear what we do not understand. Even more frightening is the enemy we cannot reason with or have power over. Golems are just such foes. Vampires, werewolves, and other classic monsters walk among us (at least at times), speak with us, and participate in society to an extent. All may share a particular Achilles heal, such as sunlight for the vampire, or the silver bullet for the werewolf. But golems do not participate in human society. And golem hunters have no foolproof weapon at their disposal.

Many players participate in a *Ravenloft* campaign because they enjoy the fear it inspires within them. It's the same reason we visit "haunted houses," tell ghost stories, and watch horror films. We like to be scared (at least through imaginary situations). For the DM, a golem is an ideal monster to just plain "scare the bejeezes" out of their players. For such thrill-seeking players, not much can top the horror of being certain you have destroyed your enemy - only to see it rise up again, good as new. After this has happened more than once, even hardened adventurers may be jumping at shadows and flinching away from every unexplained noise.

Intimacy

A common theme in gothic horror is the intimate situation - a comforting familiarity with a person or place that leads characters to drop their guards despite impending danger. In a golem adventure, characters should find themselves in a situation marked by such comforting familiarity. The Created often seek out human civilization and haunt its edges, sometimes yearning for acceptance, other times merely looking for prey. Thus, even the most familiar setting can be the site of a golem scenario. But even if the PCs are in a strange town, they might still find a warm inn or a friendly tavern. When violence and fear strike in such comforting surroundings, the result is far more confusing and horrifying than, say, being attacked while crossing an ore tribe's lands.

As noted, an intimate situation may involve familiar people as well as places. For example, perhaps the golem's creator has stolen the animating spirit from someone the PCs know and care for. While the group may realize this awful truth at first, the golem may retain certain memories about the party and use the information against them. For example, if a character's mother has been ill, the golem might leave crude notes asking whether she has recovered.

Such a golem is particularly appropriate for the role of a recurring enemy. All golems make excellent recurring foes, of course, due to their power and regenerative abilities. But a creature whose spirit was linked to the PCs both before and after animation can add a neatly macabre note to confrontations. And having a PC wake to discover some evidence that a former acquaintance laid beside him in the night - when the PC had no idea that character was even in the area let alone still alive - can be as intimately horrifying as the kiss of the succubus. Of course, as the PCs soon discover, that former acquaintance will most certainly have changed for the worse.

Even more intimate and horrifying is discovering that a member of one's own adventuring party has been placed within the body of a golem. Such adventures approach their peak of horror as the golem PC rapidly begins to lose control, and his friends attempt to reverse the terrible transplantation before it is too late. This type of adventure is extremely tricky to run, however. Pacing and balance are critical. To maintain effective tension, the DM must emphasize the golem PC's gradual loss of identity and control (which is the true horror), while still allowing the party some hope of saving the PC. If this balance

can be struck correctly, however, you can be sure your players talk about this adventure for a long time to come.

Tragedy

Although golems are creatures of darkness, they are also creatures of great tragedy. As noted in Chapter Two, a golem may be animated by the life force stolen from another living being. During the course of its "kidnapping," the spirit becomes warped. However, it still maintains some idea of its former self, some memory of who it once was. The doomed spirit, twisted by the malignant obsessions of its creator, is evil and must be destroyed. The heart of the golem's tragic existence lies in both the tiny shred of humanity forever trapped within the golem's body and in the golem's initial doomed attempts to reach out to others from its utter isolation.

Frankenstein's monster is an excellent example of the doomed creation of a mad scientist. The creature yearns for companionship, acceptance, and even love, but its true nature can never allow the monster to attain these goals. Struggling and raging against its creator, its own nature, and the world that rejects it, Frankenstein's monster is a study in tragedy.

The golem's creator can also be portrayed as a tragic figure. With only minor modifications in the case history Dr. Van Richten presented in the last chapter, Fressen could be seen as a tragic figure. If his cold and disapproving father had murdered Danalie and then sent the grieving and shocked Fressen to the asylum, his story would truly be tragic and his creation of the golem "Father" seen as a pathetic attempt at finding love and acceptance himself.

The tremendous amount of destruction and loss of life can also bring a great deal of tragedy into the adventure. If the PCs must ride into a small village rent asunder by a golem, only to find a few children left alive of all the village's residents, or a mother sobbing over her dead child, they should certainly be moved by such a scene.

Techniques of Terror

When portraying golems in an adventure, it can be wise to pick up some tricks from horror novels and films. In general, think about what books or movies you find scary and then ask yourself why they scare you. Often, when a person is asked to think of what particular event scares him, he cites something along these lines: A monster jumps out of a closet at the hero. But what they actually found scariest was the tension as the hero walked through the house. Knowing that there is a monster out there *somewhere* is much scarier than simply having it stand before you. When the monster comes out from under the bed, you can at least attack.

Gothic horror relies heavily upon the fear of the unknown. Golems are an ideal way to bring this sort of terror into an AD&D campaign. They are inscrutable, they are evil personified, and they are out there somewhere. Maintaining this sense of uncertainty and imminent danger is one of the best ways of putting a party on edge.

Here's another method of enhancing the fear caused by a golem: Never let the PCs get a good look at their foe until the final confrontation. While playing the role of NPCs, arrange for a few horrified witnesses to mumble about "those terrible, terrible eyes" or some such. Let the PCs see the devastation wrought by the creature. When the heroes arrive on the scene of such destruction, time the adventure so they're only a few moments too late, again and again, though they may catch a glimpse of the fleeting creature. In short, allow the players' own imaginations to do some of your work for you. After all, each of us has our own particular fears, and the images they conjure in our minds are those which horrify us the most.

The movie *Alien* provides an excellent example of this visual restraint. Ripley and the other crewmembers of their space freighter first see the young alien as it emerges from a crewmember's stomach (killing him in the process). The viewer shares their horror as the victim's stomach bulges and pulses, yet the creature itself is seen only fleetingly. Then the crewmembers know an alien is aboard their ship, but they can find only its trail—the skin that it sheds as it grows and grows. One by one, the crewmembers are picked off and eaten; still, we are granted little more than a glimpse of the attacker. (This film is also an excellent example of utilizing more than just sight to create horror and suspense. Sound, touch, smell, and taste are all important senses and should not be ignored when describing both your monster and the surroundings the PCs are in.)

Another means of making the Created truly terrifying is to emphasize their relentlessness. This quality is best conveyed through extremes: a golem displaying primal levels of emotion and destruction, or a golem that exhibits a complete absence of these qualities. In the latter case, for example, the enemy may walk at the same, deliberate pace, no matter what its

victims do or how fast they run. This can be vastly more frightening than a golem who performs the pell-mell attack typical of many monsters. After all, a creature who feels no need to hurry must be confident in its eventual success. This technique is especially effective when the PCs are on the run. The use of a recurrent golem foe (as discussed above under *intimacy*) can also be an excellent device for wearing at the PCs' nerves and causing them to feel always on the alert.

A final method that often proves effective in provoking fear is a horror movie stand-by that goes something like this: Create tension (Billy sneaks through the gymnasium trying to escape the monster he knows is out there), then create a shock (suddenly a dark figure looms up behind Billy), which turns out to be a false alarm (it's only Billy's goofy friend, Eddie, wondering what Billy's doing), and *then* spring the real shock on the relaxed audience (now the monster strikes').

Of course, some players are hard sells, and if all your techniques to cause horrified and fearful reactions in your players fail, you can resort to using fear and horror checks. But it is infinitely more fun for all concerned if the PCs are actually scared and horrified.

Creating New Golems

Imagine you've decided which elements of horror you'd like to emphasize during your adventure, and have begun to develop a story line. You've decided who is attempting to create a golem and why. Now it's time to determine the exact nature of the golem, the malevolent heart of your story. The methods outlined below will help you create a unique monster especially suited to your campaign.

Using the Monstrous Manual Tome

The simplest and quickest method of creating a new golem is to consult the golem entries in the *Monstrous Manual* book and the *Ravenloft* appendices to the *Monstrous Compendium* series. Even though these golems are automatons created by wizards and priests, as opposed to intelligent creatures born of an obsession, the descriptions can still provide a useful springboard.

In any case, start by considering the golem's creator. Is he (or she) a blacksmith, for example? Consult the entry for the golem variety that best suits the creator and your story line (such as iron for the blacksmith).

Even using this sort of shortcut, you can create a unique golem. In fact, it's always a good idea to adjust the standard creature a bit so that your PCs must remain on their toes, not knowing exactly what type of enemy they face. Uncertainty will add excitement, fear, and mystery to your adventure.

During play, be careful not to make a pronouncement like this: "It looks like a flesh golem." Such a statement completely deflates what is otherwise a dramatic moment: the moment the PCs see their foe. Instead, describe the hideous, lumbering humanoid with a lopsided face, sagging skin, and huge hands, smelling faintly of blood and decay, or a fiendish creature that leaps from a rooftop and lands before the PCs as deftly as a cat. This kind of description prevents the players from recognizing the creature and immediately making a mental roster of its combat abilities.

When you've created a golem based on a standard type, it's especially important to prolong some of the mystery about that creature during play. One of the golem's main strengths is its resiliency. If the PCs are unaware of the exact nature of their enemy, they will be extremely shocked when the golem rises up from "death", apparently unharmed.

Starting from Scratch

This method for building a new golem takes more time, but the results will reflect that effort. You'll have complete control over your creation, and can tailor the golem to your exact specifications.

Earlier in this book, Van Richten presented common traits, vulnerabilities, and extraordinary powers of golems. These can serve as guidelines for your new creature. Consider the information to be suggestions only; it is not intended to be a rigid system of inflexible rules. The purpose of this book is to open up possibilities and expand the options of you, the DM, not to limit your creativity.

When building golems from scratch, remember how powerful these monsters are. Be careful to balance the golem's special abilities with at least a few vulnerabilities. It is a delicate task to create a monster that appears nearly unstoppable, but is also

a monster the PCs have a chance of defeating. The gibbering golem described by Dr. Van Richten is an example of a golem "created from scratch."

PC Golems

If your story calls for the spirit of an NPC to be planted in the body of a golem, plotting the adventure is relatively easy. But what happens if a player character is the victim? This potentially dramatic twist poses special challenges. Certainly, the desperate fight to save the PC is the stuff of great adventure. However, becoming a golem must in no way benefit the PC.

In most cases, a golem's animating force, or spirit, has only the fragmented memory of its former self, and then only briefly. However, if your story calls for a PC's spirit to be transferred to a golem body, then the personality of the character should remain intact for a short time. This allows the PC and his friends a window of opportunity in which to save the unfortunate character. Bear in mind, however, that the sudden disruption of changing bodies is *always* followed by the deterioration of the PC's mind and personality as he rapidly becomes a creature of obsession and evil.

The section below explains how long a PC's spirit may inhabit a golem before this atrocity is irreversible (and the player must abandon his or her role). It also describes what happens to a PC's personality and abilities when he becomes a golem. You may wish to devise your own methods of golem animation, but the following guidelines should provide a springboard for your imagination.

The Energy Surge

As noted in Chapter Two, a powerful surge of energy binds a spirit to the golem's body. When that surge occurs, the PC must make a system shock check. If he fails this check, his body dies during the transfer of the spirit, and the player must immediately give control of his character to you, the DM. The player should then create a new character, for the old one is permanently lost, trapped within its new golem body.

On the other hand, if the system shock roll is successful, the PC finds himself a golem. Within 2 to 24 (2d12) hours, the character will remember his true identity, although he will only have hazy memories of his transformation. He will have an acute sense of physical power, however - a power derived from his new form.

Brain Transplants

An adventure in which the physical brain of a player character is placed within the body of a golem offers an even more extreme plot twist. This ploy should only be used if you feel the PCs will have some chance, however slim, of restoring their comrade to his original state. There is an added difficulty, as the PC's body almost assuredly (barring extreme magical measures such as the use of a *time stop* spell or the like) actually dies during the physical operation. The death of the character's body makes it that much more difficult for his companions to restore the unfortunate PC. In any case, the PC must make a successful system shock roll to survive. (See "Reversing the Transformation" for more information.)

Changes by Class

When the mind and personality of a PC enter the body of a golem, the character's abilities can change dramatically. These effects are explained below. Of course, the normal changes first imposed on PCs when they entered the dark lands of *Ravenloft* are still in effect. Avengers, arcanists, and gypsies are all character classes that are defined in the *Domains of Dread*, rulebook.

Warriors and Avengers: Save for the tremendous strength of the warrior's adopted golem body, the change does not significantly affect the PC's abilities. However, if the warrior utilizes this prodigious strength (or any of the other abilities of his new form) in combat, the character will find himself that much further from salvation (see "Effects on Personality," below). Avengers, while in a golem body, are less focused on their creator as they are on their nemesis. If their nemesis is within 10 miles, they may develop a telepathic link, like that a normal golem has with its creator. They lose all other benefits, and may find it hard to resist using their golem powers.

Paladins: A paladin entering the body of a golem in *Ravenloft* loses almost all of the paladin's powers. The paladin cannot successfully discover whether a being is chaotic while in the new body, nor can he heal himself or others while in golem

form.

The paladin does, however, receive one small boon: He is no longer detectable by the lord of the domain. Further, he retains the ability to turn undead. However, any attempt to do so suffers a -4 penalty due to the increased difficulty the paladin has at focusing his willpower and faith while in the golem body. If the paladin ever uses one of the golem's many abilities, or when he inevitably begins to be corrupted by his new form, he suffers an alignment change and loses all the special abilities of his class (see "Effects On Personality," below). In order to regain the paladin's abilities and alignment, the character must (at a minimum) embark on a holy quest. DMs must determine the effect on a paladin's powers when in a golem in lands other than the Domains of Dread.

Rangers: Rangers completely lose their animal empathy while in the body of a golem. Animals can sense the unnaturalness of the ranger's new form and instinctively shy away. If the ranger has any animal followers, they too will avoid their master. The animals will have no idea what has happened to the ranger. It is entirely possible they'll think the character has died and then move on. If the ranger regains his own body, the animals will return, provided they're still in the area.

Wizards and Arcanists: When placed within the body of a golem, a wizard immediately loses all ability to cast spells. Although the character retains the knowledge necessary to work magic, the body and brain of a golem are incapable of channeling the necessary energies. Try as he might, the wizard cannot master magic of any sort until he is returned to his own body. Arcanists are affect much the same as wizards. They can still, to a degree, enforce their will upon the mindless dead, however. All such attempts are to turn or command undead suffer a -4 penalty. The Arcanist's knowledge of forbidden lore is not affected.

If the wizard has a familiar, the character may well lose that companion forever. The familiar itself runs a risk of dying from the psychological shock of the character's transfiguration. When a wizard becomes a golem, the player should roll a saving throw vs. death magic for the animal. If the check is successful, the familiar survives. If not, the result is fatal.

However, even if the poor familiar survives the initial trauma, it will remain in a state of shock and attempt to flee the area. If the familiar is not stopped, chances are it will never be seen again, and any remaining bond between the mage and the animal will dissolve. However, if the familiar is somehow kept in the area and the wizard is restored to his normal body, the wizard can attempt once, and only once, to restore the bond. In order to do so, the mage must again cast the *find familiar* spell. If successful, the mage will regain the bond with his familiar.

If the above method fails, however, the familiar will view the mage as dangerous and will make every attempt to flee. It will never again be the wizard's familiar, and the wizard's powers are as affected as if the familiar had died.

Priests: Like a paladin, a priest who is placed in the body of a golem finds it extremely difficult to focus his faith and willpower. Thus, attempts at turning the undead incur a -4 penalty. This penalty is in addition to any other penalties the priest may suffer due to other conditions in *Ravenloft*.

The priest's spellcasting abilities are also affected. While in a golem body, the priest can cast no spells above 3rd level. Additionally, the base chance of spell failure is 50%. For every point of Wisdom over 12, this percentage is reduced by 5. Thus, a priest with a Wisdom of 15 has a 35% chance of spell failure while in a golem body.

Rogues: If a rogue is placed in a golem's body, his abilities change to match the physical traits of the new form. However, unless the body has exceptionally dexterous digits and limbs, the rogue will suffer a penalty to any skills requiring finesse (lock picking, picking pockets, etc.). This penalty normally ranges from -10% to -50%. It is up to the DM to determine the specific penalties involved.

In addition to suffering the penalties just noted, a bard or a gypsy in the body of a golem can no longer utilize any of his magical abilities, including the ability to charm. Further, like the wizard, he cannot cast spells.

Effects on Personality

During the initial hours following a player character's transfer to a golem body, he becomes acquainted with the amazing strength of his new form. However, while power is gained, much is at stake: The transfer to golem form puts the character squarely on the path to becoming a creature of evil, in mind as well as body.

As the DM, you should describe in vivid detail the character's newfound physical prowess and abilities. However, if the

character ever uses these abilities - the abilities of an inherently monstrous form - the inevitable dissolution of the character's personality occurs more swiftly.

Any time the PC uses a golem ability, you should make a powers check for that character. The base chance of attracting the attention of dark powers of the *Demiplane* should be roughly 10%. Feel free to vary this chance based on how and why the character has used his abilities. (For example, if he was saving a small child from harm, the chance might only be 5%, but if the PC used his powers for personal gain, the percentage should be much higher.) The *Ravenloft Domains of Dread* rulebook offers more advice for adjudicating PC actions and powers checks.

If the PC fails a powers check, make a note of it. Later, if the PC is successfully returned to his own body, describe the effects of that failure. These checks are cumulative. Thus, it is entirely possible for an incautious PC to find himself a creature of Ravenloft - an MFC - even as he thinks he has been saved.

This descent into darkness leads only so far. The PC *will not* reach the final stage through any actions the PC golem takes, and thus will not become a lord of a domain. Instead, once a PC golem has reached that point, actions that would otherwise require further checks merely cause his personality to dissolve at even greater speed.

In particular, for every powers check "skipped," the PC golem's personality immediately shifts to the next level of dissolution shown in Table 7: Timetable for Personality Dissolution. Thus, a PC whose personality was in the balanced category before the evil act would decline to faint, thereby conning one step closer to total personality loss and NPC status.

Unfortunately for the poor PC, even if he refrains from using the dark abilities of his new body, he merely keeps alive for a brief while longer the slim hope of returning to his former self. The amount of time a PC has before he becomes an NPC is based on the character's Wisdom and whether or not his brain was transplanted into the golem's body. Characters who've undergone such a transplant tend to retain their own personalities for a slightly greater period of time, as more of their "true self" inhabits the body.

Table 7: Timetable for Personality Dissolution

Mental State	Wisdom						
	3-4	5-7	8-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	17-18
<i>Intact</i>	1 day	1 day	1 day	2 days	2 days	3 days	3 days
<i>Dominant</i>	2 days	3 days	5 days	6 days	8 days	9 days	10 days
<i>Balanced</i>	2 days	4 days	6 days	7 days	8 days	9 days	11 days
<i>Faint</i>	2 days	2 days	2 days	3 days	3 days	4 days	4 days
<i>Golem</i>	8th day	11th day	15th day	19th day	22th day	26th day	29th day

Notes: First, locate the column for the PC's Wisdom. The text in that column describes the length of time spent in each mental state. Each time the PC uses any golem power, Wisdom is reduced by -1 for purposes of determining rate of personality decay. If the PC's brain was transplanted into the golem body, add 1 day to the duration of each stage.

Stages of Dissolution

The Table 7: Timetable for Personality Dissolution how many days elapse before a PC's personality disintegrates and he is forever lost. This disintegration is marked by five stages: intact, dominant, balanced, faint, and golem. Consult the column corresponding to the character's Wisdom. Anytime the PC uses the powers of his new form, however, his Wisdom is reduced by 1 point for purposes of determining the rate of the character's decline.

The text below defines each of the five stages of personality dissolution. This information should be shared with the player trapped in the golem body, so he can attempt to roleplay accordingly. If the player does not do so, however, feel free to have the PC make both fear and horror checks as he slowly feels himself losing control.

Intact: The PC's personality is essentially unchanged at this first stage. However, the PC should certainly be horrified by his situation and behave accordingly.

Dominant: Minor changes occur in the PC's personality. Although the PC is still in charge, tell the character he feels angry, moody, and hurt over minor incidents that would normally not bother him at all.

Balanced: At this point, the PC is truly caught up in the struggle to control his personality. No matter what the PC's original alignment was, it now becomes chaotic due to the PC's inner turmoil. Tell the PC he feels great confusion and strange desires, and that he is beginning to feel his control slipping away. The PC's mood begins to swing even more erratically than before.

Faint: By this point the PC has lost almost all of his original personality. The golem personality has gained the upper hand, and you should only allow the player to take the role of the PC only for brief intervals. At other times, you should control the PC, treating him as a young golem.

Golem: The PC has now lost his struggle and is a golem in every sense. The player has lost a character, for the golem is an NPC.

The Inner Struggle

While the PC is within the golem body, the character is in a constant struggle to maintain control of both his mind and body. Such a struggle is intense, and any sort of conflict or surprise can cause the PC to lose his grip, even if only for a short while. Even something so small as another party member or an NPC disagreeing with the PC golem may cause the PC to lose control.

Whenever violence of any kind occurs, when anyone disagrees strongly with the words or actions of the PC golem, or when the PC golem is surprised, consult the table to the left to determine whether the PC maintains control. (Find the row corresponding to the character's personality state, then roll 1d6 to find the column listing the PC's reaction.) As the DM, you may also make this "self-control" check whenever you deem it appropriate.

Table 8: PC Golem Self-Control

Personality Level	Roll 1d6					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Intact</i>	A	A	A	B	C	D
<i>Dominant</i>	A	A	B	B	C	D
<i>Balanced</i>	A	B	C	C	D	D
<i>Faint</i>	B	C	C	D	D	D

Key:

- A) PC remains in control of actions.
- B) PC flees scene for 1d4 rounds.
- C) PC attacks nearest nonparty member(s); regains senses in 1d10 rounds.
- D) PC loses control and attacks anything in sight for 1d10 rounds.

Reversing the Transformation

The methods for restoring a PC golem to his rightful body vary according to the manner in which the character's life essence was originally transferred: through a surge of energy, or a through a brain transplant.

The Energy Surge: In this case, those who conduct the reverse transfer must possess both bodies: the character's own and the golem's. They must then utilize some sort of powerful energy charge again. The amount of power required is a matter for you, the DM, to decide. However, this reversal definitely calls for some effort and planning on the part of the PCs. The most important factor to consider is what type of quest you and your players will most enjoy. Several possible scenarios are outlined below. Whatever the method, however, when the reversal is attempted, the character must make a successful system shock roll. If the PC fails this check, the character and both bodies die.

☼ The party sets up a "Dr. Frankenstein" style laboratory (or uses the creator's lab, if he had one). Lightning is somehow harnessed to create the necessary energy surge.

- ☛ The adventurers become detectives, hunting in old libraries and ancient ruins to rediscover ancient alchemical formulae. One of these concoctions, when swallowed, frees the spirit to return to its body, while the second forces a spirit to leave its current form.
- ☛ The party uncovers information regarding a legendary magical pool that will reverse such a terrible transformation, provided both bodies are placed within it. Or perhaps they discover a legendary portal, and both bodies must be sent through it. This type of storyline can be used to send the party on an urgent quest in which they must fight against both time and any obstacles the DM places in their way to save their companion.
- ☛ Some bizarre magical item may also be used to place a PC in the body of a golem or to replace the PC in his original body.

Transplantation: For obvious reasons, both bodies must be on hand to attempt a reverse transplantation of the brain. The procedure is complicated by two factors: the physical operation needed and the (probable) physical "death" of the PC's body. The operation must be performed quickly, and a *heal* spell must be cast on the PC's own body at the moment the brain is replaced. The PC must make a successful system shock roll to survive this surgery.

If the PC's original body is dead, a *resurrection* spell must also be employed immediately following the heal spell. However, if the PC's body has been kept alive somehow, this second step is unnecessary. If the operation is successfully completed before the PC's personality has deteriorated, the PC will be restored.

Lasting Effects

Even if a PC golem is successfully restored to his original human or demihuman state, he still bears the scars of this horrendous experience. Recovery from such trauma is slow, and it may never be complete.

The text below describes the lingering effects of such a reversal. The damage incurred depends on how long the PC was trapped in the golem body. Effects are cumulative, so a PC who reached the "balanced" stage mentally receives all the ill effects of the earlier stages as well as the effects noted for the balanced stage.

Intact: The PC automatically suffers the effects of a failed horror check.

Dominant: The PC's Charisma score is reduced by 2 points due to mood swings and difficulty relating to others. Such the moodiness and resulting loss of Charisma last from one to four (1d4) months.

Balanced: The PC loses one experience level due to extensive memory loss.

Faint: The PC suffers from a *split personality*. In times of great stress (DM discretion), the PC's "dark side" may emerge and take control. The PC must make a Wisdom check with a -2 penalty to avoid slipping into his secondary personality.

If the PC does change personalities, he comes under the control of the DM for a period of one to four (1d4) turns. When the PC recovers from one of these episodes, he will remember nothing of that time period. This effect can only be cured by *heal*, *wish*, or a similar spell.

A Final Caution

As the DM, you should think carefully before creating any PC golems in your campaigns. Players do not like having their characters manhandled, especially when such treatment results in the death of their favorite character! However, you may wish to utilize the unique element of personal horror that a PC golem adds to an AD&D campaign. Seeing your friend struggle to control an alien and evil body (or having a character in such a position), and managing to save the individual is truly a heroic task. If the PCs should fail in their task, knowing the hideous creature who is now their enemy was once a valued companion should horrify party members. Whenever a PC realizes he is confronting a golem that was once a friend, the PC must make both fear and horror checks.

Golem, Flesh, Ravenloft

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Very Rare
Organization:	Solitary
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Nil
Intelligence:	Average
Treasure:	Nil
Alignment:	Chaotic neutral or evil
No. Appearing:	1
Armor Class:	6
Movement:	12
Hit Dice:	9 (40 hp)
THAC0:	11
No. of Attacks:	2 (fists)
Damage/Attack:	2d8/2d8
Special Attacks:	Strangulation
Special Defenses:	See below
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	L (7'-8' tall)
Morale:	Fearless (19)
XP Value:	5,000

The madman who fashions a flesh golem must harvest its parts from at least six corpses: one for each limb, another for the head and torso, and yet another for the creature's brain. Most creators use an even larger collection of parts. For instance, the eyes may be drawn from one body, while the hands come from another. The result, sewn into a scarred mass, is always ghastly. While individual golems vary in appearance, none has the flat head and neck bolts common to old horror movies.

Combat: The Ravenloft flesh golem is made of strangely "living" tissue, but its body is highly resilient. White fire and acid cause normal damage, nonmagical weapons cannot penetrate its skin; only weapons of +1 or greater enchantment can strike it. Attacks from monsters of at least 4+1 Hit Dice also harm the golem (PCs don't qualify).

The flesh golem is immune to all cold and electrical attacks. (Note that electricity does not regenerate hit points, as it does for the flesh golems created in other campaign worlds.) The Ravenloft flesh golem is also immune to toxins, disease, and any attack that involves a biological function alien to the creature - in particular breathing, resting, or aging.

Most spells do not affect the golem. It cannot be teleported. It is immune to all mind-affecting magic, such as *charm person* and *sleep*. However, it cannot automatically detect invisible creatures or see through illusions, unless the corresponding magic is cast directly upon the golem (*phantasmal killer*, for example).

Excluding cold or electrical attacks, magical assaults that cause a loss of hit points can harm the golem. However, it gains a +4 bonus to its saving throw against such attacks. While failure means it incurs damage, most other spell effects are ignored. This applies only to spells cast directly upon the golem, including those with an area effect. It does not include "side effects." For example, if a *wall of stone* falls on a golem, the golem does not eliminate the wall with its touch. The golem is also vulnerable to *wish*, *limited wish*, and level-draining attacks (though it always gets a +4 saving throw bonus to avoid a loss of hit points).

The golem has a special attack, which it can use when it pleases. If it strikes with both fists in the same round, it can begin strangling its victim during the next round. Strangulation causes 3d8 points of damage each round - automatically. The victim cannot escape unless he has a Strength of 19 or greater. It is possible for two people to break the golem's grip (one on each arm), provided each person has a Strength of at least 17.

The Ravenloft flesh golem boasts unique regenerative powers. It recovers 1 hit point an hour, whether or not it is resting. If its hit points drop below 0, the creature ceases to heal. The body is not dead, however, merely incapacitated. The mind is unconscious. If at least 50% of the creature's parts remain intact, the golem can be stitched and repaired. If it then receives a bolt of electricity, it reawakens, fully restored.

Only fire and acid can permanently destroy the body of the flesh golem. Anything less, and the creature may be reanimated at a later date. Fire is also harmful indirectly; the golem fears it. Unless it makes a successful fear check (save vs. paralyzation), it must remain at least 10 feet from small flames (cooking fires, torches, etc.) and at least 25 feet from larger flames (bonfires, many torches together, and so on). Even a lit match may anger it, though no check is required. The fear check number for flesh golems is 12 (the usual number is 8, but a -4 penalty is imposed). If a golem is forced too close to a flame, consult the fear check results table in *Domains of Dread* to determine the creature's reaction.

Habitat/Society: Ravenloft flesh golems are fashioned by mad men - from scientists to artisans - and given life by the mysterious forces of the *Demiplane*. They live as hermits and long to be accepted by mankind, though most are too evil or insane to fit in. The inevitable rejection they suffer leads to a deep hatred of living creatures, especially humans and demihumans. Most eventually murder their creators.

The animating spirit belongs to the brain used to make the golem, or that of another creature transferred into it. This spirit is usually warped in the process, however. Therefore, it's much more primitive and childlike, and may retain very little memory of its former existence.

Ecology: Flesh golems have no meaningful place in the environment.

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Ghosts

The boundarief which divide Life from
Death are at best shadowy and vague.
Who shall say where the one ends,
and where the other begins?



- Edgar Allan Poe
The Premature Burial

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*Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her shin was white as leprosy,
The nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.*

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge
"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

Introduction

For as long as the people of our world have kept written records, the comings and goings of spirits among us have been noted. Some ghosts appear as lights or recognizable shapes hovering in darkness. Others seem to be real people or creatures, but they are nothing more than insubstantial images - as incorporeal as they are unliving. Ghosts are known in all shapes and sizes. They undertake macabre missions toward deadly goals, and have any number of motivations. Most are evil, some indifferent, and few good and kind.

In this work, I shall examine all known types of ghosts. I shall share with you what I can of my knowledge and pray with all my heart that it may be enough to keep you alive if you encounter such spirits by chance or design. If all else fails, I pray even more that this knowledge shall be enough to allow you to rest in true death and not to rise and haunt the night as an apparition in our darkened land.

My Life Among the Dead

I have lived a long life, and if I am lucky, it shall not end soon. I am in good health, despite all the storms I have weathered. Still, I know that the black shroud of death will one day fall across me. When it does, I will look back upon a life that was long and hard but not without its rewards. I have done much good, and I shall face the grave with no regrets - but one sorrow. Let me recount it for you.

My first encounter with the undead was with the horrible vampire who called himself Baron Metus. When that monster stole my beloved son Erasmus, then murdered my dear wife Ingrid, I vowed I would devote myself to the annihilation of all his diabolical kind.

My sorrow, of course, is that I have become what I am only at the cost of losing my family. At the time I began my quest for revenge, I was a much younger and more foolish man. I meant only that I should battle the dreaded vampires in all their shapes, that I should seek their every lair and see to it that these monsters were destroyed. I did not understand the scope of my quest then. To track down and destroy all the vampires on all the worlds that I now know of is an impossible task, but I never hesitated to rise to battle.

No single person can do all that I set forth to do. It is my hope, however, that by placing what I know in a series of books, I will aid those who would follow me on my quest. If you have seen the eyes of death look down at you, if you have heard an inhuman hiss in the darkness, if you have known terror and dread, then you know the importance of my work. I offer you my heart, my prayers, and - most important - my knowledge.

In the two decades that have passed since the death of my wife and child, I have traveled much. I have seen horror in all its shapes. I have faced monsters that could have issued forth only from the deepest pits of evil. In every case, I have been tempered by the meeting. Those times when I destroyed my foes filled me with the energy to continue in my holy work. Those times when foes escaped my vengeance left me the wiser; never again, I vowed, would I be as shortsighted in a future meeting. Those foes who defeated me - and there have been many, despite my undeserved reputation for invincibility - have left me all the stronger for the wounds they inflicted upon me.

How many times have I been driven to death's door by the creatures of darkness? I cannot say. But in every instance I was determined to battle back from the injuries I suffered and to have my revenge. I am a peaceful, merciful man, but such

vengeance is dear, indeed.

The Thundering Carriage

How did I, a devoted vampire hunter, come to be an enemy of the incorporeal undead as well? The inclusion was not a difficult one. It began on a cold autumn night in Lamordia. I was close on the trail of a vile creature that I call the child vampire. The details of my encounter with that dark beast are presented elsewhere [RR1 Darklords, TSR #9331], so I shall not dwell on them here. While researching the creature, I happened upon a lonely country inn, the Thistle & Bonnet. The place was so charming and the darkness approaching so fast that I bade my companions stop. We discussed the matter briefly, then decided to spend the night.

The innkeeper, a cheerful fellow with the unlikely name of Bellikok, saw to our every need. He presented us with a great feast of a dinner, saw to it that our glasses were always full, and never seemed at a loss for some clever comment or anecdote to move the conversation along at a merry pace. In all, he was the perfect hostler.

All that changed, however, as the gleaming copper clock on his mantle rang ten. No sooner had the last chime died than a look of concern crept across merry Bellikok's face. I feared that he had grown ill and moved to comfort him. "I am a physician," I said. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

For an instant he seemed taken aback by my concern. Then he allowed a wry smile to cross his face and let out a short laugh. "Would that you could, kind sir," he sighed, shaking his head.

Seeing that my companions were as curious as I was about the cause of his sudden change of spirits, I bade him continue. Dropping his head so that he looked only upon the floor and not upon our faces, the innkeeper did as I suggested.

"Do you hear the sound of that carriage, sir? Low and distant, like thunder looming on the horizon?"

I cocked my head and, as he had said, I did indeed hear the sound of a coach in the distance. Still, nothing seemed unusual about it. Indeed, thinking that it might promise another customer for the night, I offered him that consolation. "Surely you have room for another guest?"

As the sound drew nearer and nearer, he became more agitated. "That conveyance bears no guest I'll have in this place," he hissed. "No, indeed. That carriage rides forth from the gaping maw of blackness itself. I know not where she travels to, but I know what comes with her passing. Here, move to the windows. You'll see what I mean."

With that, he blew out the lights in the inn and gathered us all about the large window that looked out upon the road. In the distance, we saw an eerie glow moving down the highway toward us. It seemed to be moving at an incredible speed and to be giving off an eerie glow like pale lightning.

Suddenly the horrific conveyance was upon us. It flashed past our window at a speed I would not have thought possible. I had only the briefest of looks at the thing, but its impression is forever set in my mind. The wagon was large, as bulky as any merchant's coach I've ever seen. It was drawn by a team of four great horses from whom all flesh and tissues had been removed. At every step of these skeletal steeds, lightning flashed when hoof struck earth. The ebon wood of the coach-carved and etched with evil runes and dark figures - was illuminated clearly by a shower of azure sparks that sprayed away from the wheels as the coach rolled along the road.

As shocking as this macabre vehicle was, its occupants were even more memorable. The coachman was a gaunt and skeletal creature, well suited to the team he drove. As he passed, I saw him strike at his horses with a whip, the lash of which was composed of pure lightning. When it snapped above the beast, a great crash of thunder roared out, and the animals seemed moved to even greater speed.

Through windows set in the coach's doors, I could see the grim passengers of this nightmarish wagon. Gaunt and thin, but still draped in flesh, they reached out at us through windows barred with bones. Their faces were pitiful, etched with agony and torment. In the second that they were before me, I felt all of the suffering and anguish that radiated from their tragic faces. These were the damned.

Then, even before I saw it was upon us, the conveyance was gone - racing away down the highway at a speed beyond my comprehension. I was about to speak, seeking to voice my horror, when the innkeeper motioned for silence.

Instantly the sky erupted in thunder. Huge sheets of lightning raced from horizon to horizon, shedding a brilliant blue light across the countryside. Rain fell upon us in a mighty cascade, battering the windows with the ferocity of a hurricane and turning the road outside into a morass of mud. The storm, more savage than any I had ever felt before, lasted only for a few minutes, then it was gone.

My horror turned to anger, that such an apparition should so freely spread fear and destruction in its path. My crusade against vampires now became one against ghosts as well, and soon against nearly every form of undead or wicked creature.

Overview

In this book, I shall attempt to put forth all that I have learned about the incorporeal undead. I shall discuss their creation, their habits, their physiology, and their weaknesses. All of this information will, I hope, help others who have chosen to battle the forces of darkness on every front. I have organized this information into the following chapters.

Chapter One: Types of Ghosts. Here I will present several broad categorizations I have made regarding the origins of ghosts. It is my belief that such tools enable us to better keep track of the horrors we face in this world. By battling them with both the keen sword of ancient knowledge and the powerful firearm of modern learning, I believe we can triumph over the incorporeal undead.

Chapter Two: Ordinary Powers. Before one can hope to prevail against the forces of darkness, one must have an understanding of their nature. In this chapter, I detail the common abilities of ghosts and provide some cautionary notes on how one might hope to battle against this supernatural enemy.

Chapter Three: Extraordinary Powers. While all ghosts have certain elements in common, as discussed in the previous chapter, many are unique. Ghosts gifted with special powers can be deadly and must be stalked with great care. In this chapter, I shall examine those powers that make ghosts truly deadly adversaries.

Chapter Four: Vulnerabilities. It is a good thing for us all that even the most powerful of ghosts is certain to have its weaknesses. While some ghosts are among the most powerful of horrors it has been my misfortune to meet, they are all hindered in some way by their past. In my years of fighting these creatures, I have yet to encounter one that did not have some vulnerability that could be exploited in combat.

Chapter Five: Speaking with the Dead. One of the most valuable tools in the battle against ghosts is information. The old adage that knowledge is power is never truer than when dealing with these ethereal horrors. In this chapter, I shall discuss the spiritualists one is likely to require, guidelines on locating them, and tips on how to spot those who would deceive ghost hunters and make claims of powers they do not have.

Chapter Six: Investigating a Haunting. In this chapter, I outline the steps I advocate in order to stalk and destroy ghosts. I use my experience gained from a most unusual mass hunting to illustrate the techniques. It is my belief that failure to follow these guidelines will inevitably result in deaths or worse.

*What beck'ning ghost, along the moonlight shade
Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade?*

- Alexander Pope
"Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady"

Types of Ghosts

Ghosts, spirits, apparitions - call them what you will. They come in a great many varieties. I have devoted a great deal of research to understanding them and the supernatural laws that govern their creation, existence, and destruction. In this chapter, I shall share with you what I have learned about the origins, natures, and abilities of ghosts.

If I were less stern about my desire to know all that I can about the undead - if I were less passionate in my need to uncover the truth about the supernatural - I might long ago have given up my quest. It often seems to me that, as soon as I am convinced I know all that can be known about these incorporeal creatures, new evidence is presented to me and I must reconsider my most solid convictions. I admit to despair on many occasions - but my yearning to know more is unending. Thus, my work goes on.

Before I continue, I must define an important term: *karmic resonance*. It is necessary to do so, for it is at the core of the subject of ghosts, spirits, and the like.

Supernatural creatures draw their power from numerous sources. In my first book, I wrote of the vampire and how the passing of the years allows him to draw more dark energy from the so-called Negative Material Plane. With each day that passes, vampires become minutely more powerful. Over the course of a month or even a year, this increase is minor. With the passing of a decade or century, however, they can become unstoppable.

Ghosts, unlike vampires, draw power not from the passing of time, but from the forces present at the moment of their creation. At the exact instant that a person's spirit is transformed into a spectral undead, its strength is set and locked by the emotions that surrounded it. I call this lingering energy that keeps ghosts empowered karmic resonance. Thus, the passing of time does nothing to increase the power of a ghost.

The instant of a ghost's creation is subject to intense energies. Just as the shock of birth is overwhelming to a child (and the mother), so too is the sudden plunge into the frigid, black waters of unlife. The intensity of this shock is based wholly upon the emotional and karmic energies of the transformation. In other words, the stronger the emotional state of those present at the ghost's creation, the more powerful the spirit that arises.

The level of power attained by a ghost is thus not haphazardly made. Two ghosts, created in similar manners, will be of roughly similar power levels. True, their exact powers are likely to be very different, but the actual danger they pose - their resistance to physical harm, their ability to resist a holy person's attempts to drive them away, or the strength of their special attacks - will be analogous.

I have chosen to classify ghosts according to six categories: *magnitude of power, physical appearance, physical consistency, origin, anchor, and trigger*. The distinctions between certain categories are very fine and may seem confusing to the layman,



but this classification serves a purpose and will be helpful to the devoted ghost hunter.

The following text elucidates the terms I use and should prove helpful in any quest to rid the world of ghostly fiends. At the end of this chapter is a simple outline delineating the categories and subcategories by which ghosts may be classified.

Magnitudes of Power

The first category by which I classify ghosts is based on their levels of power, which I call *magnitudes*. In a previous work, I did much the same with vampires, which I classified according to their age. A ghost's magnitude is roughly the same as a vampire's age in measuring their total strength: The greater the magnitude, the more powerful the ghost; the older the vampire, the more powerful it is.

First Magnitude

The least powerful of the incorporeal undead, these creatures are created when just enough emotional energy is available to empower the transformation to an undead state. This is, fortunately, the most common type of spirit.

Ghosts of the first magnitude are created the same way as are other ghosts, but they tend to have less dramatic origins. In fact, I have often considered first - magnitude ghosts to be almost boring - their power is weak, their afterlife passive, and their evil subdued.

As an example of this type of spirit, I must present the Loud Man of Lamordia - a spirit I found most amusing.

When I was young, I traveled to a small village along the coast, Leidenheim. While there, I learned of a spirit who haunted a lake outside town. It seems that those who fished in that lake were occasionally troubled by a ghostly fisherman a ghost who talked to them about the fine spot he had found for bass, the sudden changes in recent weather patterns, and other trivia. His conversations were so monotonous that it was said to be impossible for a listener to avoid falling asleep.

Escaping the spirit's babbling, it seems, was likewise impossible, for the Loud Man would follow the fishermen wherever they went. Only by leaving the lake, and thus abandoning bringing home the evening meal, could one escape this specter. Those who attempted to drive off the fellow found that they could do so easily, but any fish they pulled from the water for the next few months would spoil before they could be eaten.

The cold stone of the ancient tomb loomed before us. Lifting our lanterns high to light the way, we moved into the crypt. The going was slow, for even our brace dwarf, Geddar Ironheart, was reluctant to intrude upon the resting dead of this ancient place. Bantur, as talkative a swashbuckler I had ever met, was strangely quiet as he strained his eyes to pick out movement in the thundering darkness. The air, thick and cool, washed around us as if we were wading in a shallow pond. The sounds of our progress - the scraping of cleric Kevlin's boots, the clanking of Geddar's chain mail, and the occasional crunch of a beetle or spider beneath Bantur's shoes - seemed magnified by the shadows around us. I have never suffered from claustrophobia, but I must confess that I felt utterly trapped and isolated in that dark and evil place.

Second Magnitude

Ghosts of the second magnitude are more powerful than their lesser kindred, but are usually little more than nuisances. However, they are more aggressive and more easily angered than lesser spirits.

In order for a ghost of this type to form, the dying person must be in a state of some emotion. The emotion need not be overly consuming or of great duration, as is necessary for the more powerful spirits to form. For example, someone who dies during a spousal quarrel might have enough emotional energy to attain the second magnitude of unlife, as might an artist who is working on a painting that means a great deal to her. It is sometimes even possible for a person who knows he or she is going to die - by the hangman's noose, for example - to become a second- magnitude ghost. The so-called Laughing Man of Valachan is an example of this sort.

Third Magnitude

Ghosts of the third magnitude are often outright evil and malicious. Their powers are generally such that they can resist much conventional harm, even from magical devices or spells. Often they can cripple or kill opponents with ease.

In order for a ghost of the third magnitude to form, a person must die while in a highly emotional state. An example would be a man forced to watch as his beloved family was slain by brigands before he himself was killed, dying in the grip of his overwhelming anguish. The karmic resonance of this tragedy might be strong enough to create a third-magnitude ghost. Similarly, someone enraged or horrified to an extreme degree at the time of death might attain this status.

Forth Magnitude

Among the most powerful of apparitions, ghosts of the fourth magnitude are created only through scenes of death that involve great emotional stress or energy. Spirits of this type are generally warped by the power of their emotions, becoming highly aggressive, evil, and cruel. They are almost impossible to drive off or destroy by conventional means, requiring special care on the part of those who would eliminate them.

Rare indeed are the circumstances surrounding a person's death that are powerful enough to create a ghost of this type. In my travels, I have encountered only a half dozen or so of these evil and dangerous monsters. In each of the cases I came across, the ghost had once been a person who had either embraced death with great fervor or felt himself so powerful that death could hold no sway over him. The evil General Athoul, one of the incorporeal leaders of the dread Kargat of my homeland Darken, may illustrate the first. It is said that his devotion to Azalin was so great that even death only meant a new manner in which for him to serve his beloved commander. The second is perhaps best illustrated by the infamous Martyr of the Moors, a man who sought death as the ultimate step in his devotion to a dark and evil deity, only to find that he had been cursed with eternal unlife.

Fifth Magnitude

The thought of these creatures is alone enough to make any sane person tremble with fear. Fifth-magnitude ghosts are so powerful that I know of not a single case in which one has been destroyed through conventional means. Without exception, ghosts of this magnitude who were destroyed required special means to eliminate them.

The emotional intensity needed to create a ghost of this power is so rare that it happens but once in a very great while. I would dare say that whole centuries might pass without a ghost of this type being formed, for which we can all be grateful.

Tristessa, the banshee that haunts Mount Lament in the Keening region, is one of only two spirits I know who falls into this category. The second is the dread Phantom Lover, a spirit said to prey upon poor souls who recently lost loved ones.

In cases where this type of ghost is aware of its special weakness (and few of this magnitude are not), woe be the hero who seeks to exploit it. Such a spirit has certainly taken precautions to ensure that its weakness is never used against it. (Weaknesses are discussed in Chapter Four.)

Physical Consistency

The second category into which I classify ghosts is that of physical consistency. When one thinks of ghosts, one often assumes that they are intangible things. Indeed, this is most often the case. However, those who assume this is a strict rule might unknowingly set themselves up for a horrible surprise. The subcategories below describe the physical nature of ghosts. I must warn the reader that these classifications are broad and, in some cases, as vague as the ghosts they define. I cannot be clearer, for the supernatural often defies mortal understanding.

Incorporeal

This is the stereotypical state of a ghost. Having no physical existence, it moves about unfettered by physical objects such as walls or chains. Such creatures cannot be grappled, for no person can secure a hold on them. Indeed, they are immune to all manner of physical harm—swords and daggers do not bite them, and arrows and quarrels pass right through them. However, magical weapons are able to injure ghosts of this type, as might certain arms of unique manufacture, such as silver swords.

Such manifestations can easily pass right through the bodies of living beings. In most cases, no ill effect is suffered from such an encounter - although a sense of cold or apprehension is not uncommon.

In rare cases, however, a wholly incorporeal essence may have a profound effect upon an individual as it passes through. I myself was the victim of such an attack. As a younger man, I was confident that no incorporeal creature could directly affect me. The reader can imagine my surprise when one of these ethereal beings turned upon me and flashed through my body. The instant it penetrated me, I was overcome with a feeling of the deepest horror. All my careful plans, I believed, could not prevail against this fiend. I was as nothing against it. In stark terror, I turned and fled.

It was more than an hour later before I came to my senses. I had been a puppet under the mastery of some fearsome creature, and it had engineered my fear. I am thankful that the effect of the ghost's passage was not more dreadful, for I have seen the corpses of those less fortunate than I who fought ghosts with more terrible powers.

Semicorporeal

A specter such as the bizarre Strangling Man of Gundarak might have a body that is largely incorporeal, but still retains aspects of its being that are seemingly solid. My experience has proven that the solid areas are not, in most cases, actually firmer than the surrounding ethereal body. Rather, the ghost exerts some conscious or unconscious force through willpower in an almost telekinetic manner. While a victim of the Strangling Man surely felt the forceful hands of her attacker on her throat, this was a manifestation of a paranormal force and not the actual grip of solid hands. Were the hands truly substantial, the creature would not have been able to pass through walls and doors, as we know it did.

This is not a hard and fast rule. I have encountered a few creatures that did, in fact, seem partially solid. It may be that they were simply better able to manifest this physical "telekinetic" force. Whatever the case, these creatures did not seem able to pass through solid objects as truly incorporeal ghosts can.

The ethereal nature of this type of ghost is such that magical weapons or those of special manufacture are required to inflict any wounds upon the creature. It may be that a blow to a solid area of the ghost would injure it, but such attacks are usually too precise for the average combatant to make in the chaos of melee.

Corporeal

Corporeal spirits are far less common than their intangible counterparts, nearly as rare as ghosts in the shape of inanimate objects. Through vast mental willpower or supernatural ability, these creatures have solid and complete bodies. Often, the body resembles exactly the one the ghost had when alive, down to the clothing.

How then, one might ask, do I justify the claim that these are ghosts and not zombies or some other form of undead? The answer is exemplified by an encounter I had with such a spirit.

Some years ago, I attended the funeral of a lovely young woman, an acquaintance who had assisted me on an investigation. Her body was secure in its coffin when a woman confronted me who looked exactly as the dead woman had at the time of her death. We battled fiercely before the funeral ceremony, and I barely held the apparition back from attacking other guests. Throughout our clash, it was clear to me that this nightmarish double was as solid and complete a being as I myself, for my enchanted dagger bit into its flesh as cleanly as it would have cut you or me. Yet it did not bleed, nor did it acknowledge pain or weariness, warning me of its supernatural nature.

In the end, when I triumphed over the "woman," the "body" of the ghost (though not that of the girl in the coffin, for I checked later) broke down into an elemental mist. The transformation was such that it put me in mind of a vampire, giving me quite a start. But when a chill wind howled through the drifting vapors, breaking them up and scattering them freely out the open windows, I was convinced I had faced something new.

I have since encountered but one other corporeal spirit, and I thankfully believe them to be very rare. I can only assume that a spirit of great mental fortitude is required for so concrete a manifestation of the apparition to occur.

Mutable

I would be remiss in my account if I did not draw the reader's attention to a type of ghost I can only describe as "mutable." Spirits of this nature seem able to shift from insubstantial to solid form and back with ease. For example, a ghost that proved itself intangible by walking through the wall of a tomb might then become corporeal and lash out at intruders.

In many cases, the difference between this type of spirit and its various cousins is very subtle. It could well be, for example, that the aforementioned Strangling Man was able to transform from a semicorporeal state to an incorporeal state-making it a mutable spirit. Evidence in the case has led me to conclude otherwise, but the point is worth noting.

It has been my experience that ghosts who seem to be of a corporeal nature are, in fact, mutable. They seem freely able to assume corporeal or incorporeal states at will. The fact that exceptions exist, however, merits the division of these creatures into separate and distinct categories, as noted above.

Physical Appearance

The third category by which I classify ghosts is that of physical appearance. A ghost will usually fall into one of the following subcategories: vaporous, spectral, humanoid, bestial, monstrous, object, preserved, corrupted, distorted, or beauteous.

In my travels and attempts to battle the evil of the undead wherever it may stand, I have encountered so many unusual ghosts that it seems impossible to think of them as variants on a single theme. In most cases, ghosts look as they did in life more precisely, as they did at the time of their deaths. In some cases, however, the ghosts' appearances are transformed, perhaps by becoming vaporous or spectral. (However, some spirits can change their shape at will.)

I have found that the incorporeal undead come in a great variety of shapes and sizes. While the typical image of a "ghost" is that of a translucent creature of more or less human visage, it is dangerous to always expect this. Yet, for all their dissimilarities, I have found that ghosts share a number of physical characteristics. Thus, I have been able to categorize most apparitions in the ways I describe below.

Vaporous

Many ghosts lack the power or desire to assume recognizable physical shapes. They often appear as misty clouds or swirling fogs. Particular features can be discerned in some, while in others nothing is recognizable. Most often, those who come into contact with this type of ghost describe it as cold or damp.

Ghosts of this type may have special abilities associated with their form. I recall one man who told me the tragic tale of a vaporous form that descended upon his family one evening in their home. As the mists engulfed them, the air became infused with a foul essence that was unfit to breathe. Gasping and choking, the man dragged himself clear of his home before losing consciousness. When he awoke, he found that only he had survived.

Spectral

Some ghosts appear as a point of brilliant light not unlike a will o'wisp or a *light* spell. These lights vary greatly in intensity, although I do not believe one can always gauge the power of the creature by the magnitude of light it gives off. In some cases, the emotional state of such a ghost is indicated by the hue of its light.

Ghosts of this type are often accompanied by a telltale sound, such as a whistling or humming. I have heard stories of spectral phantoms that were accompanied by a singular ringing said to be much like the tinkling of crystal bells.

Humanoid

This type of ghost is believed by many scholars of the undead to be the most common. Humanoid spirits, most of them human in origin, look much as they did in life. They are clearly of humanoid shape, although not always fully defined. Such a ghost might have a well-defined head, torso, and arms, but have legs that trail away as a cloud of vapor.

Stories are told in hushed tones by the inhabitants of Ungrad, in Valachan, of a faceless horror that roams the streets on nights when thunder rumbles across a cloudless sky. It is said that this spectral horror kills his victims and steals their faces to ease the eternal agony he suffers. I have seen the body of one of his victims, and the sight of the faceless corpse was - to say the least - ghastly. Although I have never encountered the creature itself, my guess is that he is a humanoid ghost who has a misshapen or injured face. In this case, perhaps some facet of the ghost's creation accounts for his unusual appearance and behavior.

Bestial

We have all heard stories of phantom hounds that roam fens and marshes in search of mortal prey. These examples illustrate yet another type of ghost - the bestial. I have heard stories of ghost sharks that prowl the Sea of Sorrows, wolf spirits that stalk the woods of Kartakass, and similar manifestations.

In some cases, bestial ghosts seem to have a kinship with like creatures of mortal nature. The aforementioned ghost wolves of Kartakass, for example, have been reported to lead a pack of living canines. I cannot say if the live animals followed the spirit ones of their own volition or from magical domination.

Monstrous

It is not unreasonable to believe that some ghosts were originally not humans or demihumans, but true living monsters. Indeed, I have recorded in my journals a number of encounters with such creatures. Without exception, a monster transformed into an undead spirit is even more horrible than it was in life. In many cases, it not only retains its former powers and abilities, but it also gains new ones because of its horrible metamorphosis.

The most frightening creature of this type that I have encountered was a gruesome medusa. I had vowed to help a friend who found it lurking beneath the mountains of Tepest. We had sought out the creature, believing it was as mortal as any of us. By the time we discovered our mistake, half of our party was slain - either turned to stone by its deadly gaze (which it had retained from its mortal form) or drained of life by its chilling touch (which it had gained upon becoming a ghost).

Unprepared for a battle with such a fiendish creature, we were forced to withdraw. In the months that followed, while we regrouped to prepare for another assault on the ghost, the spirit ventured out of its lair and struck at the innocents of that region. By the time we had destroyed the phantom, nearly two dozen people had been killed - many of them my close friends. It was a hollow victory, indeed.

Object

As impossible as it may seem, I have encountered "inanimate" objects that are, as far as I can tell, actually ghosts. To say the least, they are extremely rare. I believe that ghosts of this type are formed when an individual is greatly attached to or associated with a physical object. Upon the individual's death, he is anchored to that object so strongly that the object itself is transformed into a ghostly state.

In half of these cases, the ghost object is physically transformed so that it bears the countenance of the individual, appearing to be a painting or engraving of a face or person somewhere on the object. Needless to say, this can be a difficult type of spirit to accurately identify. In other cases, the object itself appears ghostly and insubstantial.

As an example of the latter kind of ghost, I offer the Phantom Ax of Gildabarren. Some years ago, a series of murders occurred in an isolated dwarf community in Darkon. I was in the area and joined the investigation. We soon found that the murders were being committed by what seemed to be a magically animated battle ax.

With the aid of a talented spiritualist, however, we were able to uncover the truth: This weapon was imbued with the spirit of a dwarf warrior named Gildabarren. Gildabarren had been exiled from his community in his youth, and he had returned to haunt it upon his death. His spirit had focused its energy on the ax, an heirloom of great importance to his family. The karmic resonance surrounding his tragic drowning death was so strong that the ax itself became, in effect, Gildabarren's spirit. With this information, we were able to overcome the menace and put this unsettled soul to rest.

One by one, we examined the caskets that lay in the recessed burial chambers. Without exception, each and every one of them had been defiled by grave robbers. Kevlin muttered a holy vow under his breath, for such sacrilege weighed heavily upon his heart. As he lifted his head from a silent prayer for the dead, Geddar cried aloud.

As one, we swung about - steel flashing in the darkness of the tomb, glinting off the guttering light of our lanterns. A row of spectral figures stood before us, blocking our exit from the tomb. Bantur, ever the proud swashbuckler, stepped forward to defend us should they attack.

Strange and ethereal creatures were they, barely visible as clouds of wispy vapor and twinkling, shimmering lights. As we

watched, they resolved themselves into more familiar forms. Bantur cursed under his breath, then stepped forward.

Preserved

This is the most common state of an apparition. A ghost in a preserved state is unchanged from its appearance at the time of death. In cases where a ghost's living form died of unobtrusive means (poison, a deadly magical spell, and the like), the ghost will look just as it did when alive. Violent death marks, as from a sword wound or similar attack, are fully visible. In extreme cases, where death was the result of an overwhelming injury, the form of the ghost may be horribly mutilated. I have seen the apparition of a man who died in a burning house, and it was, I assure you, a most unpleasant sight.

Corrupted

It is possible for a ghost to reflect the appearance of its corpse as it exists in the grave. As time passes, the ghost begins to look rotted and decayed, just as the body does. A corrupted ghost is often so horrible to look upon that it inspires fear and revulsion in the strongest of men. I have seen such creatures in my travels and can testify that this effect does not lessen with time - there is something so utterly macabre about these unearthly, rotting images that it challenges one's reason with madness.

It has happened that, where a body has been preserved, the ghost's visage remains unchanged though the ghost is, in fact, corrupted. I have heard stories from a reliable source in the distant land of Har'Akir of a ghost who rose from the body of a mummified priest when the rituals surrounding his death and burial were left incomplete. Many adventurers mistook the ghost for a mummy - an error that cost most of them their lives. Only through the efforts of a local priest was the true nature of the creature uncovered. The ghost was returned to a restful death upon completion of the proper rituals and sacraments.

Distorted

Some apparitions have their physical appearance twisted and distorted in ways that can hardly be described. These creatures are nightmarish reflections of what they were in life. I have heard it said that they are aspects of the madness that must surely exist in the tortured mind of a ghost. Whatever the cause, they are horrible to look upon.

Many examples come to mind, but I think that none is perhaps more awful than the dreadful Baying Hound of Willisford. This foul creature looked, from a distance, to be a great mastiff or hunting dog. When examined more closely, however, the hound was really a man whose body was warped so that it resembled that of a great canine. The transformation seemed to cause it pain, for it let out such cries of agony that they were mistaken by the locals for the frightful howling that gave the creature its name.

I cannot account for the strange shape of this creature - I merely recount its tale. Its origin remains a mystery to me, as does its fate, for I don't know if it still exists or if some brave adventurers have been able to dispatch it.

Beauteous

Some ghosts assume an appearance that is almost angelic in its innocence and seeming passivity. They take on the guise of the most beautiful of women, the most handsome of men, or the sweetest of children. In most cases, those who knew the being in life can recognize the ghost. The creature's appearance, however, is more perfect than it could ever have been in the natural world. All of its less admirable qualities are softened or replaced in ways that make it endearing and alluring - how it wished to be in life.

I remember when I first encountered such a creature and it opened its arms to me. It came in the form of a lovely girl who had raven hair and the dark complexion of the tropics. In a voice so sweet that even now it sends shivers through my body to think of it, the spirit invited me to embrace it. It whispered to me of its desire for me and its love for me. A part of me knew that it lied, but I could not resist. Had it not been for the intervention of a close friend, the ghost would have killed me that night.

Such ghosts are uniformly evil, using their veil of illusion to lure victims close so that they may lash out at them. In many cases, spirits of this type are able to charm those who knew them in life.

Origins of Ghosts

The fourth category by which I classify ghosts is their origins. Although most ghosts will fit into one of the subcategories I discuss below, other means of origination should not be discounted.

I have, over the years, collected hundreds of documents that profess to detail the origins of numerous ghosts. In many cases, I have been able to assemble a number of accounts detailing the "birth" of a single apparition. One might think that so many references could not help but provide a clear and insightful view of the events leading to the creation of a ghost. Rather, the converse is quite often true. In instances where two or more authors chronicle the details by which a specific haunting occurred, I have found myself confronted with conflicting facts, theories, conjectures, and opinions that cloud the matter as surely as the swirling clouds of autumn hide the face of the moon.

Still, putting aside the less reliable accounts, there does emerge a certain pattern in the creation of ghosts. Based on this pattern, I have been able to classify most ghosts according to eight origins. In some cases, this involves the manner of the person's physical death; in others, it depends upon the events of the person's life. Occasionally, events that occurred soon after death play a part.

The eight methods or motivations by which ghosts seem to originate include: sudden death, dedication, stewardship, justice, vengeance, reincarnation, curses, and dark pacts. There are likely to be other situations through which ghosts may form, but these seem the most common.

Sudden Death

A ghost can be created when an individual unexpectedly dies. The spirit of the doomed person simply doesn't realize he or she is dead. A spirit of this type tends to retain the alignment held in life - at least at first. As the years flow by, however, the spirit becomes less sane. Eventually, the spirit assumes a personality hostile to the living world, or else slips helplessly into madness.

Consider the case of the infamous Laughing Man, said to haunt the Valachan countryside. I have no fewer than five accounts of his "death." While they differ in details, the important points match perfectly.

The Laughing Man was a hunter who often set traps in the woods near his home. Tending the trap line required him to spend the night in the woods, something many folk - myself included - are reluctant to do in that land. Because of this, the hunter would often go into the woods with several of his neighbors in the mistaken belief that there would be safety in numbers.

One night, the group completed the chores and settled down to an evening of stories around the campfire. While the hunter was consumed with laughter following the telling of a joke by one of his companions, a group of bandits attacked them. The hunter was slain by a single arrow that struck the back of his head. Magical conversations with the spirit of the Laughing Man reveal he did not know what happened to him by the fire. He watched the massacre, unable to affect anything in any way, as the bandits swept down and killed his friends. Only in the end, it is said, when he turned and saw his own body lying at the edge of the campfire, did the awful truth become clear to him.

The apparitions before us seemed to come from all walks of life. There were common folk (transparent and vague but clearly visible) and heroes, too, of some long-forgotten conflict, clad in armor and wielding swords. I had no idea how long they had rested here before the vandals gave them cause to return.

Kevlin raised his holy symbol, a gleaming silver trident that seemed to give off a faint glow of its own, and beseeched his god for protection from these restless spirits. Somehow I knew it wouldn't be enough. This was their place, a domain of and for the dead - we would have no power over them here.

"Van Richten!" called Bantur. "Begin your work; Geddar and I will hold them for as long as we can!" As the brave pair raised their magical weapons in my defense, I opened the leather pouch that we had recovered from the thieves.

Dedication

Some ghosts are drawn from beyond the grave out of devotion to a task or interest. A learned scholar who has spent her life researching ancient tomes in an effort to decipher a lost language might return to haunt her old library if she died before completing her studies. Dedicated ghosts are almost always anchored (a term discussed later) to a specific place or item. This is also true of ghosts who are stewards, as noted below.

Stewardship

Among the most fascinating spirits are those I call stewards or sentinels. These ghosts are seldom truly evil, and they seek only to protect something that was important to them in life. In almost every case, these spirits are anchored to a specific person, location, or object - although I have heard reports of wandering spirits that seek to guard over travelers in general or some other less clearly defined group.

A steward is quite adamant about his desire to protect the thing to which he is anchored. In general, his power is greater than that of other ghosts, for he is strongly dedicated to the task and seems to draw energy from the bond to the mortal world. I cannot help but pity the rogue who attempts to loot a family crypt that is protected by a sentinel spirit, for it will bend every bit of its will against him in order to destroy him.

Among the most common stewards are those who appear to guard ancestral estates. This type of spirit is often at the root of many "haunted house" stories, and they can be quite violent when confronted with trespassers and other unwelcome guests.

It is seldom possible to remove a spirit of this type except by destruction of the thing that it guards. In the case of a building or an object, this is often possible with some effort, although the ghost will obviously lash out sharply in an attempt to thwart this endeavor. In a less manifest focus, such as when a ghost is determined to watch over its descendants, this can be almost impossible to accomplish.

Justice

I have come to the conclusion that this category is distinct from the following one, vengeance, for several reasons. Perhaps the most important of these is the fact that ghosts who seek justice almost uniformly were good people prior to death. Additionally, these ghosts never act upon imagined wrongs and, for the most part, are satisfied enough with the correction of a wrong to rest again - even if this means that those who originally wronged them go unpunished. In short this type of ghost has a certain nobility, as opposed to the sort that seeks only blind revenge.

To make this distinction clearer, consider the well-known case of the Headless Gypsy. Here we have a man who was cast out from his people, the Vistani, for a crime he did not commit. When he returned to them in an effort to plead for reconsideration, he was sentenced to death and promptly beheaded. That night, his spirit returned in the shape of a swirling cloud of sparkling, shimmering dust. This vaporous apparition was able to move freely about the camp and seemed to take great delight in causing mischief, for it was able to manipulate physical objects to some extent.

As time passed, this ghost became more and more troublesome to the Vistani - valuable objects would vanish or break, horses and dogs would be released then frightened into flight, and so on. In an effort to stem this tide before it could become dangerous, one of the elder women of the band used her prophetic powers to contact the spirit. Under the Headless Gypsy's guidance, she uncovered evidence that cleared his name of any wrongdoing. As soon as this was done, the ghost vanished and was never seen again. How sweet life would be if all such hauntings could be so easily ended and all restless spirits so quickly stilled.

Vengeance

Perhaps the most common type of ghost is the vengeful spirit. This is the restless soul of someone who suffered a great wrong in life. Unable to avenge himself in the mortal world, this apparition rises from the grave to harass or destroy those who maltreated him in life.

The desire for revenge burns strongly in such creatures, eventually turning their minds to evil. It seems, in fact, that the desire for revenge is so corrupting that even those who seek an understandable vindication grow evil. It matters little, I believe, whether the wrong that has caused such a spirit to rise from the dead is real or imagined. Indeed, in many cases the most evil and powerful of these spirits thrive on the belief that they have been slighted when no evidence of prejudicial treatment exists.

A perfect example of this type of ghost can be found in the domain of Tepest. There, several years ago, I ran into a most unusual spirit whom I recounted in my journal as the Reflection of Evil.

It seems that a young woman named Keni was prone to jealousy whenever her husband Drakob even spoke to another woman. I have never found anyone who would even begin to suggest she had cause for this, for Drakob was as devoted and loving a spouse as any woman could want. Her jealousy became so consuming, however, that she was unable to stand the thought of his being gone from their home for more than a few hours at a time. One day, while Drakob was going about his business in the town of Viktal, a fire broke out in their home. Unable to escape the sudden, horrible blaze, Keni died.

As the months passed, Drakob mastered his grief. He eventually wooed a young woman named Zjen; two years after the death of Keni, he remarried. On Drakob's wedding night, however, the image of his first wife appeared in the mirror on a dressing table. The frantic newlyweds destroyed the mirror, only to find that the one they replaced it with was promptly inhabited by the same apparition. Over and over again, they discarded or destroyed mirrors in an attempt to drive this phantom from their life. Eventually, they were forced to flee from their home, for every reflective surface began to bear the image of the dead first wife.

The couple's new house seemed a safe enough refuge for the first few weeks, but soon the jealous eyes of Keni haunted it. When Drakob beseeched a priest from the local church to drive the restless spirit back to its grave, matters grew worse. The exorcism enraged the spirit and, if anything, magnified its power. On the night after the attempted banishment, Zjen looked down and saw the reflection of the dead girl in a bucket of water. Keni's spectral hand lashed out at Zjen and left a horrible scar upon the woman's face. The wound was unresponsive to medical care, and Zjen soon sickened and died.

When last I spoke with him, Drakob told me that he was still being haunted by the image of Keni and he dared not make another attempt to drive it off for fear that matters would become even worse. I do not know what became of him, but I left him in a state of mental exhaustion that was as close to death as any living being can bear. He made me swear not to interfere, and I could not refuse him.

Reincarnation

This sort of apparition is extremely rare and is quite distinct from the others described here. Although I have never encountered such a creature, I have it on the most reliable authorities that it does exist.

A reincarnated (descendant) spirit appears when a being of exceptional willpower chooses to return to life by usurping or possessing the body of one of its descendants. The victim of this possession must be a direct relation; the importance of blood ties in this diabolical relationship cannot be overstated.

Once the ghost has gained control of the host's body, it utterly dominates the descendant's spirit. Unlike other forms of ghostly control, however, the victim is not instantly killed by the domination. He or she may linger on for years unconscious, in a state perhaps like that of sleep, before succumbing to the evil within the body. Yet there is hope, for the removal of the intruding spirit frees the body to return to its natural owner. Usually, a dominated individual will have no memory of the events that took place while he or she was dominated and manipulated.

Curses

Ours is a land filled with the accursed. I cannot say with certainty how it came to be this way, but it is so. Some say that each of us lives under the looming shadow of some dark curse. For myself, I can think of no greater weight to bear than the memories of my beloved Erasmus and dear Ingrid. Some of our people, however, are cursed in ways unimaginable to the common man: They are shackled by unlife.

Ghosts of this type may be created by a curse that is external in origin. For example, a man may offend an ancient and powerful Vistani woman who chooses to retaliate with the dreaded evil eye of the gypsies. Under the power of such a spell, the offender might be condemned to live out eternity at the spot where his misstep was made, until the gypsy takes pity and releases him from the curse.

Ghosts may also be forged by a curse brought upon them by wrongs committed during life. These curses are far more horrible than those laid on by an outside party, for there is no quick solution by which the victims may be released from their suffering - suffering they themselves caused. Further, those who condemn themselves in this manner are uniformly evil and

seldom repent in the afterlife.

To illustrate the latter type of curse, consider the mysterious Counting Man of Barovia. My research indicates this is the spirit of a wealthy and powerful banker who had been miserly and stinting all his life. When he passed away, no one lamented the loss of such a cold, cruel person. On the anniversary of his death, the Counting Man was seen wandering the streets of Barovia at night, dressed in the rags of a pauper and begging for change. Those who dropped a coin in the spirit's cup (which seemed, curiously, quite able to catch and hold their money) were left in peace. Those who did not contribute to this ethereal beggar were attacked and driven screaming into the night, aging many years from the encounter.

Dark Pacts

The final method I record by which ghosts are formed is one that I shudder to mention. However, the truth is that some would willingly trade away their humanity for the eternal life of the undead, in order to gain some advantage. They make a pact with evil forces.

It is my belief that, without exception, these people cannot even begin to understand the scope of their thirst for immortality. The ramifications of this desire to survive beyond one's own death are staggering. That desire, coupled with the centuries of ghostly life that follow, is a burden far too heavy for any mind to bear. In the end, madness and destruction loom up to claim anyone who would barter life away in so vain an attempt to cheat the master of death.

Of course, entering into a pact with some being or force is difficult, for creatures capable of bestowing the gift (or curse, rather) of immortal undeath in any form are rare. Most commonly, these pacts are made with the vile creatures that, the sages say, lurk in alien realms and planes outside our own world. Those who seek to strike a bargain with these forces of the supernatural must first locate such beings and attract their attention. This in itself is a dangerous and foolhardy thing to do. In almost every case, dealing with such powerful, evil creatures results only in tragedy and death.

Once someone makes contact with a creature capable of granting his wish for immortality, he must offer some payment for the "boon." In many cases, this favor will take the form of a service, as material wealth means little to fiends of this power. Often, the task will do nothing to further the goals of the beast, but will instead provide it with chaotic amusement.

In order to illustrate this type of origin, I must recount a story that causes me much heartache, for it involves a close friend. When I was a boy in Darken, I knew a bright and energetic lad named Eldrenn Van Dorn. We were close childhood friends, but we were separated when his parents moved to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

Years later, I saw Eldrenn again when I was in Darkon, hunting a vampire. At first, I did not recognize him. He was gaunt and pale, looking almost as if he hadn't eaten since last I had seen him. His eyes were dark and seemed to look right through me when he spoke. The striking contrast between this shell of a man and the robust boy I had known could not have been greater. The fact that he was now a sparkling, transparent ghost seemed of only secondary importance.

We talked, the ghost and I, and as the hours passed he told me of his life. He explained that his family had settled not far from one of Darkon's largest cities and that he had been raised in an atmosphere of happiness and prosperity. As he entered his teen years, his mind began to wander and he looked beyond his father's tinsmithing business for work.

He explained that his senses had seemed to him shallow and incomplete, except for the ability to see something more than what was there. I nodded, for I had heard of this yearning from others who were called to the magician's path. Eldrenn was born with the blood of commoners in his veins, but the mystical fire of an enchanter lay in his soul.

Over the course of the next few years, he began to study wizardry. His powers grew slowly at first, but he found he had a natural affinity for the working of magic. Eventually, he became quite powerful. In fact, he found he could learn nothing more from his studies and set out to contact the only man who seemed a suitable mentor to him - the dreaded Lord Azalin, master of Darkon. My poor friend seemed hesitant to say the name, and he was slow in telling me of the foul pact of obedience he swore to the dark lord.

Eldrenn spent months under the guidance of this powerful figure. All the while, he learned more and more - not only about magic, but also about Lord Azalin himself. It was through my talk with Eldrenn that I learned the horrible extent of the powers of Darkon's Wizard King.

Compilers' Note: Of Lord Azalin's true nature, more is revealed in Van Richten's manuscript on lichs, which is the next

section of this volume.

-LWF

What Eldrenn did not know, however, was that Azalin was teaching him powers he could never fully contain. In the end, those powers destroyed my friend - consuming his flesh and blood and stealing the magical power he had accumulated in his life. Tragically, death was not a release for Eldrenn. The powerful oath he had sworn anchored him to the servitude of Azalin for all time, even beyond death.

Our interview ended when Eldrenn looked past me, out a window into the distance. I turned and saw that he was entranced by the distant spires of Lord Azalin's castle, Avernus. He bade me farewell, for (he said) his master was calling him. He then floated slowly through the room toward the castle, fading from sight until he was gone. It was several hours before I was able to compose myself and force my mind from the dreadful tale I had been told. I mourned my lost friend.

Anchors

A fifth category by which ghosts may be classified is whether they are anchored. Many spirits are tied to a specific person or place; some are found haunting a singular item. I call these *anchored* spirits, for just as a ship's anchor keeps it in place during rough weather, so do the bonds that these ghosts feel for certain things prevent them from ranging afar. In some ways this is a blessing. Finding a spirit who is anchored to a specific house, for example, is far easier than finding a ghost who roams the countryside seeking revenge for its death.

Anchored spirits can, however, be more horrible than their wandering counterparts, as anchored ghosts are terribly powerful. They tend to be extremely aggressive, often becoming territorial and protective of the region c object to which they are secured.

Spirits can be anchored to one of three things in the material realm: a relationship, a place, or an item.

Relationship

This anchor connects a spirit to an individual. In some cases, a ghost's relationship with its anchor is adversarial, in others symbiotic, or even - on rare occasions - beneficial.

The majority of personal anchors are formed when a person has served as steward to a family line. If the karmic resonance surrounding the faithful servant's death is strong enough, his soul is transformed into a ghost. His magnitude is dependent upon the emotional energy at the time of death, and he is also a ghost whose origin is that of stewardship. Likewise, in this instance, he is an anchored spirit, for he is anchored to the family he swore to serve.

Occasionally, an anchored spirit forms from someone who seeks revenge against a single person. Such a spirit is nearly always hostile to all people who interfere in the revenge plot.

Interestingly enough, personal anchors can be passed on. Thus, a ghost who returns to haunt the woman who had wronged it in life might drive its primary victim to destruction, then transfer its obsession to the woman's daughter, and so on throughout many generations.

Geddar brought his dwarven ax down in a long sweeping arc. His blade passed through two of the ghosts, causing them to cry out in pain. In retaliation, one of the other spirits surged forward and reached out its fingers to brush across the brow of the dwarf. He seemed unaffected at first, but a look of horror then spread across his face such as I had never seen in a dwarf warrior. Geddar fell, clutching his chest, and I knew in my heart that we would never hear his booming laugh again.

As I placed the last of the amulets back in the coffins, Kevlin began to pray again. He called upon his deity to return these lost souls to the peaceful sleep of the dead. Too late for our beloved Geddar, we watched as the phantasms fade from sight, and the evil of this place vanished.

- From the personal journal of
Dr. Van Richten

Place

It may be that this is the most common type of anchor, or at least the best known. Who among us has not heard tales of a haunted grove where none dare travel after dark? Who has not heard of a house said to be home to the lingering spirits of the family who built it?

In most cases, a spirit anchored to a specific place is a steward. It will not allow any desecration of the area the ghost inhabits. Generally, only acts of violence against the ghost's "home" will anger it; those seeking to pass through the area will not be troubled so long as they show proper respect and leave quickly. Only in rare instances is the mere act of trespassing upon the soil protected by a specific spirit enough to earn its wrath - and possibly the trespasser's death.

In the distant and elusive land of Har'Akir, for example, each and every tomb is said to be watched over by the spirits of those interred there. Grave robbers who disturb their sleep, it is believed, bring death and destruction upon themselves for the crimes they commit against the dead. While I have never been able to prove this, I had occasion once to speak with an elderly man who, although he claimed to be but seventeen years old, appeared to be on the verge of death from the frailty of many decades. He assured me that the rumors told of Har'Akir's guardian spirits are true, based upon his own sad experience as a onetime tomb robber - and I must say I felt moved to accept his testimony.

Item

Perhaps the rarest form of anchor is that of a spirit's attachment to a singular item. I have rarely encountered such spirits, but I have heard tales and read accounts of others from sources that I consider credible. Thus, I include these ghosts in this work.

Compilers' Note: Dr. Van Richten's many notes reveal that he considered the Phantom Ax of Gildabarren (mentioned earlier) a true ghost and not merely the anchor for a ghost, though perhaps it once was merely an anchor. The battle ax was originally a nonmagical heirloom, but over time the attachment of the dwarf's spirit to it perhaps infused the weapon with magical abilities before it was absorbed into the ghost's essence, becoming the ghost of the dwarf himself. Possibly objects serving as the anchors for ghosts eventually go through this process and become ghosts themselves in a merging of the material and spiritual.

- GWF

In order for a spirit to become anchored to an object, that object must have held great significance for the person in life. The case that best illustrates this, at least in my mind, is the tragic yet fascinating tale of the Gray Lady of Invidia.

This woman was obsessed with a small cameo she wore constantly. I believe her young son gave the brooch to her as a birthday gift. The boy was killed in an accident that very day, and she fixed upon the item as a last link to her lost child.

When the woman died some years later, her will requested that the trinket be buried with her. Her sister, however, had always coveted the pretty brooch, and she removed it from the body just before the casket was sealed. In the months that followed, the spirit of the Gray Lady drove her to madness and death.

Things did not end there, for the cameo changed hands several more times. In each instance, it brought grief and destruction. Eventually, a young wizard with a keen eye discerned the focus of the suffering. He saw to it that the Gray Lady's body was exhumed, and the charm was at last laid to rest with its rightful owner. Once the coffin was resealed and returned to the earth, the hauntings ceased.

Triggers

The sixth and final category I will discuss is that of triggers (borrowing the word from the firing mechanism of smoke power weapons). Generally, once a ghost has been created, it becomes a permanent inhabitant of the world. It remains in existence until its goals are accomplished, it is laid to rest by the actions of mortals, or it is utterly destroyed in combat.

Sometimes, however, a trigger is involved that causes the ghost to appear at a certain event or time, or under certain conditions. A trigger can be thought of as a temporal anchor, if one wishes, for that is essentially what it is.

Time

Ghosts who are triggered by the passing of time are troublesome to track down and destroy, for one seldom knows where to begin looking for them. If a ghost rises every one hundred years from a certain tomb, the origin of its curse is soon lost to memory. Furthermore, a ghost hunter might feel he has destroyed the apparition when, in reality, it has simply gone into "hibernation" for another century.

A natural phenomenon may trigger the appearance of some ghosts of this type. For example, the night of the full moon might bring forth the spirit of a slain constable who makes his lonely rounds just as he did on the night he died. The dramatic return of a bloodred comet to the skies above a harbor town might herald the appearance of a ghost ship.

Action

Some ghosts are triggered when a certain action is performed. In a sense, the guardian spirits of Har'Akir might be regarded this way, for they are harmless unless their tombs are violated. Disrespect for the dead is the most common trigger for a recurring ghost.

The arrival of an action-triggered ghost is usually violent and immediate. Take, for example, the case of a steward ghost who returns to haunt anyone who defiles the home he built and inhabited. The descendants of the ghost sell the house to a man who wishes to destroy it in order to make room for a larger structure. As soon as the first of the demolition workers begins to practice his art, he finds himself confronted by the misty, howling shape of the house's original owner. A person who entered the house but did the structure and its contents no harm would likewise leave the house unharmed.

Cyclic

Cyclic ghosts are uncommon. They seem to be trapped or cursed to repeat their deeds and responses, their actions forever limited by similar times and circumstances. The tragic bussengeist, a tortured spirit forced to witness one horrible disaster after another as the years go by, is a perfect example of a cyclic ghost [MC-10 Monstrous Compendium Ravenloft Appendix I, TSR#2122].

On a less dramatic scale, I once read of a spirit who climbed the same set of stairs in a church's clock tower every time the clock chimed twelve. His walk would begin just as the first bell sounded, and he would reach the top step just as the last one ended, only to fade away once he had completed his journey. As long as it was left alone, this apparition was more a curiosity than anything else. However, those who interfered with its climbing met with a gruesome end, as the creature's touch caused flesh to run like water from their bones.

Conclusion

Classifying a ghost is a time-consuming task. However, the ghost hunter who has done the requisite research is equal to the challenge of returning a spirit to its proper resting place. It pays to understand as much as possible about the type of ghost being confronted, its origins, and its manner. The following outline may help the reader classify any ghosts encountered.

I. Magnitude of power

- ☉ First
- ☉ Second
- ☉ Third
- ☉ Fourth
- ☉ Fifth

II. Physical consistency

- ☉ Incorporeal
- ☉ Semicorporeal
- ☉ Corporeal
- ☉ Mutable

III. Physical appearance

- ☼ Vaporous
- ☼ Spectral
- ☼ Humanoid
- ☼ Bestial
- ☼ Monstrous
- ☼ Object
- ☼ Preserved
- ☼ Corrupted
- ☼ Distorted
- ☼ Beauteous

IV. Origins

- ☼ Sudden death
- ☼ Dedication
- ☼ Stewardship
- ☼ Justice
- ☼ Vengeance
- ☼ Reincarnation
- ☼ Curses
- ☼ Dark pacts

V. Anchors

- ☼ Relationship
- ☼ Place
- ☼ Item

VI. Triggers

- ☼ Time
- ☼ Action
- ☼ Cyclic

And then, abruptly, once more I thought I heard the sound of that huge, soft tread on the aisle, find this time closer to me. There was an awful little silence, during which I had the feeling that something enormous was bending over towards me, from the aisle.... I had the lantern ready in my left hand, and now I snapped it on, desperately, and shone it straight above me, for I had a conviction that something was there. But I saw nothing.

- William Hope Hodgson
"The Thing Invisible"

Ordinary Powers

Calling any aspect of a supernatural being's abilities "ordinary" is deceiving. After all, even the most rudimentary apparition, the lowest of first-magnitude ghosts, can do things beyond the ken of mortals. Thus, the reader must understand that powers I call *ordinary* are common or typical for ghosts as a whole, as opposed to the *extraordinary* or unique powers I discuss in the next chapter.

Before I discuss these ordinary powers, I must describe a fundamental truth about our world that will act as a frame of reference for the reader.

It seems our whole world is immediately surrounded by a belt that learned ones call the *border ethereal*. This border is a transient thing that permeates our land. It is, in fact, as much a state of being as it is a place of existence. It functions as an intermediary between our world and the vast, mysterious, unseen realm called the Ethereal Plane.

Ghosts and other incorporeal beings become nonsolid by entering the border ethereal. Curiously, however, they are unable to take the step from the border ethereal into the Ethereal Plane itself. It seems that some mystical force is at work that prevents them from moving beyond the border. I cannot account for this effect nor even define it clearly.

But enough discourse on the conjectures of sages. The background the reader now has should provide a reference point for the following "ordinary" powers of ghosts: insubstantiality, invisibility, rejuvenation, immunity, racial abilities, class abilities, and creation of undead. Although all ghosts have the first four ordinary powers, the remaining three a dependent upon the individual ghost.

Insubstantiality

A ghost's best known power is, without doubt, its ethereal nature. Being insubstantial, the ghost is not restricted by physical barriers and can come and go as it pleases. Its movement may be limited in some cases by an anchor or a magical border it cannot cross, but for the most part a ghost cannot be constrained physically.

In its insubstantial form, a ghost is immune to harm from normal weapons. Even the mightiest dwarven ax or the finest elven sword will not cleave that which is ethereal. No, only magical weapons can harm the ethereal creature. In addition, those enchanted weapons effective against a lesser ghost may have no power against a greater one, for the spirit's resistance



to attack is directly based upon its magnitude.

I must warn the reader, however, that I have encountered some spirits who seem more resistant to harm than I would have expected from their apparent magnitude. Either these ghosts had some sort of additional protection, or their true magnitude was cleverly concealed.

The ghost's intangible state is, I believe, proof that it exists primarily in the border ethereal. If one were able to enter that mysterious realm and confront a ghost on its own territory, I speculate that it would be as solid as you or I. It might even be possible to battle the creature with nonmagical weapons and destroy it just as one would a mad dog.

As the young woman moved toward Alanik, I raised my crossbow to warn her off. The light of the fireplace danced on the quarrel's silver head. I felt confident in its power and deadliness.

To be sure, it was very nearly impossible for me to believe that so fair and innocent a girl could be responsible for all the deaths in town, but the evidence was conclusive. Then, as she moved nearer my companion, I saw the girl's true nature plainly in the way the moonlight streamed through her body - she was utterly ethereal, a ghost. She reached out in anticipation of taking Alanik in her vile embrace. I tightened my grip on the weapon's trigger and fired. The quarrel cut cleanly through the air, plunged into her breast, and emerged without slowing from her back. As it buried itself in the far wall, my confidence in the silver quarrel was shattered. I knew that no earthly weapon could protect us.

Mutable and Semicorporeal Spirits

Mutable spirits are able to become ethereal or tangible at will. As soon as these creatures assume a corporeal state, they become vulnerable to attacks using nonmagical, physical weapons.

I would be remiss in my charge to instruct would-be ghost hunters, however, if I did not warn the reader that this is not always the case. On more than one occasion, I have heard of the death of someone who found that his nonmagical blade was useless against a truly corporeal spirit. Similarly, those mutable or semicorporeal spirits - who seem able to become partly corporeal while retaining a primarily incorporeal state - do not become vulnerable to mundane weapons.

As I described earlier in Chapter One, these spirits do not actually become partially solid. Rather, they seem able to focus their energies in such a way that they can affect their physical surroundings without becoming a part of them.

Invisibility

Another power of a typical ghost is its ability to become invisible at will. Creatures moving about in the border ethereal are not readily visible to those who dwell in our world, as invisibility seems to be a side effect, if you will, the ghost's existence in this "realm."

There are numerous ways to detect ghost that is not yet visible, although they are almost all magical. The most common means employed is the use of a detect invisibility or similar spell. I am also told that some persons are able to sense the presence of ethereal creature by means of innate psionic abilities. It is said that the Vistani always sense the presence of the incorporeal, although this may be an old wives' tale.

In most cases, a ghost must become visible (if not tangible) to attack those in our real, solid world. Only the most powerful and deadly of ghosts are able to attack without revealing their presence to their victims.

Table 1: Magnitudes of Ghost Defences

Ghost's Magnitude	Armor Class *	Bonus To Hit **
First	0/8	+1/0
Second	-1/6	+1/0
Third	-2/4	+2/+1
Fourth	-3/2	+3/+1

Fifth -5/0 +4/+2

* **Armor Class:** The first number is the Ghost's Armor Class when it is etherial and being attacked by nonetherial foes. The second number is Armor Class of the ghost when it is either corporeal or attacked by a foe that is also etherial.

** **Bonus to Hit:** The first number represents the minimum magical bonus a weapon must have in order to harm a ghost when it is etherial and attacked by nonetherial foes. The second number represents the enchantment needed when the ghost is either corporeal or attacked by a foe that is also etherial.

Nonmagical means of detecting invisible and incorporeal creatures are generally of no use. For example, scattering a fine layer of dust or flour across the floor of a room might well cause an invisible corporeal being to reveal itself through the making of footprints. An incorporeal creature, however, would leave no such sign of its passage. Similarly, attempts to discern the presence or location of an incorporeal creature by making sweeping passes with a weapon or other object will generally fail. An incorporeal spirit can be detected in this manner only if the object or weapon used to probe the area is magical and its enchantment strong enough to actually strike the ghost.

Rejuvenation

As strange as it may seem, it is possible to drive off a ghost by physical combat. Doing so, however, often requires a magical weapon or spellcasting ability. Those without such tools stand little chance of harming, let alone destroying, any ghost.

Even if one has the physical ability to harm an incorporeal spirit, however, the task is only half completed. Most ghosts are able to strike down a mortal with but a few blows, thanks to their special powers. Conversely, it usually requires a great effort on the part of many individuals to inflict enough harm to one ghost to drive it off or destroy it. I have heard tell of apparitions that were beset by teams of adventurers and managed to not only survive the attacks, but completely annihilate their mortal opponents.

This resilience is partly due to a ghost's ability to heal itself, though ghosts do not regenerate in the way that vampires and certain other creatures do. This is not to say that a ghost that is badly injured in a skirmish today will be whole and hardy on the morrow. Rather, there is an important difference in the ways in which a ghost is able to heal itself of injury as opposed to the ways in which other creatures recover from harm.

To heal themselves, ghosts are able to employ a process I call rejuvenation. Unlike regeneration, which implies a healing of wounds at a greatly accelerated rate, rejuvenation allows the ghost to absorb the essence of the Ethereal Plane that surrounds it, thus restoring itself to full vigor.

This process is taxing and demands the ghost do nothing for some time after the assumption of ethereal matter, rendering it vulnerable should it be forced to rejuvenate during a combat situation. As a rule, a first-magnitude ghost can heal any injuries sustained at any time, but it is then helpless to act for an hour afterward. The duration of this "resting time" lessens with the power of the ghost until, at the fifth magnitude, a ghost need only rest for 10 minutes after rejuvenation.

As a word of caution, I must advise the reader that I have, on rare occasions, encountered ghosts that seemed able to heal themselves more rapidly, perhaps by a process I can only liken to regeneration.

Table 2: Magnitudes of Ghosts's Strengths

Ghost's Magnitude	Hit Dice*	Rejuvenation Rest**
First	1-3	60 rounds
Second	4-6	45 rounds
Third	7-9	30 rounds
Fourth	10-12	20 rounds
Fifth	13+	10 rounds

* **Hit Dice:** This lists the range of Hit Dice commonly available to ghost of a given magnitude. Exceptions to this range are not uncommon.

** **Rejuvenation Rest:** This gives the time following *rejuvenation* during which the ghost is forced to rest.

Immunity

Being undead, ghosts have a natural resistance to many forms of magical attack. As one might expect, this is a characteristic that they share with many other undead creatures. In the text that follows, I shall examine each of the most common spell immunities.

Magic Resistance

From time to time, a ghost hunter may encounter spirits that are immune to all forms of magic. As a rule, the more powerful a ghost, the more resistant it is to spells and spell-like powers. In general this is manifested as a blanket resistance to magic of all types. More information on this broader, more powerful, type of spell immunity is found in Chapter Three.

Biological Spells

The very nature of the ghost as an unliving creature makes it immune to all manner of spells that depend upon the processes of life or life's own essence for their effects. Perhaps the best known example of this resistance is the natural immunity that all undead have to every form of sleep-causing spell.

The list that follows was compiled with the aid of an anonymous ally of mine, a powerful magician in the land of Barovia. The reader will find all other spells she has ascertained are useless against the undead because of their unliving nature.

Wizard Spells Useless Against Ghosts

*Avoidance/attraction **
Blindness
Cloudkill
Contagion
Deafness
Death
Death fog
Energy drain
Hold animal
Hold monster
Hold person
Irritation
Magic jar
Otto's irresistible dance
Polymorph any object
Polymorph others
Power word, blind
Power word, kill
Power word, stun
Sink
Sleep
Slow
Vampiric touch

Priest Spells Useless Against Ghosts

*Animal growth/shrink animal **
Cause blindness
Haste

Cause deafness

Cause disease

Finger of death

Hold animal

Hold person

*Regenerate/wither **

*Restoration/energy drain **

Speak with monsters

* These spells are the reversed versions of their more common counterparts.

Ghosts are immune to all spells of the Enchantment/Charm variety (including *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold magic*), death magic, cold, and poison of any sort.

If psionics are used in the campaign (as per PHBR5 *The Complete Psionics Handbook*), certain psionic powers could be declared useless against ghosts. Powers in this class might include: *aging*, *attraction*, *aura sight*, *aversion*, *awe*, *control body*, *daydream*, *death field*, *detonate*, *domination*, *double pain*, *false sensory input*, *id insinuation*, *inflict pain*, *invincible foes*, *life draining*, *mass domination*, *mind thrust*, *mind wipe*, *phobia amplification*, *posthypnotic suggestion*, *psychic crush*, *psychic drain*, *psychic surgery*, *repugnance*, *switch personality*, *telepathic projection*, and *teleport other*. Certain other powers, if used, would cause the user to make a madness check: *contact*, *empathy*, *ESP*, and *mindlink*. Any psionic power that closely resembles a particular spell in effect should operate like that spell, such as *disintegrate*. *Psionic blast* and *ultrablast* should affect a ghost normally; *wrench* should force a ghost into corporeal form. Spirit sense can detect a ghost, but a fourth- or fifth-magnitude ghost can save vs. spell to avoid detection, unless it is anchored. The Dungeon Master can adjudicate other psionic effects.

Unique Immunities

In some cases, a spirit's resistance to magic is based upon its origins. For example, I have heard tell of the ghost of a young woman who died when an avalanche of snow swept away her mountain chalet. This ghost was immune to harm from all spells that do not employ cold, ice, or the like as a part of their magic. Normally, spirits who are immune to some type of magic are more vulnerable to others. In the example presented above, the apparition of the alpine girl was more greatly affected by a spell such as *cone of cold* than would normally be expected. In extreme cases, it might be impossible to drive off or destroy the spirit unless magic to which it is vulnerable is employed.

Seeing that my quarrel had not slowed the phantom, Alanik Ray backed away pulled his leather satchel to him, and he began to rummage through it in search of something unbeknownst to me. The phantom beauty turned toward me, confident in the impotence of our attacks and defenses. Its slender, pale hands reached out for my throat, and I found myself unable to look away from that angelic face. Suddenly, Alanik Ray shoved me roughly aside. I slipped and fell. As I watched from the floor in stunned silence, the ghost spread its arms and took my companion into its deadly embrace. To my surprise, the great detective seemed unharmed. Indeed, it was the ghost who threw back her head and let out a scream of agony. Alanik Ray had impaled her on a shaft of gleaming crystal.

-From *The Life of Alanik Ray*,
by Arthur Sedgwick, Physician

Racial Abilities

Although ghosts acquire new abilities from their undead status, a number of spirits also retain the natural abilities of their racial origin. The ghost of a dwarf, for example, might retain its natural infravision as well as its resistance to spells. Not all spirits retain such racial abilities, but enough do so that it is important to note this possibility. Racial abilities most likely retained seem to be those intrinsic to an apparition's new life.

Class Abilities

The knowledge that a ghost possessed when it was a living being is seldom lost to it in the transformation from life to unlife. Thus, many ghosts retain the abilities of whatever profession they pursued in life. In the least of these cases, this might include such common skills as cooking or carpentry, both of which have little importance to the incorporeal apparition. Far worse, however, are spirits that retain their knowledge of formidable magic, innovative battle tactics, or the mysterious powers of the psionic mind.

Creation of Undead

In approximately half of all cases of ghostly haunting, the apparition has the ability to cause a person it kills to rise up again as some form of undead, though not necessarily in the form of another ghost.

If the ghost also has the ability to command undead, these newly created assistants fall instantly and totally under its control. The type of undead spawned by a given ghost differs from ghost to ghost, but the new undead almost always shares something of its creator, notably certain of its considerable powers and abilities.

In general, a ghost is able to employ this power only when it slays a person using its primary special attack ability. Thus, a ghost capable of draining life energy might be able to bring to unlife anyone who died from having his or her life energy drained away, rising again as a lesser form of undead.

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*"There isn't many ghosts like ours, sir,"
he assured me with mournful wide.*

- William Hope Hodgson
"The Gateway of the Monster"

Extraordinary Powers

I have dealt thus far with the abilities common to most spirits. In this chapter, I will discuss the paranormal powers I have encountered only in specific ghosts.

Over the years, I have battled and researched more ghosts than I care to remember. These creatures were often unlike any others I had encountered. Thus, despite my attempts at classification, it certainly seems that every ghost is unique. One might encounter one hundred wolves in the forest, and although each is different from its brothers in coloration, size, and temperament, these differences are nothing when compared with the radical differences I have found among ghosts.

On the pages that follow, I have recorded twenty-one extraordinary powers and abilities known to the incorporeal dead. (The powers are arranged alphabetically.) I take heart in the idea that any single ghost usually has no more than one or two of these dreadful powers, but bear in mind that some ghosts have more. On one truly horrifying occasion, I was forced to confront a spirit who had no fewer than six of these extraordinary powers. I barely escaped that encounter. Four of my closest friends were not so lucky.



Accelerate Aging

Some ghosts are able to cause an unnatural accelerated aging of their victims. I have seen this process in action - watched as someone's hair turned from brown to gray to silver, saw wrinkles stretch across a previously taut face, heard the cries of pain as arthrid spread through now fragile bones - but cannot explain how it actually occurs.

This is, I believe, similar to an ability drain, but this unnatural aging affects the victim's entire physiology rather than some specific aspect of it.

Some ghosts seem able to manifest this destructive power by a simple touch.

Table 3: Magnitudes of Ghosts's Attacks

Ghost's Magnitude	Priest's Level *	Years Aged **
First	5	5-20 (1d4x5)
Second	7	10-40 (1d4x10)
Third	9	15-60 (1d4x15)
Fourth	11	20-80 (1d4x20)
Fifth	13	25-100 (1d4x25)

* **Priest's Level:** A saving throw vs. spell is allowed for those affected by *accelerate aging*. Priests at or above the levels indicated are assumed to always make this saving throw successfully. Other heroes earn a +2 bonus on their saving throws if they are two or more levels above the level indicated for priests. Thus, if a 6th-level priest were immune to the aging attack of a given apparition, an 8th-level fighter would make a saving throw against it with a +2 bonus.

** **Years Aged:** This is the number years a victim is aged by the attacks is determined by the power of the attacking ghost. For ghosts who cause aging simply by being seen, number of years aged is Fixed at the *minimum* for that power category; thus, a fifth-magnitude ghost would cause anyone simply seeing it to age 25 years. Actually being touched by the ghost, however, causes variable damage, as noted in the column. In all cases, the aging is irreversible except by means of certain spells as described in the *Dungeon Master Guide*.

The general effect is a rapid acceleration of biological functions such that the victim instantly ages many years.

Accelerate aging is most dangerous to those of us who are further along in life than others. I myself have been cursed by a ghost's aging attack on one occasion, and I believe I was fortunate that the blow dealt was not more severe and the effects more deadly.

Very powerful ghosts are often able to induce this aging in those who merely look upon them. This effect is fiendishly lethal because the ghost projects this power at a distance, while it is still safe from many forms of attack. A mitigating factor is that sometimes this power requires the potential victim to make eye contact with the ghost. Thankfully, ghosts of this type are very rare!

Cause Despair

Some spirits are able to cause those near them to lose hope and become convinced that the cause for which they work is lost, whatever the truth of the situation. Persons under the effect of this aura generally become lethargic and depressed. In some cases, people affected by this power become frustrated and prone to violent outbursts. I have seen more than one party of adventurers fall to bickering and fail their quest, despite the fact that success was in their reach. In almost every case, this power functions as a simple aura that affects all those within a given radius of the ghost. Fortunately, removal from the proximity of the ghost mitigates this despair, and adventurers quickly return to normal stoutheartedness.

Alanik Ray raised his hand and called for us to stop. He turned slowly, looking around the inside of the crypt carefully, then turned his scrutiny on the members of our party. At last, he turned to face the young mortician, Bartonwood.

"We need explore this dark matter no further," he announced. "The murderer is among us is he not, Bartonwood?"

I was shocked by Alanik's accusation. I had known the worthy Bartonwood for many years. He was no more capable of so brutal an act than I was.

I turned to speak on his behalf, but Bartonwood had collapsed. A thin stream of white vapor poured from his open mouth, rising up to take a misty human form. It was clear now that Ray had been correct, but I knew nothing of the peril now before us.

Table 4: Magnitudes of Created Despair

Ghost's Magnitude	Radius of Aura *	Negative Modifier **
First	25 feet	-1
Second	50 feet	-1
Third	100 feet	-2
Fourth	200 feet	-3
Fifth	300 feet	-4

* **Radius of Aura:** This indicates the maximum distance at which the *cause despair* power operates. Any

person within that area must save vs. spell in order to avoid succumbing to the color surrounding the ghost. If the save is made, the ghost has no effect upon that hero. If the saving throw is not made, the victim suffers a negative modifier, as noted below.

**** Negative Modifier:** The number noted is applied, to a character who takes a saving throw; the negative modifier applies to all attack rolls, saving throws and proficiency checks. The modifier is in effect until the victim moves beyond the radius of the ghost's aura. A spell that boosts morale (including *remove fear*) that is in effect before heroes enter the aura of despair provides a +4 bonus to the initial saving throw, or (if cast within the radius of *cause despair*) entitles affected heroes to make new saving throws, with no bonus, to escape the effects of the aura.

Cause Fear

Some ghosts have the power to inspire a supernatural fear in those who see them. I have felt this chilling horror myself and cannot find words to describe how all consuming it is. I shall say only that, although several years have passed since the dark night when this power was used against me, on its anniversary I wake up screaming.

In most cases, ghosts who cause fear radiate it as a magical aura. They need not touch the victim, look into his eyes, or even know of his presence - the mere sight of the creature is enough to trigger the effect in the victim.

Table 5: Magnitudes of Created Fear

Ghost's Magnitude	Fear Check Penalty *
First	-1
Second	-1
Third	-2
Fourth	-3
Fifth	-4

*** Fear Check Penalty:** Those who see a ghost who has this ability must make a fear check, modified as noted above (in addition to all other modifiers). The fear check is treated exactly as described in *Domains of Dread* (Chapter Six).

Cause Paralysis

Some ghosts are able to render their victims immobile. Whether this is due to some creature supernatural manipulation of the victim's nervous system or the generation of an aura of magical terror, I cannot say.

The paralysis induced by these creatures is generally of a temporary nature. Those affected by it are unable to move even slightly for a brief period of time. When the paralysis wears off, it generally does so quite quickly, although the muscles and nerves of the victim might tingle or ache for a long time afterward.

Generally, the ghost must lash out and strike its victim in order to induce this effect. Some apparitions, however, are said to radiate an aura that causes all those who look upon them to become frozen in motion. In either case, this debilitating power is dangerous in the extreme, for it leaves the victim vulnerable to any other form of attack the spirit might employ.

Table 6: Magnitudes of Created Paralysis

Ghost's Magnitude	Saving Throw Adjustment *	Paralysis Duration **
First	0	2d4 rounds
Second	-1	2d4 turns
Third	-2	2d4 hours

Fourth	-3	2d4 days
Fifth	-4	Permanent

* **Saving Throw Adjustment:** Anyone subjected to the attack of a ghost that can *cause paralysis* must make a saving throw vs. paralysis or be rendered immobile. The saving throw is modified as indicated by the ghost magnitude.

** **Paralysis Duration:** This varies depending upon the magnitude of the ghost. In the case of a fifth-magnitude ghost, the victim is unable to move until such time as *dispel magic* or a similar spell or power is employed to remove the magical effects of the paralysis.

Cause Revulsion

Some spirits, particularly those of corrupted appearance, are able to induce a feeling of disgust and revulsion in the living. Often this is so powerful as to cause the victim to become physically ill.

I encountered a spirit of this nature while traveling aboard the *Wailing Maid*, a small merchant vessel that ran from Martira Bay to Mordentshire. We were just out of port when night fell. With the rising of the moon, there came a cry of pain from below deck. Dashing to investigate, I found that one of the sailors had been crushed by the fall of a heavy crate in the hold. The crew was certain the cargo had been well secured and was at a loss to explain the tragedy, claiming it must have been an accident. I, however, suspected it was not.

My suspicions were confirmed when, the next night, another "accident" occurred. This time, a fire broke out near several barrels of black powder in the cargo hold. Had I not been on hand to smother the blaze, the entire ship might have been destroyed.

As I dampened the last flame, I found myself in the company of a bowlyn, a dread spirit of the seas [MC10 Monstrous Compendium Ravenloft Appendix I, TSR #2722]. Upon seeing that I had thwarted its plan to destroy the ship, the creature swept toward me with a cry. I raised an open vial of holy water and splashed the contents upon the ghost. To my surprise, this did not harm it.

The creature swept past - no, through - me. As soon as its misty form came in contact with my flesh, I staggered backward. A wave of intense nausea swept through me. So intense was this feeling that I fell to my knees. When the crew heard the noise and found me, they had to carry me back to my cabin.

I dare say that, had another accident not occurred the next night while I was still incapacitated, I might have been blamed for the mishaps and forced to face the angry captain's justice.

The misty apparition rose into the air and flew about, twisting and contorting as it went. The entire room became deathly cold, and an eerie wailing clawed at our hearts. Suddenly, I saw the earthen floor of the tomb shift and bubble.

Decayed, skeletal bands broke through the soil to grab at us. Even as I scrambled to avoid this new menace, a host of ghastly, animated corpses pulled free of the soil. We were outnumbered three to one by the walking dead.

Then, as if from a great distance, I heard Alanik Ray call out. "These creatures are not real!" he cried. "Pay them no heed, for they are only illusions!"

I heard his words, and - knowing him to be as reliable a source as one is likely to find - I bent my will to the task of ignoring these hideous images. Within seconds, they faded until I could no longer see them.

Table 7: Magnitudes of Created Revulsion

Ghost's Magnitude	Nausea Duration *	Negative Modifier **
First	1 turn	-1
Second	1 hour	-2

Third	1 day	-4
Fourth	1 week	-6
Fifth	1 month	-8

* **Nausea Duration:** Apparitions that can *cause revulsion* automatically induce a state of nausea in their victims for the duration noted as per the ghost's magnitude. In general, the ghost is required to physically touch someone in order for this power to manifest itself.

** **Negative Modifier:** Those attacked suffer a negative modifier to all attack rolls, saving throws (including fear and horror checks), and proficiency checks. Any healing spell, even one as minor such as *goodberry*, cancels the effects of this nausea, regardless of the magnitude of the ghost that created the condition.

Cause Wounds

Some ghosts have the ability to wound at a touch, for the power is a simple manifestation of the deadly energies that seethe within them. In order to cause wounds, the ghost simply strikes at someone in the same way it would have in its past, when it was alive. If the blow lands, the ghost dissipates a portion of the target's life essence. In effect, the victim dies just a bit. It seems to matter little if the ghost is corporeal or incorporeal, for this ability crosses the line between our world and the border ethereal.

The stronger the karmic resonance of a ghost, the more powerful its ability to wound. In the most powerful of ghosts, this attack can be lethal. People injured by a ghost employing this attack find themselves singularly marked by it. The supernatural power of the ghost leaves a blazing red welt upon its victim, harming the skin and deeper tissues. In time, the color of the wound will fade, but a wicked scar will remain. I myself bear these marks of violence upon me.

Table 8: Magnitudes of Attack Damage

Ghost's Magnitude	Damage Done *
First	1d4
Second	1d6
Third	1d8
Fourth	2d6
Fifth	3d6

* **Damage Done:** In addition to damage, any wound has a percentage chance equal to the points of damage inflicted of reducing the victim's Charisma by one point. This reflects both the disfiguring nature of *cause wounds* attacks and the damage it does to a person's karmic strength and psychological health. A victim reduced to zero Charisma is assumed to be consumed by despair and without the will to live. Such a victim must make a saving throw vs. death magic. Failure indicates that the victim collapses and dies. Success means that he is transformed into a "broken one," as described in the *Monstrous Manual* tome.

Charm Animals

Some spirits are able to exert considerable influence over the beasts of the living world. The nature of this dark talent is such that most lowly creatures are unable to resist the ghost's will; they must obey its every command.

This power functions similarly to a *charm person* spell, except that it affects only animals (not monsters) and can be used at will. The total Hit Dice of animals that can be charmed at any one time by a ghost is generally equal to three times the Hit Dice of the ghost. Some apparitions may have lower or higher limits.

Charm Persons

Similar to the ability to charm animals, this power can exert control over human and kindred races when used by ghosts.

This ability functions in the same way as a *charm person* spell. The total Hit Dice of persons who can be charmed at any one time by a ghost is generally equal to two times the Hit Dice of the ghost. However, some apparitions may have lower or higher limits.

Command Undead

Some spirits have the ability to command other undead creatures to do their bidding. Thus, it is possible for a ghost to surround itself with a legion of lesser horrors that will act on its behalf. These lesser undead are slaves to the creature that commands them, and they are freed from their bond only upon the destruction of their master.

A ghost that can lead undead creatures as if it were an evil cleric of a level equal to its own Hit Dice, using the chances for success outlined in Table 47 in the *Dungeon Master Guide*. The number of undead that can be commanded at any one time is usually equal to three times the ghost's Hit Dice, although exceptions are not uncommon as the *Dunpeon* Master decides. This Iteteri does not include undead created by the ghost itself, as described in Chapter Two.

Create Illusions

The power to shape images out of nothing dangerous indeed. Just as some wizards are capable of making others believe in illusory visions and sounds, so too can some spirits alter the perceptions of their victims and fill the senses with lies.

The power of illusion ranges greatly in scope and intensity. At its weakest, it is the ability to make simple sounds echo from nowhere or lights flicker hauntingly in the night. At its greatest, however, it can drive victims to the edge of madness as the conviction grows in them that nothing they see is real or trustworthy.

For the most part, ghosts who have the power of illusion are able to produce effects that mimic the spells cast by wizards. There are important indifferences worth noting, however. For example, these spirits have no need to invoke the magical rituals magicians often must use, and thus can cause the effects they desire to spring instantly into being. As one might expect, the more powerful the ghost, the more convincing the illusions it creates.

It is important that the reader understand the difference between *illusions*, which are manifested by actual (if insubstantial) images and sound that can be verified by any number of onlookers, and *phantasms*, which are physically nonexistent and occur only in the mind of the victim. Fortunately, I have heard tell of only one ghost that was able to manifest the latter power, so this entry defines only the former.

The number of senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste) that an illusion can affect is directly related to the power of the ghost. For each magnitude that the ghost has attained, its illusion may appeal to one sense. The senses affected are determined by the *Dungeon Master* when defining the ghost's powers.

For example, a first-magnitude ghost might only be able to create illusionary sounds or lights. A third-magnitude ghost could manufacture an illusion that is visible, creates sounds, and gives off a certain odor. The illusions created by a fifth-magnitude ghost can be seen, heard, smelled, touched, and even tasted. A fifth-magnitude ghost, like a higher level wizard, is able to tap into extradimensional energies in the creation of its illusions, making them quasi-real.

Adjudicating the use of illusions in AD&D game scenarios can be challenging. *Dungeon Masters* are encouraged to refer to the various spells of the Illusion/Phantasm school for guidelines.

Dominate Victims

This power is similar in nature to the ghostly ability to inhabit bodies (see later). It is, however, less vile, for it does not mandate the destruction of the target. It is possible for the victim of such an attack to be subdued and the dominating spirit driven from his body.

Use of the domination ability enables a spirit to assume complete control over the actions of its host. In general, however, some special condition must be met before a ghost can dominate a person.

For example, some ghosts may have the ability to slowly paralyze a mortal. Gradually, the ghost's victim becomes less and less agile, his Dexterity impaired. After several attacks, he is no longer able to move at all. With the victim utterly helpless from the insidic nature of the ghost's paralysis, the spirit slips into the body and dominates it. For a ghost to dominate a person, the victim must often be in a state of reduced physical and mental ability. Only the most powerful of ghosts can seize control of a fully healthy and completely alert victim.

Initial control of a body is attained whenever the dominating ghost comes in direct physical contact with a victim who is in the required physical state. However, a number of spells are able to drive a dominating spirit from the body of its host. When this happens, or when the ghost abandons control of the body for whatever reason, the host is generally able to recover fully from the trauma. Thus, a paralyzed victim would probably recover her ability to move over the course of time.

Do not misunderstand: Dominated individuals are able to move and act normally. I have found it next to impossible to tell from a brief surface examination whether a person is under the control of a spirit. The dominating spirit does not, however, have access to the memories of its victim. Thus, a simple set of questions about the date, current surroundings, and past events can often reveal the presence of a dominating spirit. Of course, no ghost will take this discovery lightly.

With the illusory dead no longer a threat to us, Alanik Ray sprang to aid Korrigan, the priest. He helped the woman to her feet and told her something I could not hear above the howling and shrieking of the misty spirit before us.

As they set about preparing for what I could only assume would be an attack upon this evil specter, my attention was drawn to young Barton wood. The mortician was beginning to stir. Despite the presence of that wll spirit above him, I was abruptly consumed with the desire to aid him. I went to his side, ignoring calls from Alanik and Korrigan to stay back.

No sooner had I reached the young man than an incredible flash of light erupted in the air above me. Korrigan had unleashed some powerful spell at the apparition. I have a dim memory of Alanik's cry of triumph - a sound cut short when I fell forward, unconscious.

Table 9: Magnitudes of Ghost Domination

Ghost's Magnitude	Hosts's Condition *	Duration of Control **	Saving Throw Adjustment ***
First	Dead	1 turn	+4
Second	Dying	1 hour	+2
Third	Debilitated	1 day	 0
Fourth	Asleep	1 week	- 2
Fifth	Any	1 month	- 4

* **Host's Condition:** This column gives a general description of the condition the victim must be in before the ghost can *dominate* him. In the case of a first-magnitude ghost *dominating* a victim dead no longer than one day, the victim acts in all ways as a zombile, though an intelligent one; once control ends, the "zombie" returns to a dead state.

** **Duration of Control:** This column lists the amount of time the spirit will have unchallenged control over its host. At the end of this time, however, the victim is allowed to make a saving throw vs, paralysis in order to drive off the spirit. This save is modified as indicated in the saving throw adjustment column.

The length of time before a ghost can attempt to *dominate* the same victim again is found by inverting this column. Thus, a first-magnitude ghost could not regain; *domination* of a victim from which it had been driven

for one month (the time a fifth-magnitude ghost could originally dominate a victim). A fifth-magnitude ghost could regain control of its victim after only one turn (the: time inversely noted under the first magnitude).

***** Saving Throw Adjustment:** As indicated in this column, the saving throw is modified per the ghost's magnitude. A successful saving throw drives the spirit from the body and prevents it from regaining immediate control. Failure to save indicates that the victim remains under control of the spirit for the full amount of time listed in the "duration of control" column.

Drain Abilities

Some spirits have the power to siphon off a person's life force. This is manifested in several ways, but one of the most crippling can be the loss of physical and mental abilities. Generally speaking, a ghost's ability to bleed off a person's Strength, Intelligence, and the like requires that the spirit touch the victim.

The sensation of this drain has been likened to a chill that causes the victim's bones to ache as if he or she had been immersed in ice-cold water. Although the effects of the ghost's touch may begin with minimal loss in physical ability, repeated attacks by the apparition can be crippling or even fatal.

Table 10: Magnitudes of Ability Draining

Ghost's Magnitude	Points Drained *	Duration of Loss **
First	1	1 day/point
Second	1	1 week/point
Third	2	1 month/point
Fourth	3	1 year/point
Fifth	4	Permanent

*** Points Drained:** *Ability draining* takes this many points from a victim, based on the magnitude of the spirit. Since all ghosts are different, the Dungeon Master should decide which ability a particular ghost drains. Reductions to an ability score are Immediately reflected in the victim's related characteristics. For example, a loss of Strength might immediately reduce the victim's attack and damage rolls.

**** Duration of Loss:** This indicates the general length of time before a single lost ability point is regained. Thus, the victim of a fourth-magnitude spirit will regain lost points at a rate of one per year, and if he lost three points it will be three years before his ability is fully restored. Magic can often quicken this pace, as determined by Dungeon Masters, for individual spirits.

A saving throw vs. death magic is allowed whenever a ghost with *ability draining* attacks a hero. A successful save indicates that the hero regains lost points after the time noted has passed. Failure to make the save, however, means that the ability-point loss is permanent. The attack of a fifth-magnitude ghost *always* results in permanent damage to the victim, so no saving throw is allowed.

Drain Energy

Without a doubt, the most horrible attack available to any undead creature is its ability to draw forth the life energy of a living being. Some say that ghosts feed upon such energies, but I find that theory implausible.

It is my belief that life energy is simply a result of the ghost's ties to the Negative Material Plane - a side effect of the creature's existence, as it were. In many cases, persons who die from a ghost's draining energy attack may become ghosts themselves.

In order to drain a person of his life energy, a ghost must touch him. Fortunately, ghosts who are unable to assume a corporeal or semicorporeal form are seldom able to employ this power.

Table 11: Magnitudes of Life Draining

Ghost's Magnitude	Levels Lost *
First	1
Second	1
Third	1
Fourth	2
Fifth	3

* **Levels Lost:** The *energy drain* of a ghost causes a victim to lose experience levels, as noted in this column per the ghost's magnitude. A person affected by such a power is reduced in experience points to halfway between the minimum needed for his or her new (reduced) level and the minimum needed for the next level above the new level, as described in the section on Special Damage (Energy Drain) in the Combat chapter in the Dungeon Master Guide.

Drain Memories

Some spirits, though thankfully very few, are able to rob a person of his or her memories merely by touch. People have lost their recollections of the past few minutes, hours, or even days through such a hideous attack.

Fortunately, some individuals are able to regain their memories with the aid of magical or psionic healers, but I know of no mundane cure for so potent an attack. It is said that certain monsters and alien beings can restore a man's past to him if they can be persuaded to do so, but I think none are so foolish as to seek treatment from such horrors.

Table 12: Magnitudes of Created Memory Loss

Ghost's Magnitude	Period Forgotten *
First	1d10x10 minutes
Second	1d10x10 days
Third	1d10x10 weeks
Fourth	1d10x10 months
Fifth	1d10x10 years

* **Period Forgotten:** Any hero attacked by a ghost with the *drain memories* power must make a saving throw vs. spell. A successful save indicates the memory loss is temporary. Recollection of "forgotten" events occurs gradually over the course of 1d 10 days per magnitude of the ghost. Thus, a hero attacked by a second-magnitude ghost and who made her saving throw will regain her lost memories in 2d10 days.

If the saving throw is unsuccessful, the memory loss is permanent. Only powerful spells, such as *psychic surgery* (if PHBR5 *The Complete Psionics Handbook* is being used) will restore the victim's memory. The period forgotten is the amount of time indicated prior to the attack. Take the example of an 80-year-old heroine who is attacked by a fifth-magnitude ghost; she fails her saving throw and loses 40 years of memory. She could not choose to forget the first 40 years of her life - she would have to forget the latter half of her life. In her memory, she would again be 40.

Entrance Victims

A spirit, especially one of a spectral nature, can cause those who look upon it to become *entranced*. A person in this state is helpless to defend himself against attacks by that ghost or its minions. This paralytic fascination with the ghost retains its hold over the victim until the ghost leaves his sight.

Some researchers claim that the trance is simply a hypnotic effect and is not truly magical. My research indicates this belief

to be incorrect. I have found that the ghost is able to *entrance* its victims by tapping into their inner fascination with death. All creatures, whether they are aware of it, have a morbid interest in these matters, and the ghost, with its magical powers, is able to evoke that appeal.

Upon first sighting a ghost able to *entrance* its victims, each hero must make a saving throw vs. paralysis. Success indicates that the hero is able to avoid the ghost's magic and may Continue to act normally. A hero who fails this save, however, is unable to move or undertake any action, no matter how simple, for as long as he can see the ghost.

Additional saving throws are allowed to attempt to break the trance after a number of melee rounds equal to the magnitude of the ghost has passed. Thus, a hero facing a first-magnitude ghost who fails his saving throw on the first combat round would be able to attempt another saving throw in the second round. If he failed that save as well, he could try again on the third. On the other hand, if the ghost were of the fifth magnitude, the hero could not make a second saving throw until the fifth combat round (or the tenth round, if he failed the second save).

Inhabit Bodies

Many apparitions are able to lash out at victims and invade their bodies. This ability is similar, but not identical, to the physical effects manifested by the magical spell known as *magic jar*. I have discussed this similarity with a number of mages over the years, but they are unable to account for the differences. For example, when mages employ the *magic jar* spell, they are required to have a special crystal on hand to use as a container for the life energies to be "jarred," but ghosts do not. This receptacle, the mages insist, is crucial to the operation of the spell; without it, the spell cannot work. However, ghosts manage quite well without the crystal.

Under normal circumstances, a *magic jar* spell forces its victim into some sort of receptacle (the aforementioned crystal, for example). Because ghosts do not employ this focus, there is no storage place for the victim's spirit, and it is forever cast out of its body to become a ghost or similar spirit on its own. Thus, a ghost able to successfully employ this power instantly slays the person that it is used upon. I am told there is no more painful way to die than having one's life force ripped free of one's body in this fashion. I learned this from a ghost who had been formed in just this way, so I cannot dispute it.

Once the ghost has cast out the spirit of its prey, it enters the now vacant shell of the body. It may do this by swooping toward the victim and merging with the still-living flesh. In some cases, however, the ghost simply fades away and no obvious contact is made between the ghost and the body. In either case, the ghost now controls the actions of the body, for good or evil.

It is possible to drive a ghost from a body it has inhabited. Some spells are said to be useful in this effort (dispel magic, for example). The most direct way, however, is simply to kill the host body. While this does not destroy the ghost, it does drive it back into the open, where it can be more easily identified and attacked.

I must say, however, that it is horrible indeed to wield your weapons against the body of someone you knew well. I have been in such a situation, and - despite the fact that I knew my friend to be dead and his body animated by a ghostly fiend - it was almost impossible to strike at him with my knife. When the deathblow landed, I watched helplessly as the apparition that had ruled my friend's body fled his corpse and my vengeance.

This power is handled as per the description of the 5th-level wizard spell, *magic jar* (in the Player's Handbook), though with special conditions. A ghost with this ability can freely target a specific individual for attack, unlike a mage casting the *magic jar* spell. Further, the range at which this power can be employed is 20 feet per magnitude of the ghost. Thus, a third magnitude ghost can attempt to inhabit a victim's body from up to 60 feet away.

This power allows the potential victim to make a saving throw vs. spell. A method for figuring a modifier to that saving throw is discussed in the Player's Handbook with the *magic jar* spell description. If the Dungeon Master prefers a simple method for determining the modifier, a -1 to -5 adjustment to the die can be applied,

per the ghost's magnitude.

Inhabit Objects

This power is difficult to quantify, but simple to comprehend. In essence, it is the ability of some ghosts to enter a physical object and cause it to become mobile. The purported knight haunts told of in the realm of Sithicus are probably an example of this power, as is the living scarecrow of folklore, which might arise if a farmer returns to avenge his murder.

As a rule, I have found that most spirits tend to inhabit and animate objects that were important or familiar to them in life. Because of this, it is necessary to differentiate a spirit using this ability from a ghost who is anchored to an object. An anchored spirit, as described in Chapter Two, is a fixed and permanent resident of its chosen object; the object may move freely about, but the ghost will leave it at any time for any reason. However, a spirit who uses the power to inhabit objects is free to come and go as it pleases from its habitation, whatever that object might be. Generally, a spirit is restricted (or desires only) to inhabit a single type of object. For example, if a ghost inhabits a suit of plate mail and that armor is then battered into scrap metal by ghost-hunters, the spirit may flee to another suit of armor. An anchored ghost could not do that.

This power is most commonly encountered in ghosts who inhabit humanoid-shaped objects (scarecrows, armor, or statues, for example) and cause them to come to life. Occasionally, however, a ghost may inhabit another type of object, turning something mundane into a deadly hazard. Examples that occur me include haunted carriages or ship houses or castles, and miscellaneous pieces of art such as portraits or statuary.

In almost every case of this type that I have encountered, the shape of the inhabited object slowly changes to give it the semblance of an evil face. Most people, however, seem to find this change too subtle to notice until the true nature of the haunting is revealed to them.

I was unconscious for several hours. My first recollection was a sensation in great pain in my chest and a pounds headache. I opened my eyes slowly, fearing I might still be in that horrible tomb. To my surprise, the grinning of Alanik Ray filled my vision.

"Excellent!" he cried, taking my hand in his. "You are awake and all is well. "

"You defeated that vile creature?" words came out in a croak, for my throat was sorely inflamed.

"Not I so much as our good friend Korrigan. Her magic was more than a match for that apparition, once its true nature was revealed to us. "

I sighed with relief and felt my eye close again. I remember hearing my companion urging me to sleep. I glad complied.

- From *The Life of Alanik Ray*
by Arthur Sedgwick, Physic

Table 13: Magnitudes of Object Inhabitation

Ghost's

Magnitude Typical Object Inhabited *

First	Small objects only - tools, painting, weapons
Second	Man-sized objects - suits of armor, statues, scarecrows
Third	Large objects - carriages, rowboats, furniture
Fourth	Very large objects - houses, bridges, long ships
Fifth	Huge objects - castles, large sailing ships, cave complexes

***Typical Object Inhabited:** This column gives the Dungeon Master an idea of size of object: that a ghost of a given magnitude can *inhabit*. These are merely guidelines; the Dungeon Master should feel free to make exceptions as dictated by the needs of the adventure.

This power is a difficult one to define. In general, Dungeon Masters should consider what the ghost might be

able to do, then assign values to it based on its magnitude and the type of object inhabited. For example, an animated suit of armor that carries a long sword ought to be able to inflict the normal damage allotted to such a weapon. A ghost that has inhabited a carriage could try to run down someone, leaving the Dungeon Master to decide exactly how much damage such a mishap might cause.

A good rule of thumb, if no obvious answer presents itself, is to assume that the ghost can cause maximum damage averaging 5 points per magnitude of the ghost. Thus, if a fifth magnitude ghost *inhabits* a castle, and it drops a large iron portcullis on an intruder this would inflict about 25 points of damage. If eight-sided dice are used, with 4.5 points of damage per die, then a value of 5d8 or 6d8 could be assigned for portcullis damage. Saving throws for reduced damage are possible (and recommended), as decided by the Dungeon Master.

Other examples of ghosts using the power to inhabit objects exist in the AD&D game. See "Haunt, Knight", in *MC4 Monstrous Compendium Dragonlance Appendix*, TSR #2105; and "Scarecrow, Ravenloft", in *MC10 Monstrous Compendium Ravenloft Appendix* TSR#2122.

Keen

Some ghosts, commonly grouped together under the heading of groaning spirits or banshees, have the ability to release an unearthly howl, scream, or moan. This supernatural keening is so horrible that the mere sound of it can stop a man's heart. I have seen the faces of men who died in this way, and without exception each was twisted in a look of horror so dreadful as to cause my own heart to miss a beat.

Although the wailing of a banshee can be heard for many miles, its magical effect fades rapidly with increasing distance from the creature. Outside the radius in which the keening is deadly, the cry is still a chilling sound that gives rise to fear in even the bravest souls.

This great and terrible power has a weakness, however. While ghosts of this type often emit a constant cacophony of evil and dreadful sounds, their unearthly keening can only be employed a limited number of times in any given 24-hour period. Further, all but a very few of these spirits lose their keening ability while the sun is in the sky. Thus, they may be attacked without fear of their dreadful wailing from dawn to dusk.

I must caution those who would think these spirits defenseless when their power is unavailable to them, as these spirits are very dangerous even without keening. Further, in the case of the most powerful of these ghosts, daylight has no effect upon the keening ability at all. If a mistake is made about the magnitude of the spirit to be confronted, all is lost.

Table 14: Magnitudes of Ghost Keening

Ghost's Magnitude	Death Radius *	Saving Throw Adjustment **	Attacks Per Day ***
First	10 feet	+2	1
Second	20 feet	+1	1
Third	30 feet	0	2
Fourth	40 feet	-1/+4	2
Fifth	50 feet	-2/+2	3

* **Death Radius:** This is the radius of a ghost's keening ability, the area of lethal effect. If a hero is within this area and fails his saving throw vs. death magic, he dies.

** **Saving Throw Adjustment:** Victims of this powerful attack are entitled to a saving throw vs. death magic in order to escape its effects, with the adjustment as noted per the ghost's magnitude. Any number of persons can be affected by a ghost's keening attack as long as all are within the area of effect. Fourth- and fifth-magnitude ghosts may also keen during the day. If such a spirit uses its power while the sun is up, however, potential victims have a +4 or +2 bonus to their saves (depending on the ghost) instead of the penalty indicated.

*** **Attacks Per Day:** This column notes the number of times a ghost of a given magnitude can keen per night.

Those entries in bold italics (for fourth and fifth magnitudes) indicate the spirit is able to be seen during the day as well.

Lure Victims

Some ghosts are able to send out a magical summons that draws potential victims to them. In most cases, playing an instrument or singing an entrancing song does this.

I know of at least one case, however, where the summons was of a very different nature. In Staunton Bluffs, a young child died tragically at the hands of a transient rogue. The child was so horrified by the attack and so ridden with anxiety over separation from her mother that her spirit returned to haunt the meadow where she had been slain.

Every year, on the anniversary of her death, the ghost child would send out a siren's song - a sobbing, pitiful cry. This sound was so mournful that those who heard it would approach the child. Seeking to find comfort, the tortured spirit would embrace its would-be rescuer and draw out his or her life force. Perhaps this attack did provide it with some manner of comfort, for the spirit was said to fade after slaying the first person who approached it.

As soon as I slipped the silver chain over my head, the world changed. Before this transformation, I was surrounded by the sound and fury of my companions locked in battle with horde of goblins. Suddenly all this faded into soundless, ethereal images I was swathed in a grayness that dampened my heart and soul. Conversely, the grinning shade that had commanded these dark legions became suddenly clear and crisp in my sight. My eyes focused on him hungrily, for here was a source of light and vision to soothe my deprived senses.

My strange transformation drew his attention, for he turned to me, leaving his minions to battle my friends without his aid. "You have the amulet of ethereal travel!" he hissed.

I did not answer, for the creature was moving toward me with great speed. He seemed to walk through the shadowy bodies of the goblins, caring little for the destruction he caused. The twisted creatures grabbed their chests and fell to the ground. Obviously, his pets meant nothing to him if he could gain possession of the silver talisman I wore about my neck.

As the shade drew close, I raised my sword. The gleam of its magical edge seemed to anger the apparition, for he stopped his approach and let out a low growl of rage. He stood motionless for moment with his hand outstretched. To my horror, a sliver of blackness formed in his grip. In a moment, he held before him a sword of purest darkness.

- From the private journal of
Anani Mahss

A hero who hears the call of a ghost with this ability must make a saving throw vs. spell or be drawn to the spirit. A hero's Wisdom-based defense adjustment is applied to this roll. A failed roll indicates that the victim moves toward the spirit at his normal walking rate but allows nothing to interfere with his progress. Anyone who attempts to restrain the victim is attacked violently with whatever means are available to the lured victim.

A hero drawn to a spirit and forced to attack someone to reach the source of the summons will show no mercy, striking at friend or foe alike with equal fury. Once an obstacle is removed, it is instantly forgotten as the hero moves toward the lure again. A hero who makes a saving throw is immune to the lure of the ghost for the time being, but must make a saving throw at next encounter with it.

The range at which the magical summons can be heard is based upon the magnitude of the ghost. As a rule, the lure is effective to a distance of 100 feet per magnitude of the ghost. While the lure can still be heard at three times that distance, it has no magical effect beyond the initial limit. Persons outside the magical effect might hear the lure and move closer to investigate, thus becoming ensnared.

Perform Telekinesis

Some apparitions are able to focus their energy on objects and cause them to move. The amount of force that any spirit can exert in this way is limited, although I know of a few cases in which ghosts were able to lift men into the air and hurl them quite some distance. In many ways, this power is similar to the *telekinesis* spell employed by wizards. The arcane nature of the spirits who employ this power is such that the spirits are instantly able to manifest this effect and are not hindered by a lack of spell components.

It is not uncommon for an object moving under the influence of this power to be surrounded by an aura of pale blue electrical light, similar to the glowing phenomenon known as Saint Elmo's fire, seen on ships during electrical storms.

This power is used in the same manner as the 5th-level wizard spell *telekinesis*, with some exceptions. In the case of a sustained, manipulative force, the ghost can affect 5 pounds per Hit Die it has. Thus, a ghost that has 5 Hit Dice can manipulate up to 25 pounds. Furthermore, a ghost who has this power is better at fine manipulation than are wizards who perform the *telekinesis* spell. If this power is unleashed as a single, massive shock of impact energy, the maximum weight affected and the damage done are the same as those defined for the spell in the *Player's Handbook*.

Resist Magic

All spirits are immune to specific types of spells, as described in Chapter Two. In some cases, however, this magic resistance is even more powerful. For ghost hunters, nothing is so daunting as an apparition that turns aside spells as easily as it ignores arrows and daggers. In less powerful spirits, this is often little more than an annoyance. When one casts a spell upon a minor ghost, one is fairly certain the spell will function normally. More powerful ghosts, however, can be so resistant to spells that adventurers who depend solely upon wizardry in combat are more of a bane than a boon.

Table 15: Magnitudes of Magic Resistance

Ghost's Magnitude	Magic Resistance *	Class Bonus **
First	10%	+5%
Second	20%	+10%
Third	30%	+15%
Fourth	40%	+20%
Fifth	50%	+25%

* **Magic Resistance:** This percentage is based upon the ghosts magnitude.

** **Class Bonus:** If the ghost was a spellcaster of any type before its transformation, its magic resistance is increased by the amount indicated in this column. For example, the spirit of a paladin below 8th level, would not receive the bonus, but the spirit of a paladin who was 8th level or higher would (the level at which paladins can become spellcasters). Thus, a fifth-magnitude ghost who was formerly a 10th-level paladin would be 75% resistant to magic.

Conclusion

One may turn pale at the thought of the many extraordinary powers available to ghosts. Indeed, perusing this chapter's information is enough to make even the bravest heart quake at the prospect of facing a ghost who might have, say, three or four of the abilities listed here. Fortunately, most ghosts (even those of high magnitude) usually only have a few of these powers. The ghost mentioned at the beginning of this chapter - the one with no less than six extraordinary powers - was a rare exception. I pray that those of you who read my text with the intent to hunt the undead never encounter such a creature.

The following is a short outline listing the many potential extraordinary powers of a ghost. I also list the four common, or ordinary, powers that each and every ghost possesses.

I. Ordinary Powers

- ☼ 1. Insubstantiality
- ☼ 2. Invisibility
- ☼ 3. Rejuvenation
- ☼ 4. Immunity

II. Extraordinary Powers

- ☼ 1. Accelerate aging
- ☼ 2. Cause despair
- ☼ 3. Cause fear
- ☼ 4. Cause paralysis
- ☼ 5. Cause revulsion
- ☼ 6. Cause wounds
- ☼ 7. Create illusions
- ☼ 8. Dominate victims
- ☼ 9. Drain abilities
- ☼ 10. Drain life energy
- ☼ 11. Drain memories
- ☼ 12. Entrance victims
- ☼ 13. Inhabits bodies
- ☼ 14. Inhabit objects
- ☼ 15. Keen
- ☼ 16. Lure victims
- ☼ 17. Perform telekinesis
- ☼ 18. Resist magic

For game purposes, the Dungeon Master can either randomly generate the extraordinary powers a ghost may have, or can simply choose the powers best suited for the adventure. As a rule of thumb, the Dungeon Master can assign as many extraordinary powers as the generated ghost's magnitude. If the Dungeon Master planned to use a fourth-magnitude ghost for an adventure, it would have up to four extraordinary powers in addition to the four ordinary powers each ghost possesses.

*We do it wrong, being so majestic,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blow malicious mockery.*

- William Shakespeare
Hamlet
(Marcellus, speaking of the
ghost of Hamlet's father)

Vulnerabilities

Ghosts often have special weaknesses or vulnerabilities that, if exploited properly, can be used against them when attempting to return them to eternal rest. These vulnerabilities are usually tied to the ghosts' origins or their nature. In this chapter, I discuss certain weaknesses I have uncovered in ghosts through travel and research; in addition, I elaborate on weapons that may be useful against them.

I must remind the reader that this information should be considered neither absolute nor binding. Irrational adherence to the techniques described herein invariably leads to the destruction of the ghost hunter, for it will not be long before an exception to the rules occurs.

One cannot discuss the subject of ghosts without considering their place in the universal scheme of things. For instance, spirits are mentioned in every culture and religion known to me. Indeed, in some religions ghosts or apparitions are a crucial component - a component without which the very fabric of the people's faith would be greatly frayed, if not simply torn apart.

As such, ghosts are susceptible to the power inherent in simple faith and not necessarily the physical manifestation of that faith. That is, a person who sincerely believes in the sanctity of a holy place has a far greater chance of holding off a spirit using that belief alone than a person who forcefully presents a holy symbol in an effort to ward off the ghost.

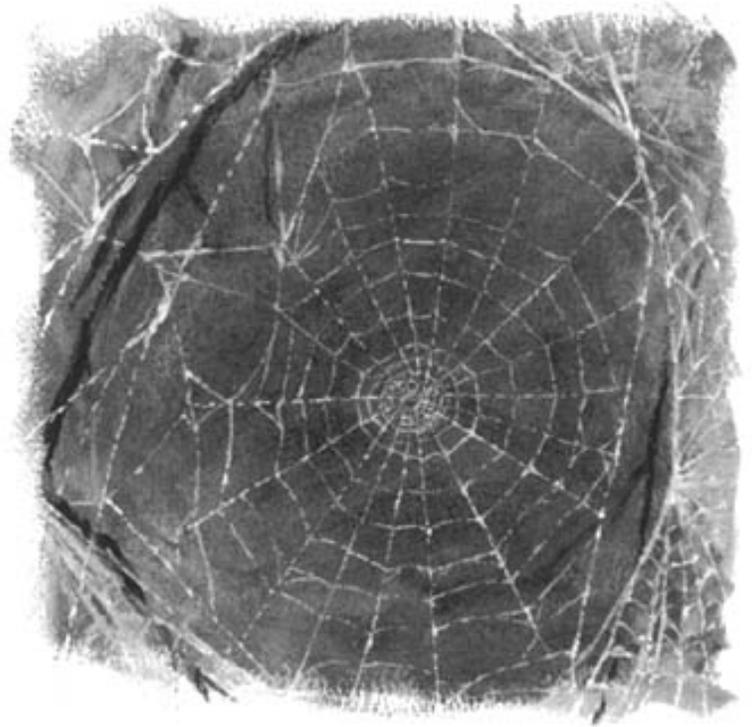
This idea offers no immediate practical application when hunting ghosts, but the true hunter must remember that the power of faith is very strong. Indeed, one day it might be all that stands between a ghost hunter and death.

Ordinary Vulnerabilities

I shall begin my discussion of ghosts' weaknesses with information about those vulnerabilities that seem, for the most part, general or ordinary. Just as the ghostly undead possess ordinary and extraordinary powers, so too do they possess both ordinary and extraordinary weaknesses or vulnerabilities. Such vulnerabilities are sometimes the only restraint that checks these creatures. Often, the very unholiness that makes ghosts dangerous is also the key to their destruction.

As a general rule, all ghosts - regardless of magnitude - are vulnerable in varying degrees to holy water, priestly turning, and holy symbols. However, among ghosts exceptions do exist, particularly with more powerful spirits.

Holy Water



Perhaps the most useful weapon for the destruction of ghosts is a vial of holy water. No ghost hunter should be without a ready supply of this valuable liquid. The numinous properties of this wonderful fluid enable it to inflict damage upon the undead even in an intangible state.

Unfortunately, some powerful spirits seem to develop immunity over time to the effects of holy water. Thus, a newly formed fourth-magnitude ghost may be vulnerable to holy water, but a ghost of the same magnitude that has existed for more than 200 years might not be. A ghost of the fifth magnitude, regardless of its age, is immune to holy water.

It is important to note that holy water must be splashed upon a ghost for it to be effective. In most cases, this means the vial must be opened and the contents hurled at the target. Simply tossing a stoppered vial at a spirit will not harm it; the vial will pass without resistance through the body of the ghost and shatter harmlessly on the ground behind it.

It is possible to splash a ghost with holy water by hurling a vial at its feet or base, breaking the glass upon impact with the ground. The resulting splash usually brings the ghost into contact with the holy water. However, the chance exists that the vial will not break. The seconds needed to throw another vial - this time unstoppered - may be all that is left of your life.

Table 16: Magnitudes of Holy Water Damage

Ghost's Magnitude	Damage Per Vial
First	1d10
Second	1d8
Third	1d6
Fourth	1d4
Fifth	0

An attack roll is required in order to strike a ghost with a spray of holy water. In such attacks, the ghost's corporeal Armor Class is always used.

Turning Undead

Only the most faithful of priests and paladins hold any sway over ghosts. Holy symbols alone, held by lay persons such as warriors or wizards, pose little threat to these creatures, but strong displays of religious faith often will.

Like other forms of undead, ghost can be turned away or even destroyed by a priest. The spiritual energy of a cleric's faith can be so overwhelming that it causes the apparition intense pain and anguish. The ghost is forced to flee from the area or risk annihilation. In some cases, the surge of holy radiance a powerful cleric sends forth is enough to destroy a ghost instantly.

Sadly, only the weakest of ghosts can be destroyed this way. Further, the more powerful the ghost, the less effective attempts to turn it away. The most powerful of all ghosts, in fact, are almost immune to turning, though even they will be unable to attack a cleric who might normally be able to drive them off.

Table 17: Magnitude of Resistance to Turning

Ghost's Magnitude	Turning Penalty *
First	0
Second	0
Third	-1
Fourth	-2
Fifth	-4

* **Turning Penalty:** This modifier is applied not only to the cleric's 1 dice roll to see if a particular type of ghost is turned, but also to the roll that determines how many Hit Dice of undead creatures are affected. If the attempt to turn is successful, but the number of Hit Dice affected is below that of the ghost, the attempt fails. In such cases, however, the ghost is unable to directly attack the cleric because of the cleric's power of faith.

January 15th

We began our ascent of the rocky slope today. The wind was cold, cutting into us during the whole of the climb. In mid-morning, however, we had reached the first plateau and paused to rest.

We had not been there for more than a few minutes when one of the guides cried out. We all turned to see what alarmed him - and found he was dead. His face was drawn up in an expression of terror such as I cannot describe. His dark skin was dry and wrinkled, his hair shot with white, and his fingers clenched as if in pain.

While the others searched for signs of some bizarre attack, I did not. I knew in my heart that they would find nothing. Instead, I turned my gaze to the slender lighthouse that stood atop this barren, mountainous island. We would find our answers there.

Holy Symbols

In my previous work on vampires, I discussed the possibility of holding certain types of undead at bay by the mere presentation of a holy symbol or some manner of blessed object. Unfortunately, this usually does not work with ghosts and similar apparitions.

As a rule, symbols or objects hold no great sway over the ranks of the incorporeal undead. Although they are often harmed by contact with holy water, ghosts are generally not repelled by holy symbols, restricted from passing through sanctified lands, or harmed by contact with holy objects.

I cannot say for certain why this is, but my belief is that it has to do with the connections a ghost retains to its former life. In the case of vampires and other corporeal undead, the physical body remains intact; thus, the physical ties to the past life remain strong. Ghosts, who have no such bodily link, are less affected by the physical manifestations of man's faith. It may be that the ethereal creatures are so removed from the physical realm of humanity that the symbols of our faith no longer have power over them.

I believe this theory has merit. For example, it explains why the presence of a holy symbol keeps few spirits at bay, but a faithful priest or devout paladin can still turn away apparitions through an effort of will, perhaps while using holy symbols as a part of a great display of faith.

It must be pointed out here that it possible (though rare) for a ghost to be kept at bay or repulsed by a holy symbol, but not because the object is holy. In such cases, the effect is similar to that of an allergen, an extraordinary vulnerability described in the following section. If a ghost is vulnerable to holy symbols, I have found that it is almost always burned by contact with them, just as if the ghost had been splashed with holy water. In such very rare cases, holy symbols can strike the apparition even when it is incorporeal.

Extraordinary Vulnerabilities

By definition, "extraordinary" means uncommon or exceptional. The vulnerabilities I describe in the next few pages (allergens, spells, and personal effects) are quite rare and specific. While many can be grouped together in certain categories, such as allergens, exact nature of a given special weakness differs from ghost to ghost.

Look upon the examples I present here as guidelines only. Be aware that these types of vulnerabilities exist, but never assume a ghost has one of these specific weaknesses until careful research supports the hypothesis.

Allergens

In my previous work on vampires, I discussed the importance of various items in battling the undead. Just as with the dread vampire, there are item that an ethereal phantom cannot bear see or touch. Called allergens, these items are useful when fighting ghosts, though seldom are the items as effective against ghosts as are the allergens used against vampires.

Unlike the vampire, which is almost always strongly repulsed by items such as garlic and mirrors, the ghost is a subtler creature. One cannot apply a steadfast rule in using allergens to keep spirits at bay, because each ghost is absolutely unique.

For example, one ghost might not be able to enter a room that contains a blooming rose, but most other ghosts would not be so restricted.

What constitutes one ghost's allergen will almost assuredly not be another's. Because allergens are so closely related to either a ghost's origin or its nature, they can be nearly anything imaginable and as such are truly difficult to quantify. The ghost hunter must research his prospective prey's past so that he can identify a suitable allergen. I myself have used items as varied as dove oil, pheasant feathers, a teacup, and a continuously chiming clock as allergens. In each instance, the allergen held special significance to a particular ghost.

While it is true that almost every spirit is repelled or held at bay by some allergen, the discovery of the allergen may be difficult if not nearly impossible. The blooming rose in the example above might well be effective against the ghost of a rosarian or the spirit of a young woman betrayed by a lover who sent her roses. Against the pilot of a ghost ship, however, the rose is likely to be useless. One might find that sea salt or the ringing of a ship's bell can keep this spirit at bay.

Presenting an Allergen

In general, a spirit is unable to approach someone who presents an allergen. Mind you, the key here is *presentation*. In the case of the blooming rose, for example, it is generally not enough for the victim to simply hold the flower - it must be held toward the apparition in a clear, direct, and courageous fashion.

The effect of an allergen is to keep a spirit from approaching. In general, the distance at which a spirit will be kept at bay is based on its magnitude. The least of spirits seem to be held back a distance of 50 or 60 feet. More robust spirits are able to move closer to an allergen, with a few powerful spirits being wholly unaffected by any form of award.

Those who hunt ghosts must keep in mind that it is impossible for a spirit to take direct action against the holder of an allergen. Be forewarned: If confronting a dangerous ghost, make certain your research is comprehensive enough to ensure that you have discovered the correct allergen, the ghost's one weakness. Many a party has come to grief upon discovering that the ghost they confront is not in the least deterred by the chosen allergen.

Using Allergens as Barriers

It is possible to protect an entire room or other area with an allergen. When doing so, the item is spread about the perimeter of the room, and its protective nature forms a barrier through which the spirit cannot pass. In some rare cases, the mere presence of the object is enough to keep a spirit out a room. For example, a ghost that enjoyed the warmth of a fire when it was alive might be unable to enter a room where a fire has been kindled, because the memory of the enjoyment and the loss of it are too painful for the ghost to bear.

In most cases, however, the presence of the allergen alone is not enough to ensure complete protection. Special steps must be taken to extract the full potency of the allergen. This is best explained through example.

Consider a ghost I encountered some three or four years ago, the Valachan Miser. This spirit was all that remained of a large and powerful man who had, over the course of his life, brought great suffering to many people. He was a merchant noted for his greed and treachery in business practices. When he died, his tortured spirit continued to stand by the counting house where he had conducted his business in life. So strong were his ties to this establishment that no magical force seemed able to expel him from it.

In the course of my investigations, however, I was able to uncover some crucial facts. Among the most important of these was the power of money to this spirit. Not only was the creature fascinated (a term I describe later) by a newly minted coin, it was unable to cross a line of such objects. To protect myself from attack by the spirit while I researched its origins, I would seal every door, window, and vent with a line of coins. Three times this spirit appeared, once at the door and twice beyond the windows, only to cry out in rage when it found it could not reach me.

Using Allergens to Cause Fascination

On the whole, allergens are repulsive to spirits. In some cases, however, they can create a sense of fascination in the ghost, an effect likened to the effect a flame has on a moth. In the case of the Valachan Miser, for example, I found he was unable to look away from a newly minted coin.

Indeed, coins seemed to have so pronounced an effect on this being that I was able to use this fascination to my advantage in the ghost's destruction. Through my research, I surmised the creature could be slain by the smoke created from burning the countless volumes of fiscal records the spirit possessed in life. In order to ensure its exposure to these vapors, I lured the

spirit into the basement of the counting house and held out to it a gleaming platinum coin. Instantly, the spirit froze. Its eyes,, smoldering pinpoints of silver light, fixed upon the coin and would not turn away. Past experience had shown me that this effect was transient, and that I had but a few seconds to do my work.

In the end, I barely escaped the blazing counting house myself, but the spirit was consumed along with its ledgers. I later recovered the half-melted coin and had it fashioned into an amulet, which I made a gift to a young assistant, Claudia, who had been instrumental in the solving of this problem.

January 16th

I write this beside a small fire that does little to drive off the fears of the night.

Our climb is at last complete. We scaled through the night, anxious to escape the thing that killed our guide on the plateau. Our efforts were costly, for two more of our company died during the ascent. I can only take heart in the belief that we all would have perished if we had remained on the cliff during the night.

Seeing the dread tower from its own level was an unsettling experience. It seems bent and twisted in an impossible manner. I stood in the darkness trying to make sense of this impossibly tilted structure. No mortal architect could have built it, for the hand of evil shows in its every stone.

Our quest will end there, I am certain. I pray my life shall not end as well.

Spells

The power of a wizard's incantation or a priest's invocation cannot be discounted in matters of the supernatural. Many spells were created for the express purpose of battling the undead. The majority of these spells were designed for use against corporeal undead, but many are effective against apparitions as well.

I will now discuss selected spells that function (or fail to do so) in unusual ways when employed against ghosts. In most cases, spells specifically intended for use in the presence of all undead function normally on ghosts. Thus, spells such as *detect undead* are not listed here.

Wizard Spells

In the past I associated with many a wizard under many circumstances. The material that follows is a collection of all that I learned from my sorcerous allies and enemies. It is my hope that this wisdom will aid in the fight against all undead.

Alarm: Even the most minor of wizards is often able to erect a magical barrier around some area that sends an alert in the presence of intruders. Such wards will not function, however, if the trespasser is ethereal or incorporeal. A ghost triggers such wards only if it is in a corporeal or semicorporeal state.

Antimagic shell: Although apparitions are not truly magical in nature, this spell creates a barrier that ghosts of any sort cannot (or will not) cross.

Avoidance: This spell (or its reverse) cannot be used to repel (or attract) the incorporeal undead. It depends upon life energies and physical mass to function, making it useless when insubstantial beings are involved.

Banishment: Ghosts are affected by this spell, though they are not extraplanar fiends like demons or devils. A successful abjuration on the part of spellcaster utterly destroys the spirit rather than forcing it to flee to the netherworld.

Binding: This spell can be employed against the undead, with mixed results. Care must be taken, for only certain versions of this enchantment will function. Spirits attacked with this spell may be chained or hedged only. Any attempt to use the spell's other powers results in absolute failure.

Blindness: This spell has no effect upon the undead, which perceive the world by means unrelated to our own senses. (However, see **light**, below.)

Cloudkill: This spell is useless in combating the unliving, which are immune to toxins that affect living processes.

Contagion: This spell, like **cloudkill**, presents no danger to the undead, as it affects only living victims.

Continual light: My comments about the **light** spell (below) apply here.

Deafness: This spell has no effect on ghosts; see **blindness** above.

Death fog: As with cloudkill, this spell cannot poison those who are already dead. Further, it does not slow incorporeal or semicorporeal ghosts who attempt to pass through it.

Death spell: This magic is useless against spirits who are already dead.

Detect magic: This spell does not detect the presence of ghosts, which are not inherently magical.

Disintegrate: Unless a ghost is in a corporeal or semicorporeal state, this spell has no effect upon it. Indeed, even a ghost that can be affected by it is usually not even dispelled. A corporeal spirit who is disintegrated often returns as a wholly incorporeal ghost an unpleasant surprise for a wizard who thinks he has cleverly destroyed a spirit.

Energy drain: All types of undead are, unfortunately, immune to this spell.

Finger of death: This spell has no effect on the undead (see death spell).

Forcecage: Incorporeal spirits are fully contained by this spell. Those who possess magic resistance, however, might break free of the cage with effort, occasionally with spectacular results. A companion of mine once caged a spirit who escaped - but returned in triplicate.

Haste: This spell, which speeds the metabolism only of living targets, has no effect on ghosts.

Hold animal, hold monster, hold person: Undead, even those that resemble the lowest of beasts, are not affected by magic that is meant to affect the living.

Hold portal: While a physical barrier is generally no obstacle to the passing of an ethereal ghost, this spell prevents a spirit from passing through an enchanted door. This does not, however, prevent a ghost from slipping through the wall in which the door is set. Furthermore, very powerful ghosts can shatter this spell.

Imprisonment: This spell works only on corporeal spirits, for the wizard using it must physically touch the target. If used by an ethereal wizard on an ethereal ghost, the spell functions normally, but the spirit is imprisoned on the Ethereal Plane.

Infravision: Ghosts radiate no heat and thus are not detectable by means of this spell. Normal infravision, such as that possessed by elves, does not reveal the presence of the incorporeal undead, either.

Irritation: This spell has no effect upon ghosts.

Legend lore: This spell is a wonderful divination! It has often revealed the secret weakness of a ghost I was hunting. I urge all who battle the incorporeal undead to seek a wizard who knows such a spell. It is invaluable in learning the history of a spirit, determining what items may serve as specific allergens, and discovering what actions, if any, can be taken to return the restless spirit to the quiet of its grave.

Light: Unless a ghost has some direct aversion to light, this spell will not drive it off or keep it at bay. Further, it is impossible to blind a ghost with this spell unless it is in a corporeal state.

Limited wish: It is not possible to destroy a ghost using this spell, but it possible to greatly hamper it for a time. For example, a mutable spirit might be forced to remain fully corporeal for a period of time, rendering it an easy target.

Magic jar: While it is true that a goodly number of spirits are able to employ a similar power when inhabiting bodies, most are immune to the effects of this particular spell themselves.

Mordenkainen's disjunction: This spell has no effect upon spirits.

Otiluke's resilient sphere: Ghosts and other incorporeal beings can be trapped within or kept out of this globe.

Otto's irresistible dance: Not only is this spell from the Enchantment school (a type of magic to which all ghosts are immune), it depends upon living functions and is thus useless against ghosts.

Polymorph any object, polymorph other: These spells cannot be employed against ghosts with any success, as they can become insubstantial then change shapes at will.

Power word blind, power word kill, power word stun: The undead are immune to these mighty spells.

Prismatic sphere: Ghosts and other incorporeal undead are prevented from passing through this sphere, even in an ethereal state.

Protection from evil, protection evil, 10' radius: These spells keep ghosts at bay, for they cannot pass through these magical barriers even while ethereal. However, many spirits might have special abilities that enable them to attack those behind these shields.

Ray of enfeeblement: This spell cannot affect incorporeal ghosts. It is sometimes possible to use it against semicorporeal spirits, and fully corporeal ghosts are subject to its effects.

Reincarnation: If the corpse from which a specific ghost has risen can be found, this spell can eliminate the ghost by restoring its body to life. However, this spell is useless against an anchored spirit, as it is too strongly tied to its anchoring object for this spell to override its newfound purpose. Even if reincarnate is successful, the reincarnated creature is always psychotic. The shock of its sudden transformation to undeath, then its odd revivification, is too much for a rational mind to bear.

Remove curse: Only in the rarest cases can this spell destroy a spirit or allow it to rest in its grave. Generally, this happens only when it is cast upon a minor ghost, say one of first or second magnitude, by a powerful spellcaster.

Sink: This spell cannot affect ghosts or spirits that can become incorporeal and escape entrapment.

Sleep: This spell is useless against the undead, for they neither tire nor sleep.

Slow: Just as the metabolism of the undead is resistant to the casting of a haste spell, so too is a ghost immune to the effects of this wizardry.

Solid fog: This spell does not slow an incorporeal or semicorporeal ghost.

Symbol: None of the magical symbols I have encountered have proven effective against ghosts. I believe the reason for this is simply a ghost's basic resistance to all mind-affecting spells. The unliving nature of the ghost's mind protects it from these spells as surely as it does against charm or sleep.

Telekinesis: It is impossible to manipulate an incorporeal spirit with this spell. **Telekinesis** can be used on semicorporeal ghosts with haphazard results. It is generally effective only against those spirits who are fully corporeal.

Trap the soul: This spell can be used with great effectiveness against ghosts of all types. In more than one case, I have seen it used to contain a spirit who was too powerful to destroy, so that Information could be uncovered that would allow it to be dealt with permanently.

Wall of force: This barrier is so potent that no spirit can pass through it. To a ghost, the **wall of force** is every bit as solid as a similar construction of stone would be to you or me.

Wish: This powerful spell can, if carefully invoked, be used to wish a ghost out of existence. It can also be of tremendous value in deducing the vulnerabilities of a given spirit. Care must be taken, of course, for this spell is notoriously dangerous.

Wizard lock: This spell makes an effective barrier against ghosts, just as **hold portal** does. Unlike the latter spell, however, **wizard lock** cannot be broken by powerful spirits.

Wraithform: A person under the influence of this spell is able to fight a ghost that is in an ethereal state. However, the attacker can also be directly attacked by the ghost.

January 17th

There was only one entrance to the tower, a stout wooden door. We gave it our shoulders and it splintered inward, rotten and brittle after years of exposure to the elements. As soon the portal was clear, a vile odor poured out upon us. The air in

the tower was heavy with the smell of death and decay. I cannot say I looked forward to exploring the building, but I knew that we must.

The six of us entered and lit our lanterns. As the darkness faded away, I thought I detected an unnatural movement among the shadows. I approached, but my examination convinced me that it was nothing more than a trick of the light.

I was relieved by this discovery. When I turned back to my companions, however, all feeling of relief left me. Every one of my friends was dead - slain in moments by an unknown force of evil.

Priest Spells

I am not a spellcaster, though I confess if I were to become one I would most likely be a priest. Although I have felt the calling, I believe it is my duty to continue to battle the evil undead with such powers as I already possess; things have moved too far along to change them now. To this end, I have found the companionship of good clerics both helpful and heartening. Without these faithful companions and the power of their faith, I would not have survived many an encounter.

The reader may rest assured that the following notes on spells of the priests, as used against the undead, are based on the diligent research of trusted allies.

Abjure: This very useful spell can force a mutable spirit into its corporeal or semicorporeal state.

Animal growth: This spell and its reverse have no affect upon ghosts, even if in animal form. It works on the live minions of ghosts, however, so they may be shrunk in size and made less harmful.

Atonement: This powerful spell is sometimes able to bring peace to a restless spirit willing to undergo the spell. It is difficult to tell if this spell will be effective unless a thorough investigation of the ghost's origins has been undertaken before the spell is cast on the spirit.

Continual light: See my comments about the **light** spell for details.

Cure critical wounds, cure light wounds, cure serious wounds: These spells are ineffective, but their reversed harmful forms function normally as long as the priest using them is able to physically touch the ghost. With corporeal spirits, this is easy enough to do. With incorporeal or semicorporeal apparitions, however, this is typically impossible.

Detect magic: As noted earlier in the discussion of wizard spells, this spell does not reveal the presence of undead.

Dispel evil: This spell can sometime be used to drive a ghost from an area and force it into its corporeal state. Further, it can act as an excellent ward, keeping the spirit from entering or returning to the area in which the spell was cast as long as the spell's power remains in effect. In rare cases, this spell is actually powerful enough to destroy a minor ghost.

Forbiddance: This spell functions normally when applied to the undead, even those of incorporeal or ethereal nature.

Glyph of warding: It is possible for a priest to craft a glyph that is specifically designed to ward off the undead. If the approaching ghost meets the conditions on the glyph, the glyph of warding will function normally. Of course, a glyph that is triggered might not affect a ghost if the spirit can ignore the type of damage the glyph causes.

Heal: This spell is similar in its application to the various cure spells described earlier.

Hold animal, hold person: Undead animals are as immune to hold spells as are undead humans, making these spells useless except possibly against animals or persons under the control of an undead being.

Holy word: The power of a holy word is indeed great. In fact, this spell can sometimes be used to destroy a ghost. As with the atonement spell, this power might not work in some cases. In order to ensure the spell's effectiveness, the priest must carefully research the origin of the ghost.

Light: Unless the ghost has some direct aversion to light, this spell will not drive it away. Furthermore, it is impossible to blind a ghost with this spell unless it is in a corporeal state.

Moonbeam: Just as this spell's lunar radiance can cause lycanthropes to transform into their bestial selves, so too can this radiance affect those ghosts who are tied to the moon. For example, a spirit who rises on the battlements of a castle

whenever the moon is full and bright might well manifest itself if this beam were to shine upon the keep it haunts.

Plane shift: This spell can be used to enter the border ethereal and combat ghosts on their own ground. It can also be used to force a ghost to enter that plane if it is a mutable spirit capable of entering an incorporeal state.

Protection from evil, protection from evil 10' radius: These spells keep ghosts at bay, for ghosts cannot pass through the magical barriers. However, many spirits may have special abilities that enable them to reach those hiding behind these shields.

Raise dead: This spell might be used to destroy an undead creature if the being's corpse is available. It is a potent weapon in the war against evil.

Regenerate: This spell and its reverse cannot affect any undead.

Reincarnate: If the corpse from which a specific ghost has risen can be found, this spell can eliminate the ghost by restoring its body to life. However, this spell is useless against an anchored spirit, as it is too strongly tied to its anchoring object for this spell to override its newfound purpose. Even if reincarnate is successful, the reincarnated creature is always psychotic. The shock of its sudden transformation to undeath, then its odd revivification, is too much for a rational mind to bear.

Remove curse: Only in the rarest of cases can this spell destroy a spirit or allow it to rest in its grave. Generally, this happens only when it is cast upon a minor ghost, say of first or second magnitude, by a powerful spellcaster. I am told it is as difficult to lift the curse of unlife from a ghost as it is to cure a lycanthrope of his affliction.

Restoration: This spell and its reverse (energy drain) are useless in battling the undead.

Resurrection: This spell might destroy a ghost under the conditions outlined for the reincarnate spell.

Speak with dead: Like the priceless legend lore spell, this bit of necromancy is a wonderful tool when dealing with ghosts. If the body from which a spirit has sprung can be found, this spell often enables a ghost hunter to learn much about the nature of the apparition. I have been able to use information acquired in this way to drive ghosts back to the grave, to sleep in peace thereafter.

Speak with monsters: This spell does not permit the caster to speak with the undead. However, the speak with dead spell allows such communication.

Spell immunity: This spell can be used to protect against special attacks from ghosts and similar undead creatures. In order for the spell to be effective, however, the priest using it must clearly identify the type of attack the ghost will employ. Furthermore, the priest must have been affected by this attack earlier in life.

Sunray: This powerful spell is a devastating weapon when employed against the undead. Even ghosts who are not normally vulnerable to sunlight are often wounded or even destroyed by this powerful demonstration of faith.

Symbol: None of the normal symbol spells for priests is effective against ghosts. It may be that a special symbol spell could be researched and created that is of special potency against certain apparitions, so this spell would be useful only on a case-by-case basis.

Wyvern watch: This spell will not function as a ward against the approach of a ghost unless cast by a priest who is ethereal at the time of casting. When so cast, the spell will detect the presence of a looming apparition, but not that of a corporeal menace such as a wolf, a bandit, or a zombie.

Personal Effects

As I have said at numerous points in this chronicle, it is vitally important to carefully research the background of the ghost one confronts. A group of heroes who charge into combat with their weapons drawn and their wits sheathed is likely to meet a horrible fate. While the final resolution of any haunting often involves the judicious use of enchanted or holy steel, steadfast devotion to such tactics is foolish in the extreme. Only an understanding of the origins and motivations of a spirit supplies the important edge needed for victory.

My research into an individual spirit has often left me with evidence indicating the need for a weapon unique to that spirit. Because these objects are almost always things that were of great importance to the ghost when it was alive, I group them

under the broad heading of personal effects. Although they are much like allergens (described above), personal effects may be used to destroy and not merely ward off a ghost.

Let me recall an example. I was once called upon to join the detective Alanik Ray in an investigation of no fewer than a dozen brutal murders. The string of killings was identical in even respect to a series of crimes committed less than a year earlier. It became clear that we were dealing with the ghost or the man who had committed the earlier series of murders.

Because the man had been hung for his crimes, we suspected the gallows might have power over him. Indeed, when we confronted the apparition, Alanik's assistant, one Arthur Sedgwick, was able to toss a noose over the ghost's head. Despite the fact that the creature was semicorporeal in nature, the sturdy hemp bound it securely. From the instant the loop touched it, the creature began to choke and claw at it. Its eyes rolled back in its head, a bloated tongue slipped from between its lips and its body melted away in a cloud of inky black mist. It was never seen again.

I can offer but one guideline when deciding to hunt the ghostly dead: Begin the investigation with an examination into the being's original death. That traumatic moment was perhaps the most important of the ghost's existence. Surely, an event so charged with karmic resonance as to create a ghost cannot help but be a good starting point. From there, the hunter will be led down an often twisted path to the true means of a ghost's destruction.

Special Weapons

In this section I examine the use of physical weapons against ghosts. As one might imagine, this is generally a futile endeavor. The mightiest dwarf wielding his family's centuries-old ax will probably not harm the most minor ghost. The weapon will pass harmlessly through the spirit, leaving the dwarf vulnerable to whatever foul attacks the ghost might wish to employ. Truly, a grim predicament.

The reader should take heart, however, for it is often possible to use weapons against the incorporeal unead. Indeed, it is even possible to destroy them if the skill of the wielder and the power of the weapon are equal to the task.

In general, there are three ways in which a weapon can be made useful against ghosts. The first, and least reliable, is to forge it from a special metal or material that is deadly to a specific spirit. The second, surer method is to have the blade enchanted in some way. (Even the most powerful apparition fears a magical weapon, for it can often injure or even destroy a ghost. Still, some of the most powerful spirits are so resistant to harm - even by magical arms - that they look with disdain upon would-be heroes who wield any weapons.) The final method is through special construction, explained later.

Forged Weapons

The most common material used to make weapons designed to battle ghosts is silver. Indeed, almost every spirit of the first or second magnitude is vulnerable to such blades, so the use of silver weapons is much warranted. Why is it that silver is so deadly to ghosts? I cannot say. I believe, however, that this wonderful metal has some natural property that allows it to siphon off a portion of the ghost's energy. In essence, the weapon might be thought of as a lightning rod. I have heard other theories put forth concerning this topic, and I cannot disprove any of them; they are all as valid as mine. In rare cases, a ghost will be encountered who is vulnerable to some other metal. In most of these instances, the exact nature of the vulnerability is rooted in the origin of the ghost. I have encountered spirits vulnerable to iron, gold, and even platinum. Indeed, I once fought the spirit of a dwarf in Darkon who proved vulnerable only to mithral weapons. After a long search, we were able to gather enough of the metal to fashion an arrowhead that, I am glad to say, laid the ghost to rest.

It is also not unheard of for a spirit to be vulnerable to weapons fashioned from material other than metal. I have crossed swords, as it were, with at least two spirits who proved vulnerable only to weapons carved of yew wood and one apparition that could be harmed only by blades fashioned from seashells. Discovering the type of material to use when Grafting such weapons is a difficult and time-consuming endeavor, but it is often necessary if a ghost is to be battled effectively.

Enchanted Weapons

By far the preferred weapon of choice in any combat situation, an enchanted weapon can make all the difference in a fight when used against a ghost. The aura of power that surrounds and permeates these weapons enables them to strike directly at spirits that are wholly or partially ethereal.

The problem with magical weapons, however, is that it is often impossible to say whether a given blade has an enchantment strong enough to harm a specific ghost. Some spirits are so powerful that lesser blades pass through them as harmlessly as nonmagical ones.

I can offer no solid advice on this matter, except that it is better to underestimate the power of one's weapon than to overestimate it. To make the latter mistake may cost a hero his life.

Specially Constructed Weapons

It is sometimes possible to harm a ghost with a weapon that has unusual characteristics beyond those of its material composition or enchantments. This could include placing a specific rune pattern on the weapon's striking surface to having the weapon constructed at a certain location. For example, I researched a case in which the spirit of a blacksmith returned to haunt his wife, a woman who had abandoned him during a time of financial hardship.

When the time came to confront the vengeful spirit, we discovered we could harm him only with a weapon that he had manufactured in his shop. As luck would have it, we came into possession of just such an item and were able to destroy the ghost. I should not be surprised to find that other apparitions haunting the mortal world have similar weaknesses.

It is almost certain that, when such vulnerabilities exist, they are dictated by the origin of the ghost. In the above case, we experimented with several other weapons, each of which seemed a logical choice based upon the particulars of the blacksmith's life and death, before we happened upon the correct tool. No fewer than four of my companions were gravely injured in our research, a testimony to both the hazards and importance of such preliminary investigation.

Table 18: Magnitudes of Magical Weapon Resistance

Ghost's Magnitude	Bonus To Hit *
First	+1/0
Second	+1/0
Third	+2/+1
Fourth	+3/+1
Fifth	+4/+2

* **Bonus To Hit:** This column lists magical bonus a weapon must have in order to harm a ghost of a given magnitude. The number before the slash is the bonus required when the ghost is ethereal but attacked by nonethereal foes. The number after the slash shows the bonus needed when the ghost is either corporeal attacked by a nonethereal foe, or even ethereal and attacked by a foe who also ethereal.

January 18th

Praise be - the night is almost ended. My exploration of the tower is complete. I know now why so many ships have broken themselves on the rocks below. This place is in league with the darkest forces. It is a focus for all that is evil in the sea. At this very moment, the foul spirits of the damned are circling me, kept at bay only by the flickering light of my camp fire.

I know that I shall not leave this island alive. Once my stock of wood fails me, the shadows will claim me. I cannot make the descent alone, for the foul thing that killed Edjard on the slopes would surely have me, too.

I shall place the last few pages of that journal in a stoppered flask. At dawn, as the tide recedes, I shall hurl it over the cliff and into the sea.

Then, I shall follow it.

- Unsigned journal found by a sailor

*He knew the anguish of the marrow
The ague of the skeleton;
No contact possible to flesh
Allayed the fever of the bone.*

-Thomas Stearns Eliot
"Whispers of Immortality"

Speaking with the Dead

This chapter examines a most curious class of people - mediums. These rare individuals can break through the barriers finding mortal life and make contact with those who have passed beyond. When battling ghosts, mediums can be valuable sources of information. Those able to coax information from the dead can reveal the weaknesses of particular spirits, the reasons they are unable to find eternal rest in the grave, and the motivation that drives them to roam the lands of the living. With such allies, a ghost hunter is assured of more favorable outcomes in any clash with the undead.

Types of Mediums

The way in which a spiritualist's power manifests itself is very different from the way in which a wizard casts a spell. While the two may attain similar results, the medium's efforts generally take longer and are more draining on the body than the magician's efforts. Over the course of this section, I shall detail the most common types of spiritualists and give a brief overview of their abilities and characteristic traits. Arranged alphabetically for the reader's convenience, the seven types discussed herere include focus, guide, host, regression, sympathetic, and trance mediums. I save the false mediums for last, as they present special problems all around.



Focus Mediums

A focus medium is an unusual breed of person. She is able to make contact with a spirit, then cause that spirit to enter an inanimate object of some type. The fusion of spiritual essence and unliving matter is unstable, but it can be maintained with concentration by the medium.

Once a focus object is inhabited, the medium can present questions to the spirit. The spirit responds by causing some reaction in the object. This reaction can be almost anything and is generally different for each medium. I know of a medium who constructed a special compass for use in her seances. The natural direction of "north" indicated a neutral state. The other directions referred to various emotional states. A number of runes are arranged in a circle, indicating possible sources of the ghost's anger. When she channels a spirit into her compass and asks it questions, the essence of the spirit is able to swing the needle to point at different directions and runes, indicating its emotional state and probable causes for the same.

The nature of the focus that each medium of this type employs varies greatly from individual to individual. Almost all of them select a focus that has some special significance. The woman who built the compass, for instance, had a fascination with loadstones that dated back to her childhood. When she felt her powers stirring within her, it seemed only logical for her

to build something that was based upon these bewitching stones.

The means by which a spirit communicates with a focus medium varies with the nature of the object employed. I have encountered many wonderful examples of this in my travels, ranging from a medium who employed a small nonmagical crystalline sphere that changed color in answer to her questions to an elf hermit who could cause spirits to enter the flames of his cooking fire, gesturing or dancing at his command.

Focus mediums are often able to extract highly accurate information from the spirits with whom they deal. While less powerful examples of their order are able to simulate the effects of a *speak with dead* spell, more powerful focus mediums are able to employ powers akin to *contact higher plane* or *commune* spells.

If the medium's focus is damaged or destroyed while it houses a spirit, that spirit becomes trapped in the world of the living. Unable to return to the realm of the dead, it soon becomes a malign force anchored to the scene of its summoning.

Guide Mediums

A guide medium is a unique and powerful individual. This person is actually able to enter the spirit world, the border ethereal, and communicate with a ghost on its home territory. My research indicates this is done in a manner similar to a *wizard's astral* spell.

Often, the guide medium must craft some manner of portal or gateway through which he will enter the spirit world. Some type of ceremony is held, during which the medium goes through a series of steps designed to open this portal. When all is ready, the mystic (and perhaps a handful of other people) can step through the gate and into the border ethereal.

Once in the spirit world, the medium has a natural understanding of what is encountered there. While I found the entire voyage utterly bewildering and disorienting the one time I traveled with a guide medium, she was never put off by the weird landscape of the spirit realm. When we encountered the spirit that we sought, it was all I could do to offer even the slightest aid to the medium battling it.

Host Mediums

A host medium is similar to trance medium in that she allows her body be used as a conduit through which ghost can communicate with the living. The host medium, however, gives up absolute control of her body to the visiting spirit for the duration of the ghost's stay.

Host mediums are useful when the ghost or spirit to be dealt with has some corporeal need to be met that requires physical body. I was once called upon look into a haunting at a popular Kartakan inn. I discovered that the spirit belonged to a woman who had been slain by wolves in the countryside nearby. Her death occurred on the day of her wedding, as she and her new husband were traveling to the inn for their honeymoon.

The spirit longed to embrace her husband, feel his kiss but once, and know the bliss of his love before she could rest in peace. With a little effort located a host medium who allowed thr woman's spirit to control her body. Thr husband and his wife were briefly reunited, and the ghost was able to rest in peace afterward. Like the trance medium, a host medium runs the risk domination if she is unable to throw of the spirit that possesses her. A host medium must be careful to avoid a sudden shock to her system while a spirit is in control of her body. A major unanticipated circumstance, such as an attack upon the spiritualist, has a chance of allowing the visiting essence to seize permanent control of the medium's body.

This type of medium is able to invoke powers similar to those harnessed in an astral spell. The medium also has an almost infallible sense of direction while traveling in the border ethereal. If the mystic is slain during this transit of the Ethereal Plane all companions who were traveling with the medium are left on their own, trapped in this realm. Finding a safe return to the land of the living can be very lengthy ordeal, as the spirits that linger in the border ethereal may well want to keep these living creatures from their own amusement, or seek to destroy them.

Like the trance medium, a host medium is a valuable source of spiritual information. Generally, a host medium could provide more information to a ghost hunter than a trance medium, duplicating the effects of *legend lore* spell.

In the event that a host medium is subjected to a sudden shock while a spirit is in control of her body, there is a 25% chance that a mishap occurs. If the medium is injured by the accidental disturbance, this chance increases by 5% per point of damage sustained. Thus, if a host medium is attacked and suffers 5 points of damage, there is a 50% chance of a mishap occurring. If no mishaps occur, the spiritualist's soul returns to her body and contacts with the spirit world is lost. If a mishap does occur, refer to the table accompanying the later section on trance mediums for the consequences.

Regression Mediums

Some mediums deal not with the spirit world, but with the inner world of the psyche. They believe that we have all lived before, and that much of the information that we possessed in our previous lives is now buried deep within our minds. By inducing a mesmeric trance in their clients, these talented individuals are able to help people recall the details of their past lives.

(I have never been bold enough to undergo this mesmeric process myself. Something in my inner nature refuses to accept that I was ever more or less than I am now. This is not to say that I do not have faith in the skills and powers of regression mediums. Rather, this is an indication of my own destiny for uncertainty. I have no interest in knowing who I might have been in a past life.)

Another talent of the regression medium is the ability to take a person back to previous times in his current life. This I have experienced. I was asked to watch the dancing flame at the heart of a fine crystal lamp while the medium spoke to me in a calm relaxing tone. Before I knew it, I apparently fell into a trance and was under his power. With only his voice a guide, I went back into my own past to relive an encounter with Desmian L'Strange, a minor vampire in Valachan.

I was convinced the vampire was destroyed in our first encounter, but I recently saw and gave chase to him the city of Levkarest. When I was able to experience the scene again from an objective point of view, I saw the means of the vampire's escape. Further details from the scene made clear a previously undiscovered weakness of the monster, which I then used to destroy him as he fell from me into the woods of Borca.

The first power of a regression medium, that of exploring a person past lives, is similar to the *incarnate awareness* presented in PHB The Complete Psionics Handbook. Those not familiar with this product can treat the ability as per a *legend lore* spell, with one past life (invented by the Dungeon Master) learned per session with the medium.

The second power, that of regression within a given lifetime, or can be treated as instilling a photographic memory in the subject. Every detail about a given past event can be examined carefully and closely. Any emotions experienced the first time (such as fear, anger and love) are sensed, but not experienced. Thus analysis of the past event can be made analytical and logical.

If the medium is interrupted in the session, the client must take a save throw vs. spell (modified by the client's Wisdom adjustment) to avoid becoming trapped in the previous incarnation or being unable to escape from reliving the past events that he or she was experiencing. Such people fall into madness and can be cured only by magical or psionic means.

"Bow your head, Van Richten, for the goodness of fair Paladine has given me the knowledge you seek. "

"Praise be."

"Do you have the murder weapon here with you?"

"I do, wise one. Here it is. "

"Ah. I see. There is much anger within this dagger. There is a hunger here, too. A crimson thirst that rivers of vital blood could not satiate. "

"Holy one, can you see a face?"

"Indeed - a dark and sinister face that hides from the furious truth of the sun. The killer is not of our realm. He is of the realm of darkness."

Sympathetic Mediums

Among the most common types of spiritualists are those I call sympathetic mediums. These people are not actually able to contact the spirit world or manifest any form of power over the undead. Rather, they sense the psychic vibrations that surround objects and places. In rare cases, these mediums can even sense things about people or other living creatures. Primarily, however, their talent functions with inanimate objects.

Every emotional event that takes place near an object or in a particular place leaves it with a small trace of psychic energy. This energy fades over time, eventually vanishing altogether. The more powerful the emotions involved, the stronger this resonance becomes and the longer it remains. The strongest of emotions can last for centuries and leave a very detailed record in an object.

When a sensitive is exposed to these vibrations, he is able to feel the emotions that linger in a given area. In most cases, this is manifested simply as an awareness of what has occurred.

I once explored a ruined castle with a sensitive named Hildegren. As we moved into the building, she became somewhat nervous and looked about with great anxiety. "Many people have fought and died here," she said. "Death and pain linger in every stone." As we moved deeper into the castle, her trepidation became more and more pronounced. When we finally reached the heart of the keep, which was dominated by a massive obsidian throne, she collapsed. This chamber was the seat of power for an evil creature from another plane of existence that had been trapped in our world. So foul and vile were the acts of this depraved fiend that even I could sense the darkness of the deeds that had been done in this place. For Hildegren, who could read the nature of such vibrations clearly, it was enough to strike her unconscious.

Trance Mediums

This type of medium must achieve a state of absolute serenity in order to employ his powers. In general, this state takes several hours to achieve, often requiring fasting and isolation. Once a trance medium is at peace, he opens his mind to psychic vibrations of the spirit world. If he is successful in his attempt to contact a ghost, the spirit is able to converse with the living, using the body of the spiritualist as a conduit.

My studies of this type of medium indicate that the spiritualist allows the spirit to contact his mind during the trance, granting it access to the medium's senses and control over his voice, though the medium retains his own mind. This is a dangerous practice, for not all apparitions are quick to give up control of a living body when the medium bids them farewell. In extreme cases, the spirit can attempt to usurp control of the body just as if it had used either the dominate victim or inhabit body power both discussed in Chapter Three.

The most fascinating thing about watching a trance medium work is listening to the changes in his voice. Each time a new spirit speaks through the medium, it does so in its own native tongue and with its own speech patterns. I have, for instance, seen a spiritualist who normally spoke with thick Barovian accent suddenly switch to the rolling, flowery prose of the elves when his mind came into contact with the spirit of an ancient elf warrior. I later confirmed the fact that the medium knew, as far as anyone could recall, not a word of Elvish.

The power of a sensitive can take many shapes. Virtually any of the detect-type divination spells might be available to a sensitive, as might the psionic abilities aura sight, object reading, and sensitivity to psychic Impressions. In most cases, the sensations that the medium receives are only vague feelings. The more intense the emotions involved, however, the more accurate the information received.

A sensitive can be overwhelmed by the power of psychic impressions he reads. If the psychic is subjected to

severe emotional trauma, he must make a saving throw vs. spell (adjusted by Wisdom) to avoid being overcome. If the roll is successful, the psychic functions normally. If the roll fails, the medium collapses into a catatonic state and cannot be revived for 1d20 hours after being removed from the presence of the intense resonance.

If the roll is a natural 1, however medium is driven complete mad by emanations. He takes on a person that reflects that suggested by the psychic impressions he received remains insane until magical or psionic means are used to cure him. In the meantime, he acts according to his own personality.

For example, Madame Selya, a noted sensitive, chooses to explore ruins of a vampire's castle. If she comes across the chamber in which the creature satisfied its lust for blood she might be overwhelmed by the that was done here. If she rolls a 1 (when making her saving throw), would take on the evil nature suggested by the vampire's frenzy, She might even come to believe that she herself is a vampire and begin feeding upon the blood of her fellow adventurers.

*Prognostics do not always prove
prophecies at least the wisest prophets
make sure of the event first.*

- Horace Walpole
Letters

A trance medium is generally able to simulate the effects of the *Speak with Dead*, *Commune*, or other informational spells. When in a trance, he claims to speak for the spirit world. In order to do this, he establishes an intimate mental link with a desired spirit. While the spirit does not really enter the body of the spiritualist, as it does with a host medium, it does manage to exert control of the medium's voice and uses his senses.

A trance medium is slow and methodical in reaching his trance state, for the slightest error can result in catastrophic failure in which the medium is destroyed and his body dominated by a restless and possibly evil spirit.

Reaching a trance state requires 2d4 hours. This may be rushed if the medium is willing, but the end result comes less certain when this is done. In order to decrease the time required, a spiritualist must lessen depth of his trance and his ties to spirit world. For every hour that trance is rushed, there is a cumulative 10% chance of a mishap. The time needed to attain a trance never be reduced by more than half. If a mishap occurs, check the following table to determine what actually happens.

Table 19: Trance Medium Mishaps

Roll

2d6 Mishap

- 2 **Mental collapse.** The medium becomes a creature called a broken one, as described in the *Monstrous Manual* tome.
- 3-4 **Mental trauma.** The medium is unable to break free of the trance and becomes comatose for 1d4 weeks.
- 5-6 **Mental shock.** The medium is stunned and cannot move or speak for 1 hour. During this time the medium is catatonic. No further trances may be attempted for 48 hours.
- 7 **Trance failure.** The medium must rest for 24 hours before attempting any other trances.
- 8-9 **Frenzy.** The medium falls under the control of a malevolent spirit and flies into a berserk rage for 1d4 rounds. During this time, the medium attacks the nearest person each round.
- 10-11 **Hysteria.** The medium is utterly dominated by an evil spirit. For the next 1d4 days the medium acts in a psychotic manner, sowing destruction and havoc wherever and whenever possible.
- 12 **Hysteria.** The medium is utterly dominated by an evil spirit. For the next 1d4 days the medium acts in a psychotic manner, sowing destruction and havoc wherever and whenever possible.

False Mediums

The last type of medium I shall discuss is the foul charlatan - a person who takes on the guise of a medium in an attempt to lure unsuspecting people near so that she can steal from them. I wish I could say that these people were rare, but the truth is that more false mediums are around than real ones.

The type of people who commonly seek out a medium are those who have some need or desire to speak with a deceased friend or relative. A widow about to remarry might desire to know her dead husband approves of her new love, for instance. These people are generally so emotionally involved with the issue at hand that their logic, which might enable them to spot a fake, fails them. Thus, the false medium is able to persuade the client to pour much money into his coffers while supplying a string of promises and suggestions that "more will be made apparent at our next meeting".

This individual takes on all of the macabre and mysterious mannerisms that he can imagine. Further, he attempts to drum up business by posting advertisements and distributing handbills that promise incredible services at minimal charge. It is not uncommon for a false medium to hire someone to tell others of his so-called skills and powers.

If one has dealt with such a vile person before, one can generally spot another with greater ease thanks to higher standards of caution. A charlatan uses many tricks in the pursuit of his ill-gotten gains. A careful observer can spot the leading questions, research, false prophecies, stagecraft, and props and devices for what they are: items in the charlatan's miserable bag of tricks.

Leading Questions

One of the most common deceptions employed by false mediums is the asking of leading questions. This tactic is simple enough to identify, but it can still be enormously effective when dealing with the uneducated or unsuspecting. The key here to defeating this tactic is to demand specific information from the medium. If he cannot supply it in any manner, then he is most certainly a fraud.

I present you now with an example of the way in which leading questions are employed.

Medium: I sense that you might be married.

Victim: No, I'm not.

Medium: Ah, yes, but there is a woman of whom you are very fond.

Victim: Yes, there is.

Medium: I sense that she might be well- to-do.

Victim: Well, she's quite poor, actually.

Medium: So she is now, my friend, so she is now - but she will not always be!

As you can see, the charlatan employs leading questions to get the victim to believe that the "medium" knows things he truly does not. In the above example, the charlatan could almost certainly count on his client to believe that the medium sensed the existence of his sweetheart, whom the client might possibly wish to marry, even though the client was tricked into revealing the relationship. Further, the client has been given the hint that this woman will one day come into a fair amount of wealth. Certainly the promise of good fortune will heighten the young man's interest in her, and foster a strong belief in the alleged powers of the wholly shameless "medium".

A quick way to defeat this ploy is to simply lie. When the medium says, "I sense you are married," simply agree. The fantastic lies such a humbug will weave when presented with so profound a deception quickly reveal his true nature - and may be entertaining enough to warrant the coinage paid for the fortune telling.

Research

Just as no ghost hunter can survive without information, so too is the false medium fond of special knowledge. No only does this eliminate the need to use leading questions in dealing with customers, it also supplies the false medium with a solid point from which to exploit the fears, weaknesses, greed, and desires of his victims.

The type of research that a false medium might perform encompasses many possibilities. Among the most common and despicable is the practice of watching the death announcements in a large town, then presenting new widows and widowers with an offer of help in contacting the loved ones they have just lost. The depths to which such a fiend will sink is appalling, for I can think of few things so vile as the abuse of vulnerable persons in mourning.

Another foul research practice of the swindler is the learning of secrets and minor facts that the "medium" claims to have been told by the deceased, with whom the medium is supposedly in contact. If the information the medium has obtained is specific and seems to be authentic, the victim will often believe that there is no way for the fraud to have learned this fact if not to have been privy to a voice from beyond the grave.

False Prophecies

The making of predictions has long been a cornerstone of the false medium business. In order to appear gifted and clairvoyant, the medium makes some prediction about coming events. This can be done in one of two ways.

The most common of these tactics is to make a prediction so vague that it will "come true" no matter what happens. For example, the customer might be told to carry a silver coin in his hand whenever he goes about in public, or a horrible fate will befall him. If the advice is followed and no great trauma occurs, the mystic takes credit for the customer's safety. If a calamity does befall the customer, however, the medium can almost always explain it away by blaming other dark forces, perhaps then urging the gullible victim to carry two silver coins from that point on for better luck.

The other means by which a prediction can be made to appear true is more difficult but far more convincing. This tactic relies upon the medium making a very specific prediction about an upcoming event, then making sure that the event comes to pass. For example, the mystic might warn of a robbery in the victim's future, men hire a thug to rob the client, splitting the take with the medium. In some cases, this can become quite an elaborate hoax, for some swindlers are truly artists at their vulgar profession.

Stagecraft

Another very convincing process by which customers can be lured away from their cash and into the clutches of the false medium is by simple acting ability. A false mystic who makes a living at his craft must be a masterful actor, capable of lying with absolute conviction and gaining the confidence, friendship, and even love of those he cheats. Often the false medium could earn an honest wage on the stage, performing in plays, but he is, for whatever reason, loath to give up the criminal life.

Props and Devices

In addition to his researching and acting abilities, the false medium can build a number of mechanical devices that enable him to mimic the powers of a true mystic. Any number of mechanisms can be employed to deceive the unsuspecting.

For example, the false medium might craft a hollow glass ball that he can cause to fill with swirling vapors "when the spirits are present." Another common tactic is the use of stage magic to cause a table or some other object to rise into the air or jump and bang about. Strange noises (often produced by a compatriot) are another common tactic.

Another common trick is the employment of smoke and vapors, created when powders, herbs, or alchemical fluids are mixed or tossed onto a fire. I know of one such individual who always insisted that he and his client drink from the same glass of wine before each session. The wine was drugged with a narcotic to which the medium had built up a tolerance. Under its influence, the victim of this deceit would experience realistic hallucinations prompted by the medium. When all was done, the victim was only too ready to believe that he or she had been in the presence of the supernatural.

The section on false mediums is particularly useful when the finding of a medium is a primary part of an adventure. The Dungeon Master can roleplay the part of a false medium for all it is worth, leading the unsuspecting group of adventurers on a merry path leading who knows where. The swindler kit from *The Complete Thief's Handbook* (TSR #2111) and the charlatan kit from *The Complete Bard's Handbook* (TSR #2127) should provide inspiration.

Locating and Hiring a Medium

Tracking down a real medium can be a difficult and demanding task. True, in some places they openly practice their art, drawing customers just as any other merchant would. More frequently, however, they are forced to practice their profession in secret because of local prejudices or government restriction. This section will discuss finding a medium through recommendation, by reputation, through advertising, and by sensing.

Please note that many people liken contact with spirits and the dead with evil and dark magic. I do not share this belief, but I have seen enough people corrupted by contact with the powers of necromancy to understand this common fear and suspicion.

A medium will assist a group of adventurers out of sympathy for their cause or out of a desire for their gold. In the former case, the charge for services rendered might be a minimal amount or even free. In the latter case, however, the price demanded may be staggering. If the spiritualist believes her services are vital to the success of a client's mission and that no other avenue of recourse exists for the client, the medium's prices may reflect a moderate increase. I have heard tell of ruthless mediums demanding veritable treasure troves from wealthy clients.

It is sometimes possible to haggle with a spiritualist when money is not available to meet a stated price. The best thing to offer the medium then is a period of service. A medium frequently has a need for investigative work, for even her powers are not unlimited.

Through Recommendation

Perhaps the most reliable way to locate a qualified spiritualist is through the recommendation of a trusted friend. In my own profession, I have established contacts with many adventurers and ghost hunters over the years. If I am in a certain domain, I need only contact someone in that area who knows me, then tell him or her what services I require. As this person is invariably more familiar than I am with the resources locally available, this works quite well for finding mediums.

To those who lack such a solid network of support, I can offer only limited advice. If an organization can be found to which you might make a claim of membership) - a thieves' guild or school of wizards, for example - then much can be gained there. It has been my experience that groups such as these can be of great service to their members and allies in locating special help. Care must be taken, however, in deciding how much trust one can place in any group of strangers.

If no manner of professional or fraternal ties can be found, there is always the clergy to consider. It is often possible to locate a church that, although not of the same faith one follows, will be sympathetic to the cause for which one is fighting. If this relationship can be forged, trustworthy advice is often forthcoming.

I have had occasion to deal with some of the priests who devote themselves to the gods of Har'Akir. While my own faith is different from theirs, we nevertheless quickly found common belief in justice and the sanctity of the tomb that bridged the gap between our cultures.

I am delighted to say that a long and true friendship arose between several local holy men and myself. Indeed, on at least three separate occasions, the actions of these wonderful companions saved my life. Without them, I should not be able to write this missive.

"Can you give a name to the vile creature?"

"To the creature itself? No. But to the mortal form it has assumed, yes. It calls itself Dominique l'Mortain. "

"What? Holy one, are you certain? Lady Dominique is well known and respected hereabouts. I cannot take action against her without absolute cause!"

"Paladine does not deceive, Van Richten. "

"No, I suppose not. But can I rely upon your interpretations of all that you sense to be accurate?"

"Would you have come to me if you harbored any doubt?"

- Transcript of a meeting
between Dr. Van Richten

Acquiring the services of a medium can usually be dealt with in the same manner as hiring a nonplayer-character spellcaster. Table 69: NPC Spell Costs, in Chapter 12 of the *Dungeon Master Guide*, provides a listing of costs that might reasonably be demanded for the use of a medium's powers.

In general, the spells available from a spiritalist include *augury*, *clairvoyance*, *commune* (500 gp), *contact other plane*, *divination*, *ESP*, *legend lore*, *speak with dead*, and *true seeing*. More potent spells, including *gate* and *plane shift*, might be available from extremely powerful mediums at whatever price can be negotiated. For those campaigns using PHBR5 *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, the following powers might be available from psionic mediums (with the costs associated with their use): *object reading* (200 gp), *precognition* (200 gp), *sensitivity to psychic impressions* (100 gp), *danger sense* (250 gp), *spirit sense* (300 gp), *probability travel* (7,300 gp + 1,000 per "passenger"), *summon planar creature* (25,000 gp), *astral projection* (1,000 gp), and *incarnation awareness* (1,000 gp).

These abilities are not, as a rule, cast or used in the same manner that a priest, wizard, or psionicist would invoke a spell or power. Rather, the same effect is created by means of a complex ritual or seance. Furthermore, not all of these powers are available from every medium. As a rule, each medium is capable of employing only 1d4 of the above spells or psionic abilities. When designing an adventure and creating a nonplayer-character medium, Dungeon Masters should carefully select the medium's powers for their dramatic effect and importance to the story, instead of randomly selecting the powers.

Dungeon Masters can play up the unusual nature of these nonplayer characters and their powers by making them unusual eccentrics who have memorable personalities and traits. An encounter with a medium is a wonderful roleplaying opportunity to add dramatic or comic mood and atmosphere.

By Reputation

A less reliable means of locating a medium is by the medium's reputation. An individual who is talented in the art of communication and who chooses not to practice his or her skills in secrecy will eventually become known. In some cases, this reputation can spread far and wide, crossing even the borders of a domain.

A word of caution is vital here, however. In my years of travel, I have encountered many fraudulent spiritualists whose claims far outweighed their purported mystical abilities. In almost every case, these individuals had amassed reputations built around stories of past successes they themselves had invented. Tracking down a medium by reputation alone lends itself to this kind of deception more than any other method.

Through Advertisement

It is possible to seek out a medium by posting handbills and hiring street criers to express one's desire to employ a such a person. This has the distinct disadvantage of alerting all those interested in fraud and deceit to the presence of a possible victim for their trickery. Even if a genuine medium responds to the advertisement, he might be overlooked in favor of a talented faker with greater charm.

I have been forced to resort to this avenue of hiring only once in my life. To my surprise, the first applicant for the position arrived even as the first of my notices was being posted. After a brief interview, I learned she had been aware that a stranger had come into town who was, she sensed, "in need of guidance." She kept a careful watch on the notice board in the center of town and responded instantly upon seeing my leaflet.

I suspect she would have found me even if I had not posted my notices, but I cannot be certain of this. Over the course of the next few days, as she provided me with all of the information I needed to solve the matter at hand, I was faced with a constant trickle of pretenders and charlatans who claimed to be the genuine article. Doubtless one or two of them might have had some minor gift for prognostication, but most were simply talented actors trying to land a profitable role - one that might have cost me more than mere gold.

By Sensitivity

I have heard tell that some people can actually sense the presence of a spiritualist in a given locality. Whether the phenomenon is magical, psychic, or divine, I cannot say, but I have seen evidence to indicate that one might attribute such a power to each of these three sources. Allow me to present an example. I was traveling with a pair of companions through the strange, distant domain of Sanguinia. My comrades were a fierce desert warrior, a foreigner name Arametrius, and the stern and mysterious ranger, George Weathermay, whose reputation is widely known hereabouts.

Arametrius was a man of secrets, to be sure. That his native land was one of deserts and hot sun was obvious, for his skin was tanned, and the chilling winds of Sanguinia were almost more than he could bear. He was unfamiliar with the metal objects we used in our daily life. As he did not speak any language I knew, I was never able to understand the wonder with which he beheld such simple things as iron tools or steel weapons. I believe the root of his attitude to be religious in nature - perhaps his people used metal only in the fashioning of holy objects.

Arametrius was also sensitive to the presence of the undead or persons connected with them. On three occasions, he awoke in the dead of night with cries of fear, grabbing for the bone ax he kept always by his side. Without exception, such nightmares were soon followed by an encounter with the undead. I was convinced that his was a valuable gift.

When it became obvious that our company would require the services someone capable of communicating with the spirit world, the task fell to Arametrius. He set his powerful mind to work on the matter and, within a few minutes, was able to sense the presence of a supernatural influence. We sought out the woman whom he had sensed a charming young lady named Claudia DeShanes - and asked for her help. To our surprise, we found Claudia had no idea what we were talking about. Indeed, she was certain Arametrius was mistaken, for she swore she was not a mystic. I persuaded her to attempt some simple experiments under my guidance, and her powers quickly manifested themselves. We learned her mother had been sensitive to the vibrations of the spirit world, as had her grandmother. Claudia was not only gifted, she was among the most accurate and powerful spiritualists with whom I have ever worked. After our adventure in Sanguinia ended, Claudia joined me in my battle against the forces of evil. We traveled together for little more than a year before her death in the dread land of Lamordia.

Sources of a Medium's Power

In this section I shall discuss the ways in which a medium might acquire his powers. It is important to me, as a man of learning, that these distinctions be drawn, for they help quantify that which is otherwise mysterious and unknown. Spiritualists seem to come in two broad groups. The first represents all those who deliberately set out to master their mystical abilities. The second group seems to come upon the mystic calling in a more haphazard, unplanned fashion. I call these groups *studied* and *incidental*.

Studied Abilities

Mediums in this group spend years in the pursuit of knowledge and power, so that they might contact and control the spirit world. In the eyes of many adventurers, these individuals are the easiest with which to deal, for they are often kindred spirits who seek to lay the dead to rest. These mediums derive their power by magical, divine, or psionic means.

Magical Powers

Persons who draw power from a magical source include necromancers, diviners, and others who depend upon the weaving of spells for communication with the undead or spirit world. Several spells have been created expressly for obtaining information from and about the dead. Among the most common and useful of these spells are *detect undead*, *legend lore*, *sending*, *demand*, and *foresight*. Magical means of communicating with the dead are quite reliable, but are not typically found among the general public. As a rule, individuals with these powers are few and far between. If a group of adventurers has no ability among them to cast these spells, their only access to these abilities is through a hired wizard. Knowing these mysterious and powerful beings as I do, I can state that finding such an individual and convincing him to give aid can be a long, hazardous, and frequently expensive process.

Divine Powers

If I had to select the spiritualists for whom I have the greatest respect, it would be those persons who draw power from the

worship of deities. As a rule, these individuals have access to highly effective and reliable spells that enable them to draw forth such information and to exercise a level of control over the undead that no magician can match.

The drawback to this group is that sometimes these individuals are in the service of dark powers. As such, they are among the most dangerous and formidable foes an adventurer is likely to face. Their abilities to communicate with the spirit world, coupled with their control over the undead, can be channeled into a mighty weapon, the likes of which few ghost hunters will survive.

Earlier, I wrote about my trip to Har'Akir and my fondness for several members of the local clergy. There is more to that story, which I shall use to illustrate the above point. One of the first people I met in that land of sun and desert was a tall, slender woman with skin the color of polished ebony. She was a priest of some sort, although her faith was unknown to me then. She extended to me what I thought was the hand of friendship, and, being alone in a domain I did not know, I accepted. For several days, all seemed well. She fed me fine foods, kept an ample supply of water and wine available for me, and made a great effort to learn my language. She expressed interest in my works and seemed eager to help me in defeating a withered spirit that had pursued me across the dunes. Before long, however, I discovered that this kindness was nothing but a charade.

I learned that this priestess, Kharafek, served a power of darkness and evil. Her only purpose in treating me well was to acquire information about the spirit I had been battling. It was her desire to control this ancient evil being and use it as a pawn in her effort to crush the local temples of just and righteous gods. I learned of her plans too late, after she had already seized control of the withered shade. I was forced to flee from her temple in the dead of night.

As I ran, Kharafek bent her will against me. Spirits rose from the sand to lash at my body. I dare say I would have been horribly mauled or even slain by the nightmares that she drew forth from the spirit world if I had not stumbled upon a small party of local clerics, led by a powerful cleric of their own faith. Seeing my peril, they came to my aid. We soon found our common ground and joined forces against the dread Kharafek.

Psionic Powers

Some people can draw upon their own mental powers to establish contact with the spirit world. Such individuals are very rare but often quite powerful. Among the powers at their disposal are such useful talents as *object reading*, *precognition*, *sensitivity to psychic impressions*, *danger sense*, *spirit sense*, and *incarnation awareness*.

Some of the informational powers employed by this type of person are truly wonderful. The first time I saw someone employ the *incarnation awareness* ability, for example, I was stunned. The information we received was accurate, concise, and decisive in the resolution of a most challenging case.

For some reason, however, psychic spiritualists are almost unheard of in the lands I call home. Those few that I have encountered have almost always been outsiders who traveled here over great distances from unheard-of places. Curiously, these psychics say their powers are far less reliable here than in their homelands. I can only assume that some aspect of our land warps these powers, although I cannot provide any manner of explanation for this unusual phenomenon.

Incidental Abilities

In rare cases, an individual with no predisposition for mystic powers has them granted to or forced upon him. Without question, these powers (be they accidentally created, hereditary, or artificially induced) are more potent than those forged out of dedicated study. This may not seem fair, particularly to someone who has spent years in the study of arcane lore and mystical incantations. While incidental powers are generally more effective in their specific roles than those that are earned, an individual gifted with incidental abilities rarely has more than one or two of them. Thus, such mediums are typically specialists with only one avenue of highly restricted expertise, as opposed to those who have studied multiple abilities.

Accidental Powers

Some spiritualists have only the hand of fate to thank for their powers. They did not seek out a special ability through study or similar means, and they have no hereditary claim to such gifts. Although powers of this type can spontaneously awaken in a person, it is far more likely that they are triggered through an accident or period of great stress.

I have met one individual, a dwarf who now travels under the name of Koal Shadowforge, whose powers can be traced to an

accidental origin. Like many of his race, Koal spent years aborning in the mines that surround the city in which he lived. One day, an explosion occurred in the tunnels, causing a collapse. The shower of rocks that fell around Koal knocked him unconscious and left him pinned beneath a heavy layer of stone. When Koal awoke, he found himself in the company of three of his fellow miner. Like him, they had been trapped in the collapse and were unable to move. Thus, the quartet was forced to wait until help arrived. They passed the time in conversation and, as dwarves are wont to do, complaining about their problems.

Two days later, help arrived. Koal was freed; luckily, his injuries proved to be minor. To his surprise, however, he found that his companions had all been killed in the initial collapse. His time trapped in the mine had been spent in the company of three ghosts.

From that point on, Koal found himself able to converse freely with the spirits of the recently dead. With the help of a magician in my native Darkon, I was able to test Koal's ability. Our conclusion was that he was effectively able to employ the spell holy men call speak with dead at any time. He had no need for rituals or incantations, his race's natural resistance to magic did not hinder him, and he made no conscious effort to employ his power. He was simply able to converse with them as you or I might chat with a traveling companion.

In some cases, power acquired in this way can be fleeting in nature. On one of my own adventures, I encountered a small child whose father had been beheaded for a crime he did not commit. When the wronged man's spirit returned to exact vengeance on the people who had falsely accused him, the daughter was able to freely converse with the apparition.

No one else was able to do this without the aid of powerful spells. Further, when the ghost had completed its task and returned to a peaceful rest in the grave, the girl was unable to communicate with other spirits. To the best of my knowledge, she now lives as happy and normal a life as anyone in Darkon.

Hereditary Powers

The most powerful spiritualists are those who descended from long lines of similarly gifted persons. Most Vistani mediums are of this type, for the powerful magic of the waking dream (explained later) runs strongly in family lines, passing almost without exception from mother to daughter.

Vistani who have this power are often trained to use their talents by their parents. They are extremely reliable when called upon to undertake spiritual tasks, and they have a good understanding of their abilities, their limitations, and the risks involved in any endeavor.

It is very rare that someone who has hereditary powers does not receive training from an ancestor or a mentor. If this does not happen, a perilous focus is created. A hereditary medium cannot help but see into the spirit world. His karmic aura is in tune with all that transpires nearby, and this can be most dangerous. With all of this spiritual energy swirling about, an untrained medium acts as a lodestone to pull ghosts, shades, and spirits into the world around him.

Often this infuses these mediums with a feeling of dread and paranoia. They sense the looming energies about them and panic. For some, this oppressive karmic weight is too much to bear and they succumb to death. In stronger minds, psychosis grows. They feel hunted and pursued by the ghosts around them. They flee, perhaps seeking isolation in the wilderness to become hermits who dwell at the heart of some haunted, dire forest.

More frequently, however, this medium never settles down. Rather, the medium becomes a mystical plague carrier who travels from town to town in an effort to stay ahead of the spectral forces that gather around him. Even the medium encounters runs the risk exposure to supernatural presences. not uncommon for a dozen or more hauntings to spring up following the passage of such a tragic figure.

With the proper training, however, these people can be a great boon to those who battle the ranks of the evry undead. While the way in which such medium's power manifest itself varied from individual to individual, one can almost always count on a hereditary medium to be a powerful and reliable source of information. If cooperative, can prove to be a valuable weapon in one's endeavors.

Induced Powers

Some mediums, particularly those from less advanced cultures, require an outside stimulus to awaken their mystical powers. Generally, the stimulus takes the form of a ritual ceremony that surrounds the imbibing of a magical concoction. The potion

must be drunk each time that spiritual powers are to be used.

The information one receives from such an individual is usually reliable, but a bit random in nature. Although induced medium can put a general question to the spirits, the contacted spirits seldom feel it is more than a suggestion. An answer might be given that is wholly accurate and correct or, more frequently, of a puzzling or only partly useful nature.

I do not mean to discount the usefulness of this kind of medium. If the only type of mystic around is someone who depends upon a magical tincture poultice to make contact with an apparition, by all means, seek out this person and make use of this gift. I am saying only that some degree of cautious is warranted in the wording of question and in the interpretation of answers.

If one thinks in broad terms when putting questions to induced mediums the reader will generally be safe enough. Ask about the origins of a spirit, or its wants and desires. If one attempts to pin down specific points, however, disappointment or disinformation is certain.

Lifestyles of Mediums

The life of a medium is seldom similar to that of a normal person. The medium receives the mortal world differently than you or I do, often sensing things that we cannot. This section discusses six personalities toward which mediums seem naturally gravitate: aloof, calculated, morbid, nomadic, reclusive, and unworthy. This information might be useful when attempting to find a medium.

Aloof

Some mediums choose to remain among humanity, but they retain a sense of alienation that marks the nomadic and reclusive spiritualists. In order to remain among the living and only in one place, they adopt an understandable philosophy: a belief in their absolute superiority over those who have no supernatural powers.

I know of one woman, for example, who claimed to see the world exactly as it was. When I asserted my belief that I could do the same, she laughed. I soon found that she was correct in her claims. Her power was in her sight. She saw the shifting winds themselves, not simply their effects upon trees. Nothing could hide from her keen senses - not those items under a magical shroud of invisibility, for she saw such things normally. Illusions and phantasms were instantly obvious to her, and she could tell if someone was telling the truth or lying merely by the aura surrounding him. She was an amazing woman.

Such keen senses, however, made it impossible for her to live as we do. She could tell at a glance the innermost secrets of everyone she met. Even the famed detective Alanik Ray, whom I have worked with on two occasions, could not match her perception and skill at deduction. She knew that all those around her feared her power. They could not stand to be near her, for she knew all their personal secrets, both benign and wicked. I consider myself fair and understanding, but even I was taken aback by her powers when we first met.

Individuals who have the aloof personality are seldom wholly good or evil. Rather, they are opportunistic individuals who place their own well being and comfort above that of anyone else. They desire only the best and insist that those around them, the lesser ranks of humanity, provide it for them.

Calculated

Some mediums adopt the same mannerisms one might expect from master craftsmen. They make no attempt to hide their powers or disguise them in any way. In fact, they often advertise their abilities and let their past accomplishments be known. They may open shops or offices, to make their living telling fortunes and answering questions about the unknown for local citizens and ghost hunters.

Such calculating mediums generally take no notice of the feelings others have toward their abilities. They are what they are and seldom regret the powers that fate put in their hands. These mediums tend to form a close circle of trusted friends around themselves, and this becomes the whole of their social life. They are often perceived as cold and caring for only what might profit them. I believe they foster this notion as a defense against those who do not understand them.

Morbid

Perhaps the most disturbing lifestyle commonly found among mediums is that which I term morbid. These individuals feel a strong kinship with the dead because of their powers. As time goes by, these ties grow stronger. The mediums begin to find things relating to death and the dead aesthetically pleasing. In most cases, these individuals live in homes that begin to look much like tombs or mausoleums.

Individuals with this outlook have a fatalistic view of the world. They see the living, themselves included, as transient things, dust motes in the vast scope of the cosmos. I have listened to their views and found them strangely compelling but disturbing. It may be that all living beings have a trace of this morbid fascination (as I hypothesized in Chapter Three regarding the power of some ghosts to entrance victims), or it may be that my own encounters with death and the undead have left me particularly vulnerable to this fatalistic outlook.

In an extreme case, a morbid spiritualist might believe that he or she is actually undead, trapped in a living body through some magic or curse. Strangely, this mirrors the mentality of many undead creatures that believe themselves actually alive but cursed with death.

Nomadic

Believing that they have no place in mortal society, nomadic mediums travel from place to place. Generally, they devote their lives to the study of the supernatural and seek to master their inner gifts. From time to time, these mediums become traveling ghost hunters who uses their abilities for the betterment of humanity without actually taking a personal interest in any given town or individual.

Just as often, however, these individuals become drifting minions evil. Their powers and resentment of the living guide them down paths of darkness from which few have the goodness or willpower to return. The wicked spiritualists can become roving adversaries as deadly as any ghost vampire.

Reclusive

Many people with the gift of spiritual powers quickly become convinced that they have no place in the land of the living. While they do not develop an affinity for dead things, they do become detached from and resentful of living society. These mediums often leave behind civilized lands and seek patch of wilderness to call their own, such dark glades or twisting caverns, when they become secluded.

I have heard of cases where would be hermits sought and obtained admission into monastic orders, granting them the solitude they desire while allowing them to remain (a bit) in the company of other humans. With strangers and visitors being rare, the mystics are free to explore the limits their powers and establish rapport with the inhabitants and minions of the spirit world.

There is a major advantage this way of life. Recluses spend so much their time in contemplation and inner study that they are able to harness every last fraction of their mystical abilities. They learn the subtle nuances of their talents and become as knowledgeable in following the paths of the undead as any ranger is in the tracking of game. As a rule, recluses are in much better control of their powers than any other type of medium.

The drawback to all of this is fairly obvious. Recluses sever almost every contact with the outside world. They often despise the people they have behind and may actually become violent if forced into meetings with old acquaintances.

It is always a good idea to approach such mediums cautiously, for they can be dangerous. In addition, they often palce traps or other wards around their lairs. The most powerful among them might actually call upon the spirits of the dead to watch over their isolation.

Unworthy

Some mediums find the weight of their powers greater than the strength of their will. They begin to feel a sense of depression and anxiety over their studies.

Such individuals see their gift as a burdensome responsibility and rapidly come to believe they are not worthy of it. They become more depressed and comprehensive as time goes by. As a rule, the greater their power, the more rapid the pace of

their mental collapse. In the end, these mediums are often overcome by depression and sink into inescapable mental disintegration of insanity or complete despair. Those who into the latter category are found in their comatose or catatonic states, will no will to live. As might be expected, they often succumb utterly to their mental weakness and die. In rare cases, under the care of a talented hand, they may be nursed back to sanity to adopt a more stable demeanor in the future.

Those who cross over the line into lunacy can be terrible and frightening. For some reason that I have not yet been able to discern, so-called unworthy mediums often become more powerful upon reaching madness. My speculation is that these people find the ability to draw upon their full reserves of power once they abandon their feelings of inadequacy, but I cannot prove this to the case.

Insane mediums become tools of power of death and darkness. They have much in common with those who morbid, but they are devoid of compassion for the living. They regard life as a foul aberration and do all in their power to end it. As one might expect, so vile a mentality is dangerous beyond words; when linked with the power of a skilled medium, a terrific enemy is created.

The Vistani

I have no love for the gypsies who travel our land. It was their treachery that saw my son taken from me and made into a night-stalking vampire. Because of them, both my beloved child and my dear wife are now dead. My advice in dealing with the Vistani is simple: *These wild people are not to be trusted at any time.*

Still, my discussion of contacting the undead would not be complete without some mention of the Vistani. These nomadic people have long been an enigma to me. Though I have tried to study them and learn something of their ways, I remain mystified by them.

Vistani women are gifted with at least traces of mystical power, I believe. They sense things that normal folk cannot, and they live as if they were in constant possession of a sense I cannot define. Some folk say the Vistani are more than mortal, but I have seen them die as might any other person.

The Vistani have a word for their unusual sensitivity to the supernatural: *karatakasta*. This translates into my own language as *the waking dream*, and it describes all manner of extrasensory perceptions and supernatural senses. To the Vistani, these mysterious talents are so commonplace as to be taken for granted.

The "Vistani Plan"

Some say the Vistani work toward a greater purpose, that all the things these gypsies do are carefully plotted and have an ultimate aim that we cannot fathom. Perhaps this is true, although I cannot support the idea. The belief that an entire race of people could undertake a project demanding absolute secrecy and subtlety on the part of all its members seems absurd (and, at the very least, highly unlikely).

If this was the case, then I must believe that the great chaos into which my life was hurled following the death of my wife and son was a part of some grandiose gypsy scheme. I have tried to examine this hypothesis with a cool and calculating mind, but I found nothing in it to make me believe that it could be true. I must put this entire idea down as wishful thinking on the part of those who would find a romantic side to these chaotic wanderers.

I admit, however, that the idea of a grand Vistani plan is appealing, even to me. I would like to think that the death of my son served some greater purpose. True, it did set my feet on the path of vampire hunting and lead, in the long run, to my writing the book you now read. My efforts at battling the undead have been, I hope, beneficial to all humanity.

Does this show that the Vistani planned this from the start? I think Rather, I think that the company of gypsies who stole my family from me and who so altered my life did so instead out of a love for the gold promised them by the foul vampire Baron Metus. There was no greater or purpose to it.

Aid to Adventurers

From time to time, the Vistani actually interested in helping adventurers. Even I must credit the with saving my life on no fewer than three occasions. In reflection, however, find no steady and reliable method which their help might be obtained. In

cases where the Vistani have worked with me, they contacted me first; I do not seek them. Thus, I believe the help of a gypsy is not generally available the asking. If they desire one's help, they will seek out that person and the person alone.

Still, it is possible to hire a Vistani medium for brief periods of time, though few do it. As a rule, the medium provides one or two card readings or similar prophetic sessions for a person before ending all contact. When a Vistana does agree to help, her *karatakasta* is an incredible tool for gathering information about the present past, and future.

I must again repeat my warnings, however. *I do not trust the Vistani*. They are too mysterious and secretive for my tastes. If they do have some master plan according to which they live, we have no assurance that it is a scheme for the good. Might it not just as easy be for evil?

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*Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream before...*

- Edgar Allan Poe
"The Raven"

Investigating a Haunting

During my years as a ghost hunter, I encountered many unnatural and terrifying spirits. In this chapter, I shall relate the details of one of the most unusual hauntings I have ever come across. In addition, I shall use this story to illustrate the techniques by which a haunting is typically best investigated. These techniques stress the need for caution and careful preparation when investigating any supernatural occurrence, and I trust the reader will make due note of them.

I have selected the adventure of the Phantom Army for this purpose because it depicts a most horrible phenomenon, *mass haunting*. It is very rare and happens only when many individuals share a common bond that links them after death as it did in life.

A mass haunting always centers on one individual, a leader. It may be that this person is the only true ghost and that the others are merely reflections of its own curse, dragged into unlife by the power of the central figure. In almost every case, the ghost at the core of a mass haunting is of fourth or fifth magnitude.

Any successful investigation follows certain stages ("picking up the scent", "stalking the beast," and "making the kill"), each of which contains a number of steps. To deviate somewhat from this plan is acceptable, even mandatory, for each haunting is unique. But to stray too far from the course I describe in this chapter is to invite death or worse. Before I tell the story of this particular investigation, allow me to relate the origins of the Phantom Army. Bear in mind that I knew only a small part of this story at the start of my investigation, so some of my actions may seem to be, in retrospect, illogical. By learning the background beforehand, the reader will better understand the whole investigation process.

The Phantom Army

The origin of the Phantom Army dates back less than half a century. A pack of twisted mongrelmen from the dread domain of G'Henna fled from their native land and entered the southern reaches of Darkon. Here, they did their best to hide in the forests and live undisturbed. Although those who lived near the mongrelmen knew of their existence and avoided them, the mongrelmen kept to themselves and did not harass the common folk. The locals feared the mongrelmen, however, and they fabricated stories of the mongrelmen's inhumane treatment of prisoners and of wild, cannibalistic feasts held under the light of the full moon.

In time, the mongrelmen became the masters of their recently claimed land. They came to know every aspect of their wooded refuge and were able to move quickly and quietly through the trees and brush. Some even said they had mastered the power of invisibility for use at will.

Eventually, the dread Kargat, the secret security force of Lord Azalin, took an interest in these intruders. A legion of



Darkon's most fearsome warriors journeyed south from Il Aluk and came at last to the woods of the mongrelmen. The leader of the legion was a dark and sinister man, a fellow known as Karuk Abjen. His men feared him and trembled at the mention of his name.

Abjen ordered his men forward into the forests. They found no sign of the mongrelmen in the outskirts of the wood, and they pressed inward. They did not know that the mongrelmen watched their every move, waiting to learn what these armored men wanted in the woods the mongrelmen called their own.

As night fell, one of the scouting parties happened upon a lone mongrelman and captured him. The prisoner was brought before Abjen and brutally tortured for information about his kindred and their purpose in Darken. Abjen ranted and accused the pitiful creature of being a spy sent into Darkon to learn the secrets of Lord Azalin's power. In the end, the mongrelman died from the abuse.

At the instant the creature's body stiffened and went slack as the last vestige of life drained from its broken form, a long and terrible howl went up from the woods surrounding the camp. It lasted for many minutes, echoing like the lingering cry of a great, wounded beast. As suddenly as it had begun, the cry stopped. An ominous silence fell across the Kargat legion.

Abjen ordered his men to stand ready for battle. All that night, the dark watchmen waited eagerly in hope of earning favor with their vile commander by being the first to spot the mongrelmen massing for attack. Dawn came, but brought with it no sign of the beastly folk who had made the pitiful howling.

The Kargat commander called his men together and gloated before them. Abjen cried out that it was fear of the Kargat and its great lord Azalin that kept the mongrelmen in check. They would not dare to attack, he shouted, for none who challenged Azalin's powers could survive. Finally, Abjen ordered a company of his men to move into the woods and set it afire. The mongrelmen and the forest they had defiled would be reduced to cinders.

As the troops dispersed, the mongrelmen attacked. They did not charge in sweeping waves filled with horribly twisted creatures; instead, attacked in small, fast, silent strike against individuals. The company of men sent to light the fires vanished never to be seen again by their companions.

At sunset, another ringing cry went up from the mongrelmen. Their echoing howl drifted through the woods, still all conversation and sapping the morale of Abjen's legion. His men were on the verge of panic, but the fiendish Abjen would not let them flee. He took command of a second company and forced them into the woods to discover what had happened to the first company. All night long they moved about, searching for their lost companions. At every step, they were met with flicker shadows, sounds of movement, and lingering traces of the mongrelmen, never did they actually come across.

As the cold glow of sunrise spread across the sky, Abjen and his tired men returned to camp. They had lost not single soldier, but neither had they found one enemy body or seen so much as one of the mongrelman foe. To their horror, they found no sign of the dozens of men they had left behind - the camp was deserted. Abjen chose to believe the mongrelmen had struck again, for he had vowed to kill any man who deserted him.

As Abjen ranted and raved at the dark woods around him, another of mournful cries rolled out through the trees. Morale among Abjen's men collapsed in full. They scattered and ran, hoping to find safe passage through the hidden ranks of mongrelmen. Many died instead. Abjen himself was captured by the mongrelmen he had vowed to destroy. It is said that they tortured him for days before he finally died. Those few who lived near the woods of the mongrelmen reported that his cries of pain and suffering were heard all through the night, and that his sobbing pleas for mercy and death filled the days. None moved to help him. In the years that followed, the mongrelmen grew more protective of their forest home than ever before. Those who ventured in were never seen again. Lord Azalin either lost interest in the pitiful creatures or decided that he did not want to lose more valuable soldiers eradicating them. In either case, the Kargat never returned to bother them.

Several months later, a merchant named Corin led her caravan past the edge of the mongrelmen's woods. As the sun set in the west, her party heard tortured, agonized cries coming from the domain of the mongrelmen. Those who were more curious and brave followed Corin to investigate. When they neared a clearing in the wood, they uncovered the bodies of countless mongrelmen. Even their frightening deformities were nothing when compared to the looks of horror and pain on their inhuman faces.

When the merchant and her people turned to retrace their steps and report that they had seen, they discovered their way was blocked. Abjen's slain troops had risen from the grave as fierce ghosts, and the woods were filled with their misty, spectral

forms. Each of them was horribly scarred and mutilated from the wounds they had suffered from the mongrels.

Corin and her cohorts were forced to retreat deeper into the forest. Eventually, they came upon a group of mongrelmen who had escaped the ghosts and were fleeing the woods to return to the wilds of G'Henna. Their travel had been slow, however, for the spirits of Abjen's army were combing the woods looking for them. After some initial distrust, Corin and the refugees agreed to work together to escape the haunted woodland.

For nearly a week, they moved through the dark and evil trees. One by one, their numbers dwindled as the ghosts claimed their victims. Finally, with only a handful left alive, the group came to the edge of the haunted forest and the border of G'Henna. A wave of relief washed over them, but it was short lived: A dark and ominous figure stepped before them out of nowhere. Abjen had found them.

Moaning, suffering spirits wholly surrounded the company. Corin, her people, and the mongrelmen pleaded with Abjen to let them pass, but the ghastly general would hear nothing of their entreaties. He announced that they would all be tortured, even as the mongrelmen had tortured him. When only one person remained alive, that one would be released to tell the world that this forest was now Abjen's and that the phantom army would allow none who entered it to leave.

Corin's spirit proved strongest, and she was freed two nights later. Her wounds were horrible and her trauma great, however, and she spent many months on the edge of madness. When she recovered from her ordeal, she did as Abjen had instructed, warning people about the dangers of the cursed forest and its gruesome inhabitants.

Picking Up the Scent

Clearly, the first stage in confronting a ghost is to discover that the creature exists. This would seem an elementary deduction, but I list it because of the three crucial steps that comprise this stage.

First Report

A ghost hunter often first learns about the presence of a spirit through secondhand accounts or reports. Only twice have I ever begun an investigation because I myself happened upon the ghost first. With this in mind, evaluate those who have seen the spirit as credible sources of information. Remember that the average person is not as intelligent as you might hope. Nine in ten times, a reported ghost proves to be nothing more than a natural creature or phenomenon, the details much exaggerated by the onlooker's panic. If it seems reasonable or even possible that the witness is telling the truth and has an accurate understanding of what was seen, proceed with your study. Keep in mind that, as of yet, you have no solid proof that you are dealing with the supernatural.

Confirmation

Next, determine the general nature of the haunting. If the witness who brought the spirit to your attention seems credible, listen carefully to that person's story and ask for clarification about details that are unclear. Once you have finished with this witness, move on to the next. Although this may seem repetitive, particularly if a number of witnesses were present, the truth at the core of each person's story provides a solid base from which to begin a successful investigation.

If, in the course of this study, you are unable to find a firsthand witness, you are probably on a false trail. If you cannot find a credible person who can present you with a personal account of a meeting with the ghost in question, drop the investigation. You will find nothing more fiendish than fear and superstition.

I first heard of the Phantom Army while traveling southwest through Darken toward Falkovnia. I stopped at a small inn for a bit of supper and a warm bed, for the night outside was growing cold. I told the hostlers of my plans to cross through the woods on the morrow. I could not help but notice the unease of the innkeeper, a quiet, older man named Talid, and his wife, a silent, watchful woman named Corin.

I inquired about their distress, offering my services as a physician if needed. The woman simply turned away from me and said nothing. Her husband sat before me, thanked me for the offer, then told me a tale that made my blood run cold.

The tale was one of terror, for it was the story of Corin's escape from the Phantom Army through the very woods I proposed

to cross. Although much of it was disjointed, no doubt from the trauma Corin's mind had suffered, the fear behind the words seemed genuine.

When the innkeeper finished, I voiced my own horror at the thought of those woods being filled with such fiendish spirits. But I had heard terrifying tale before that had turned out to be but stories, and so I asked the pair how reliable was their warning.

Corin did not immediately answer, lowered her head. Talid put his hand on her shoulder, and she seemed to draw strength from his touch. She nodded once, swiftly, and Talid gently eased her blouse off her shoulders and showed me his wife's back. Her skin was still livid with the horrid scars Abjen had left upon her those dark nights so long ago. I turned away, shocked and outraged that anyone, let alone a woman, should be so brutally tortured.

Commitment

The last step in the first stage of an investigation is perhaps the most crucial of the initial inquiry. Once you have gathered enough evidence to wholly convince yourself that you are, indeed the presence of the supernatural, you must decide whether you have the dedication necessary to continue the quest to destroy this unnatural creature.

Do not answer rashly. The road down which I have traveled has been a long and difficult one. I have seen many beloved friends hideously slain or been forced to destroy them myself after the unwillingly became things of darkness cannot promise you success or even a sense of accomplishment for your efforts. Indeed, you should expect only misery and hardship.

If you are like me, however, you will find yourself unable to halt once you have stepped upon this path. The desire for knowledge will be too great, the call of vengeance too compelling, and the longing to rid the world of these creatures beyond resistance. If you fell as I do, you will not stop until you or your enemy is dead. I pray it is the latter.

When I announced to Corin and her husband that I planned to look deeper into this matter, they were shocked. I explained to them the work that now occupied my life and the measure of success I had achieved. Hesitantly, then eagerly, they agreed to help me. I must admit that at first I doubted their resolve. But the memory of Corin's wounds was more than enough to convince me that she would stand by me in even the gravest of situations, and her husband I would stand by her.

Striking the Beast

During the second stage of an investigation into the supernatural, there are five important steps to take. Others may employ a slightly different approach, but I believe that the elements outlined below are crucial to any prudent hunt.

Search

Begin your hunt with pure, analytical sought and careful research. Learn all what you can about the ghost before you. Uncover its past and relive its life. Find out the cause of its death, for therein lies the tale of its origin, its desires, and its powers. The more information you amass now, the better your chances later of removing it.

Hypothesize

Once you have completed your interviews with witnesses, researched the ghost's past, and learned as much possible on your own, take time to draw or speculate on some conclusions. Consider the ghost's origin and try to decide if any weaknesses or powers are suggested. It is typically impossible to examine a large pool of evidence such you have presumably collected at this point without one or two clear facts presenting themselves.

Now is the time to classify the ghost according to the categories delineated Chapter One. At this step, you will want to make a guess at its magnitude and possible origins. You should be able determine whether it is an anchored or a triggered spirit.

I spent the next day pouring over the information that Corin and her husband had given me. I decided that the phantom army had no obvious weaknesses, based on Corin's account, although the nature of the torture to which Abjen was subjected at the hands and claws of the mongrelmen suggested a possible allergen.

Corin and her comrades (the latter now all dead) had suffered from daggers heated by fire, then pressed against their flesh like branding irons. It seemed logical that Abjen's ghost would have tortured the mongrelmen the same way they had abused him in life, so I decided to act on that assumption.

Over the course of the next few days, I gathered the equipment I thought would need and, in the company of Corin and her husband, headed into the woods.

Sighting

When you have acquired a solid basis of facts and a supply of ready theories, it is time to view the ghost for yourself. Of course, only a fool would rush into such an encounter without taking precautions. If you have theories about the ghost's vulnerabilities or weaknesses, make sure you can act upon them!

Your mission in this first sighting is not to battle the ghost, but to observe it. If possible, arrange to see the ghost so that it is unaware of your existence. All too soon you will stand before the creature and try to destroy it before it destroys you. Don't let this confrontation happen until you are ready for it.

Watch the ghost's behavior. Does it show weaknesses or vulnerabilities that you might be able to act upon later? What sorts of special powers does it appear to have? Is it angry and violent, or passive?

In the end, try to further classify the ghost according to the categories noted in Chapter One. Perhaps you will still have to guess at its magnitude, but you will almost certainly be able to note its physical appearance and consistency by viewing it.

Observe

If possible, make several observations of the ghost. On each occasion, ask yourself the same questions you did the first time you saw it. As you progress, you might wish to place suspected allergens at places where the ghost is likely to appear. By observing its reaction to these items, you can often discover a valuable weapon to use in later combat.

We had traveled deep into the forest when we came upon a clearing and set up our camp. Although Abjen was said to appear only at night, we constantly caught sight of his spectral army as we tried to pass the time until nightfall. We kept a bright fire burning - a fire in which our blades rested until they were red hot.

Preliminary Encounters

After you have observed the ghost, noting its patterns of behavior and its abilities, it is time to test your skills against it. It is seldom wise to move in for the kill right away, as too much remains unknown about the abilities of the spirit. Rather, set up a series of sparring encounters. Have a quick escape in mind, then challenge the ghost with an allergen or the like the might hold it at bay or harm it.

After each of these preliminary skirmishes, examine what you have learned. In all likelihood, you can find classifying the ghost according to the categories noted in Chapter One. Further, the means by which you will finally destroy the ghost are likely to be revealed during these skirmishes.

When darkness fell, Abjen appeared before us. He recognized Corin instantly and was enraged at her return to the forest. In fact, so great was his wrath that he all but ignore Talid and me. As Abjen moved toward Corin to punish her insolence, I slipped on a thick gauntlet and took my sword from the fire.

The blade glowed white-orange from the heat of the blaze, and it left a trail steam behind it in the damp woodland air. The

ghost saw the blade before he struck, and he let out a cry of alarm. I had thought, the heated weapon affected the ghost as if he were as mortal as I.

Abjen cried out in pain when the blade struck his semicorporeal form, and he fled into the woods. I feared we would next be attacked by the minions of Abjen's ghoulish army, but the injury to their leader seemed to have left the Phantom Army without the will to move.

Uncertain as to how long a reprieve we had, Corin, her husband, and I hastily retreated to the inn. I now knew the means by which I could destroy Abjen, but I needed more help. I sent a runner with an urgent message to a former traveling companion who now lived in the town of Zhukar in G'Henna.

Making the Kill

Until this time, the third stage, you might be frustrated by the slowness of the investigation. You might long to face this nightmare creature in combat and see it destroyed. Righteous anger burns within you, waiting for release. Everything that is good and holy in you has been restrained, held back for the proper moment. Take care, for the time of reckoning is at hand!

Planning

Everything you have done up to this moment has taught you how to devise a remarkable plan for the destruction of the ghost. As a cautionary note, remember the spirit's special abilities and have some means of countering them at hand. Keep in mind the ghost's psychology. If you know what attracts and repels it, you are that much closer to ultimate triumph.

Perhaps the most important thing to consider when drawing up your plan for hunting the spirit is teamwork. Make sure each member of your party understands what he or she must do in the heat of battle. Everyone must be able to count on all others to perform appointed tasks.

Timing

In many cases, the ghost determines the time of your encounter. If a spirit appears each night when the clock strikes one and vanishes when it chimes two, you have only that hour in which to make your attack.

If the ghost's appearance is erratic, you may be able to arrange this to your advantage. If it is uncomfortable in bright light, then attack during the day. If it spends the night howling and weeping, then attack while it is so engaged, in poss that it is caught off guard.

The Place

The place at which you will confront the ghost is often not a matter of your own choosing, either. If the clock tower ghost mentioned earlier never strays from the park in front of the tower, you must confront it there.

While there is some validity to the belief this places you on the ghost's soil and gives it an advantage, this is seldom an important consideration. In most cases, knowing exactly where you will fight the battle gives you an important advantage because it allows you to prepare that area ahead of time.

If the ghost tends to roam or wander, it may be hard to pin it down for battle. In these cases, you must do the best you can to "herd" the ghost toward an area that will give you an advantage over it. Do not depend upon chance to gain such an advantage - make liberal use of the creature's affinities and allergens to force its hand.

The Weapons

Never go into combat against a ghost unless you are fully confident of the powers of your weapons. The purpose behind the preliminary encounters you staged was to test your weapons. If the enchantment on your magical sword wasn't strong enough to harm the ghost during those duels, you should obtain a more powerful blade in the interim.

Every item that you employ against the ghost, from holy water to spells and weapons, must have already been tested against the ghost. Never use a weapon against the ghost for the first time during this final encounter. It is folly to do so, for if the

weapon does not function as you anticipate, you will be killed.

The Escape

Any sensible ghost hunter has an escape ready before confronting the spirit. So many things can go wrong in the war against the supernatural that nothing can be taken for granted. If you are ready to flee from the scene when the battle turns against you, use the information you gain from the abortive attack to make plans for a later assault. Do not mislead yourself into believing that retreat is a cowardly act; on the contrary, your wariness and discretion will keep you alive to continue your fight against the undead. That alone requires almost a daily act of bravery.

Act Quickly!

Perhaps the most important piece of advice I can offer you about your conflict with a ghost is this: *Everything in your plan must proceed as swiftly as possible* once you have attacked the spirit. Any delay between a failed attack and the next assault increases the chance of failure on your part, for it gives the ghost time to adjust to your tactics and weapons. Remember: While you have been studying the ghost, it has been studying you.

Now, I do not mean to say that you should rush headlong into the fray. Far from it. If some element of your attack causes a delay or pause, do not charge forward. Do not move at an imprudent pace, but do not waste any time either. I have seen many fellows slain when they paused too long - out of fear, out of mercy, or (foolishly enough) out of a desire to gloat - before they delivered the deathblow.

Within three days, my old friend, Emilion Lacousto, arrived in response to the summons I had sent to the town of Zhukar. I told him of the Phantom Army and asked that he join Corin, her husband, and me for our return venture to the haunted woods. After some discussion, Emilion agreed, and we set out the next morning.

Corin suggested we make camp in the same place as before. We knew that Abjen might linger there, and he would recognize us immediately. I feared the spirit would not approach us if he saw we had taken precautions similar to those that had driven him off before, so we lit no fire.

At dusk, the foul apparition returned. Abjen saw us and vowed our deaths would be slow and painful. The spirit did not draw near us, instead ordering his legion to attack. Fearing we would have no better chance to strike, I called to my companions, instructing them to put our plan into action.

Corin responded quickly, for she wished to avenge herself. We opened several vials of holy water and hurled the contents on the spirits between Abjen and us. The water had the desired effect, and the shades quickly drew back.

Seeing his opening, Emilion sprang into action. He charged forward, sword drawn, and uttered a word of power. Instantly, the blade of his weapon was sheathed in flame - the metal turned white hot. In a single leap, he bridged the gap between himself and the vile Abjen.

With a great effort, Emilion swung the heavy blade in a wide arch and struck the villain in the neck, instantly beheading him. As the ghostly head landed on the ground, his mouth opened and a cry of absolute suffering emerged - then Abjen's spirit disappeared forever.

With the loss of its master, the Phantom Army was no more. Each spirit dissolved into vapor. A chill breath swept the clearing and carried the vapor away.

Our work was done. Corin had avenged herself and her fallen comrades, and we had defeated the evil in the woods.

When the shouting is over and the wounded have been tended, one last task must be completed before you can claim victory: verifying the kill.

Often, a physical phenomenon is associated with a ghost - a portrait that weeps or the like. Examine this object for signs that it is no longer under the influence of the ghost. If the ghost was anchored or triggered, be ready for its next few appearances. If it does not appear, your task is, at long last, complete.

Dungeon Master Appendix

In traditional horror, few creatures are as prevalent or interesting as the ghost. While vampires and werewolves are mainstays of the genre of classic horror, Dungeon Masters often overlook ghosts as a basis for adventures.

The reason for this, perhaps, is that the former creatures are easily defined. We all know that a vampire is finally destroyed by driving a stake through its heart. Variations on this theme exist (for example, the vampire who is impervious to wood but can be impaled with an icicle or a shaft of silver), but the theme and premises remain the same.

Ghosts, however, resist such typical classifications. Their origins, powers, abilities, and weaknesses are numerous and varied. These creatures seem as ever changing as their mystical forms. This makes them challenging to use in adventures, for each ghost seems to operate under rules different from every other ghost. Thus, ghosts often require far more thought and planning to create than vampires, werewolves, or other monsters. By the same token, this gives them a richness and diversity found in no other creature in Ravenloft campaign.

Writing Ghost Adventures

Four basic elements make a ghost adventure unique: tragedy, romance, and symbolism. Each is important and, like the ghost itself, can be dealt with in many different ways to make the story different and exciting. Before a Dungeon Master begins work on a scenario involving ghosts, each of these elements should be considered and its importance in the story weighed. With a little extra time and effort, a talented Dungeon Master will quickly create a masterpiece of terror.

Tragedy

Perhaps the most important element of a ghost story is tragedy. Consider the classic works in this genre, and you almost always find that the ghost is a sympathetic figure. In recent years, this tradition has often fallen by the wayside, with ghosts being nothing more than spectral axe murderers. In a classic horror campaign, however, tragedy is paramount to the tale.

The tragedy in a ghost story stems from many sources. Most often, this depends upon the way in which the ghost is to be perceived by the players.

If the Dungeon Master desires the ghost to be perceived as a lamentable figure, then the circumstances of the creature's death or the events of its life can be heartbreakingly sad. If the Dungeon Master wishes to make the ghost's victims seem tragic, then the ghost itself can be perceived as cold and evil, while its victims are weak, helpless, and pitiable.

In the case history Dr. Van Richten presented in the previous chapter, there were two groups of tragic figures. The first group was the mongrelmen who fled from persecution in their native land, only to find alienation and destruction in their new home. The second group consisted of the poor fellows who followed Abjen into the woods. It is certainly hard to feel anything but sympathy for them because of the way in which their leader treated them, the pitiful way in which they died, and their inability to escape from Abjen's rule, even in death.

If the Dungeon Master wanted to portray the ghost in that story as a sympathetic figure, the mongrelmen could easily have been painted as the true villains. They could have been depicted as savage animals that slaughtered a legion of brave and noble troops.

Of course, it would be difficult to depict a unit of the Kargat in that light, so the Dungeon Master would probably have had to change the background of the story a bit to make the army into "good guys."

Romance

Many ghost stories have an element of romance that is missing in other types of horror. Consider the classic story of *Wuthering Heights*, by Jane Austen. It would be hard to say whether this was more of a ghost story or a love story.

It is important to contrast this with the often passionate and sensual nature of modern vampire fiction. The vampire, which is

most often depicted as having retained its physical form, lends itself well to these more tangible moods. Thus, the vampire can often be portrayed as a creature of desires and appetites more carnal than those of the ghost, which is generally perceived as intangible and ethereal. Because of their phantasmal natures, ghosts can be objects of love and affection, though not physical desire. The difference, while often subtle, is important.

In designing an adventure, the romance can come from many sources. The ghost itself is a common one, but the victims whom it haunts are equally viable. Consider the case of a widow who, having found her in a new courtship, seeks to remarry. If the spirit of her departed husband haunts her and her fiance, two potential sources of romance appear.

If the Dungeon Master desires the ghost to be a sympathetic figure, perhaps the woman remembers his kindness and love with great fondness and is being forced to remarry against her will. It might even be that her fiance killed her husband, so that he might claim the woman for himself. Conversely, if the ghost is to be evil and villainous, it might be revealed that the deceased husband was cruel and jealous, vowing that no man should ever have the lovely woman he left behind.

An even more unusual twist, but certainly an interesting one, would be to postulate that the villain in the story is the widow. Perhaps she killed her husband to gain his wealth and property and now plans to do the same to her fiance. The murdered husband might return to warn the man who is about to become the next victim of this diabolical killer. In this case, what at first appears to be a deep and true romance between the fiance and the widow would turn out to be a cruel lie.

As these examples illustrate, romance and tragedy often go hand in hand. In most cases, it is impossible to incorporate romance into a ghost story without also adding tragedy. Further, the nature of the tragedy is often suggested by the way in which the romance is structured or resolved. Be alert for possibilities to incorporate these elements into any ghost adventure you write.

History

Another important element in many ghost stories is that of history. Because the secrets of a ghost's life often define and foreshadow aspects of its death and damnation, its history is crucial. Romance and tragedy can be built into the history of the ghost with great subtlety, making them more effective in the adventure.

It is almost impossible to create a good ghost adventure without having a solid understanding of the events that made up the ghost's life and brought about its death. Similarly, the ways in which a ghost can be fought and destroyed or laid to rest are often rooted in the past.

A solid history behind a ghost story is important because of the research heroes must often undertake before heading out to confront a ghost. If the Dungeon Master has woven a careful and logical history together, the players' attempts through their heroes to uncover clues are easily resolved. By handing out bits and pieces of lore in response to inquiries, readings, and mystical scrying, the Dungeon Master can give players the satisfaction of piecing together a puzzle and uncovering the solution to the adventure. This accomplishment and the feeling of success associated with it are generally as rewarding as the gaining of experience points or treasure.

Symbolism

Consider the ghost of Jacob Marley from Charles Dickens's classic, *A Christmas Carol*. In spirit form he was bound with chains, and he carried a heavy burden of cash boxes. "I wear the chain I forged in life," he tells the stunned Scrooge.

Does this mean Marley spent his free time creating these ghastly bonds and that his corpse was buried with them draped about him? Not at all. Rather, it points out the importance of symbolism in the traditional ghost story. (Another excellent source for demonstrations of appropriate symbolism is Dante's *Inferno*, in which the damned are forced to suffer torments reflecting the sins they committed in life.)

Symbolism is a powerful tool in the weaving of a ghost adventure. The powers and abilities of a spirit, as well as its physical appearance, are often drawn from both its history and the important symbolism of its life. Further, the motivations and desires of a spirit, which are crucial in the resolution of almost any encounter with a ghost, are often represented with symbolism. Consider the example of Marley's ghost in *Ravenloft* game terms. If a group of adventurers was seeking to drive off this spirit, they could look to the symbolism shown in its appearance and history. Clearly, Marley was a miser. Perhaps it might be possible to keep his spirit from entering an area by ringing it with gold coins. Perhaps only weapons made from

precious metals could harm the creature, with a platinum sword doing its normal damage to the spirit and lesser metals doing reduced damage.

In less combative terms, we can examine the motivations of the spirit. Marley was forced to "go forth in death" because he did not do so in life. He was clearly repentant and lamented the joy he had passed up in life by being a miser. In an effort to ease his suffering, Marley was compelled to visit Scrooge and convince him to change his ways. It might be that Marley was freed from his curse the moment Scrooge changed his own life for the better. Thus, a group of heroes might return the ghost to its grave peacefully by assisting the spirit in its mission to help Scrooge recognize the errors of his ways and abandon the path of greed and avarice he had followed for so much of his life.

Creating New Ghosts

Once the gist of an adventure has been laid out, there are a number of important elements to consider when creating the ghost who will be at its heart. Depending upon the desires of the Dungeon Master, different responses to these considerations will be appropriate.

Using the Monstrous Manual tome

The various ghosts presented in the Monstrous Manual tome and its follow-on annuals are valuable starting points in the design of a ghost. By selecting one incorporeal spirit detailed in these volumes and customizing it, the Dungeon Master can quickly create a unique villain with which to confront players.

For example, let's return to the previous chapter on Abjen and his Phantom Army. His men might be given the same characteristics as shadows or wights, except that they are slaves to the powerful Abjen, clearly a more formidable foe. He might be created with the same basic statistics and abilities of a wraith, spectre, or ghost. By giving Abjen a unique power (perhaps his mournful wailing causes those who hear it to make a fear check), a singular weakness (his vulnerability to hot metal), and a unique personality trait (he tortures his enemies to death with the same hot metal objects that can destroy him), the basic entry takes on a whole new character.

If this sort of shortcut is used, it is important to maintain the illusion that the ghosts that the heroes encounter are still wholly unique. Dungeon Masters should cling to the tried and true Ravenloft campaign ideal of *never* calling an ore an ore. If a phantom legion is described as "an army of wights led by a wraith," the encounter loses much of its impact. The players would be instantly aware of the nature of the creatures their heroes face and would take appropriate steps to battle them. If the Dungeon Master refers the army as apparitions in one sentence and ghosts the next, the players will not know exactly what their heroes are facing.

From Scratch

An alternative to using the Monstrous Manual tome series as a source for ghost "kits" is to create a spirit from scratch. This takes longer, but the Dungeon Master has much more control in creating a spirit that matches perfectly with his or her vision for the adventure.

The guidelines presented in the first few chapters here regarding powers and vulnerabilities are intended to give examples of the sorts of things that should be considered when designing a ghost. These are simple guidelines and are not intended to be used as a rigid system of categorically defining ghosts. Because of the unique nature of these spirits, Dungeon Masters should not classify ghosts as "third magnitude" or describe them to players in the analytical terms Dr. Van Richten employs. Rather, these guidelines should be used to create entries in the style of the Monstrous Manual tome for all ghosts that are being designed. The Dungeon Master might think about keeping files on ghosts created for past adventures, because they can be used as "kits" from which new apparitions can be created.

Resident

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Rare
Organization:	Solitary
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	None
Intelligence:	Average
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Lawfull neutral
No. Appearing:	1
Armor Class:	0
Movement:	Fl 18 (A)
Hit Dice:	6
THAC0:	12
No. of Attacks:	2
Damage/Attack:	1d6/1d6
Special Attacks:	Keen of despair, freezing
Special Defenses:	Can be hit only with magical weapons, <i>invisibility</i> at will, immune to certain attack forms
Special Weaknesses:	Holy water, certain spells (see text)
Magic Resistance:	25%
Size:	M
Morale:	Fanatic (18)
XP Value:	3,000

A resident is a tormented soul, doomed to exist among the living until it can find self-forgiveness. In life, a resident was a person who was offered true love, but lacked the courage or conviction to accept the blessing and thus lost it, becoming embittered.

A typical "resident" tale tells of a lad named Jonas, who met a woman on a chance encounter. He befriended her and became very fond of her as time passed. Then she met a suitor who seemed to make her very happy. Jonas, unwilling to face up to the obligations of marriage but also unwilling to end their relationship, watched as his true love married her suitor and raised a family. Jonas tried to bury his anger, jealousy, and self-hatred, but he was unable to forgive himself and move on with his life. His corrupt spirit carried on his rage after his death. His "resident spirit" now inhabits the overgrown ruins of his love's cottage, where he used to visit her. Few living folk come here as the cottage is widely known to be haunted.

A resident is usually *invisible*, even when it attacks, but it can choose to appear as a soundless, vaporous apparition of manlike shape. In general, it haunts a fixed location, usually a place where its love once lived or where the two met in life. However, should it discover someone who strongly resembles its lost love, the resident often abandons its vigil and proceeds to follow this surrogate love, who will never be harmed. It seeks not to impose its own will on the world, but instead seeks a focus for its existence. In direct melee, a resident only attacks if its surrogate is in trouble. It still follow the rules by which it lived in life, in that it allows its love to lead his or her own life and defeat ordinary challenges without interference.

Although an unattached resident usually remains close to home, it also walks among the living to remind itself of what could have been. Thus, its faith in its curse is renewed. It is a driven creature, clinging to self-hatred and anger, quick to offer love and devotion, and quick to defend its beloved surrogate.

A surrogate can detect a resident's presence from its small deeds. For example, if a bed is left unmade, the surrogate might return later to find that someone has done the chore. If the surrogate expresses a desire to have a certain trinket or other small item, that person might later find the desired item resting on a bed pillow. In determining its ability to move objects, consider the resident as effective as an *unseen servant* spell.

A resident is also a protector of its love, and it seeks vengeance on anyone who troubles the surrogate, particularly if the

offender is beyond the surrogate's reach. If a noble speaks a harsh word to a resident's love, the noble risks retribution from the resident, often in the form of a single, one- round attack. To annoy a surrogate is to risk punishment; to gain its hatred by harming its beloved is to court death.

Combat: A resident can attack with its ghostly hands, inflicting 1d6 points of cold damage per strike. This is its usual attack against those it wishes to punish or drive away, but sees no need to kill. If it so chooses, however, it can also attempt to grasp a victim (two successful attack rolls are required). A grasp immediately inflicts 1d8 points of cold damage per round, as well as draining 1 point from either Strength, Dexterity, or Charisma (select randomly each round). Ability points are recovered at a rate of 1 per hour of rest. A victim drained of all ability points in any score dies at once, but will not come back as an undead being. Once the victim is grasped, the resident need not make another attack roll to continue damaging the opponent every round afterward. The resident will not relent in its attack unless its beloved surrogate is in danger (drawing its attention to someone else), or the resident is chased away.

The resident cannot be hit except by magical weapons. It is immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, cold, poison, and death magic. Holy water does 2d4 points of damage to it. Striking at a resident that is grasping a victim will inflict damage on the victim instead unless the attack roll is at least 4 points over the score needed to hit the resident. Any other result means the victim instead was struck, if the score rolled was sufficient to pierce the victim's Armor Class. A priest can turn a resident as a wraith; any result of turning or destruction causes the resident to flee or be dispersed for 2d6 days, after which it will return (see later).

A resident can be temporarily exorcised by defeating it in combat (including the use of holy water) or by a *remove curse* spell. Once all its hit points are gone or the spell is cast, the resident disperses or flees for 2d6 days. There is a 25% chance if *remove curse* is cast that the resident instead becomes enraged and attacks to kill the spellcaster and all other party members except the surrogate (50% chance), or else emits a keening wail of despair that will paralyze all within 60 feet of it for 1d6 rounds (save vs. paralyzation allowed) before it flees for 2d6 days (50% chance). Only if the resident is confronted with evidence that its surrogate does not wish it around, and an *atonement* spell is cast on it, will the resident be permanently removed from the world.

Note that if a hero becomes aware that he or she has become the focus of a resident's misplaced affection, allowing such a relationship to continue without intervention will soon call for a powers check.

Habitat/Society: A resident cannot communicate except through magical means such as a *speak with dead* spell, but it has little interest in anyone but the subject of its affections. A resident roams about a fixed location such as a building or grave site of importance to it in life, unless it is distracted by a surrogate.

Ecology: A resident has very little effect on either nature or civilization. It consumes nothing and almost never harms living beings unless its loved one is endangered. It is primarily an annoyance.



Liches

Death slew him not,
but he made death his
ladder to the skies.



- Edmund Spenser
An Epitaph upon
Sir Philip Sidney

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*Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou hill me.*

- John Donne
"Holy Sonnets," no. 10

Introduction

Who knows what arcane experiments are carried out by powerful wizards secluded in their mystical towers? We who are uninitiated to the machinations of spells and other magical phenomena can only wonder about the events that take place in a mage's private study. We can barely fathom the voluminous tomes of secret knowledge upon which these men and women pour their attentions.

The fruits of such labor can be of wondrous benefit to persons throughout the lands. A goodly wizard's reward is the admiration and gratitude of us all, and the knowledge and satisfaction that our world has benefited and is a better place to raise our children. On the other hand, a mage also might elect to call forth the most vile creatures and evil magic we could imagine.

Sometimes, in exchange for assisting evil fiends from unseen planes who desire a foothold into our realm, unwise mages are granted great powers to wield over their fellows. I fear that too many mages pursue this opportunity over the considerations of the state of our world. For these mages, treachery awaits. Wizards who follow evil paths do not understand that one cannot trust a creature that, by its nature, lives to betray.

Still other mages seek those secrets of power of their own free will. They hope to gain knowledge that evil and powerful creatures jealously guard for themselves. Such a mage believes that it is better to enter the perilous halls of power himself, using his own efforts, than to rely upon the questionable graces of others. The magnitude of this struggle is great. Evil uses many secrets to pervert our world - secret elusive that a mortal must expend every ounce of his strength and spirit acquire them.

This devotion is, no doubt, the means by which the mage is subverted and changed. He loses sight of the pursuits of normal life and becomes obsessed with seeking the keys to power. Eventually, the mage realizes that he cannot learn those secrets in his short lifetime. He finds that he must secure method of continuing his researches and experiments for years, perhaps even centuries, to come.

For this incredibly ambitious wizard there is but one way: He must transform himself into a different creature, one that will outlive his mortal shell so that he might continue his arcane efforts.

During a full moon, this mage imbibes a potion that instantly kills him - yet his spirit survives! His spirit actually dispossesses itself of his body. While in this state, the spirit acclimate itself to dark energies that are the source of pure evil. The spirit of the wizard becomes sympathetic to the heart of evil so that it may learn new and more potent secrets in the future.

The spirit eventually returns to the body, but in the interim the body shrivels and mummifies into a twisted mask of death. This corpse rises from its own grave, eyes alight with a scarlet lust for knowledge and power. The mage has died, yet it lives now and forever as a corpse. Now it has the means to pursue its twisted - nay, mangled - destiny.

Perhaps after this vile transformation the mage within the crusted shell reveals in its accomplishment. If so, it will likely be the last truly human feeling the former wizard experiences, for he has consigned himself to an eternal existence that denies the sweet, fruits of mortality and replaces them with the sour rewards of the pursuit of evil. The mage has forsaken his mortal identity altogether. Now the evil soul in the withered shell of its body adopts a new name, which it feels is more appropriate to its station. Whatever arcane synonym for evil the creature likes, we know it for what it truly is: a *lich*. It is a name to be uttered with curses and contempt.

My Path to the Dread Arcane

I dislike expounding upon my exploits for two reasons: First, I am by nature a reticent man with little inclination to boast of or excuse my actions. Second, I have no wish to expose too much of myself to those who could see me halted in my quest to destroy the unliving dead. If the lich has taught me one thing, it is that knowledge is the greatest of all powers, so I would not have my enemies know too much of me. Nevertheless, I cannot expect the reader to accept this treatise without some qualification. Therefore, I will briefly introduce myself, then explain my involvement with and study of one of the most deadly beings to poison the mind with its ruthless ambitions.

I was a doctor by profession, and might have happily remained so had the black hand of Fate not closed upon me. One day, my beloved son was kidnapped by the Vistani - curse their gypsy hearts forever! - and sold to a vampire, a blood-drinking creature of the night who masqueraded as an honorable nobleman named Baron Metus. Even now it rends my heart to explain that I was forced to lay my own son to rest at the point of a wooden stake! In retaliation, Baron Metus murdered my beautiful wife, and thus was I cast out of happiness forever. Once I sipped the finest wine of family bliss, but now I choke on the bitter dregs of revenge!

Vampires became the first targets of my vengeance, and I dedicated myself to learning all that was humanly possible to know about them. I lost many friends and comrades along the way, each of whom was as dedicated as I to the cause of justice. It is of some comfort that their sacrifices yielded invaluable information, culminating in an extended treatise on vampires-a volume that I pray will save countless spirits from eternal slavery. It is with great satisfaction that I proclaim that Baron Metus is now a pile of dust in a sunny meadow.

Compilers' Note: Dr. Van Richten's "Guide to Vampires" was reprinted as Section One of Volume One of Van Richten's Monster Hunter's Compendium.

- GWF

It was not long before my notoriety as a vampire hunter led me to the study of incorporeal undead. These beings had also taken their toll upon me and those I held dear. I have felt the chilling touch of a ghost upon my own breast, stealing precious years from my life. I have even studied entire volumes of my own research in order to relearn knowledge lost to the memory-sapping grip of one peculiar night phantom.

After the completion of my study of ghosts, for a brief time I hoped that I might finally lay down my sagely mantle and retire, but that sweet dream may be forever beyond my grasp. I have realized that my world is populated by a multitude of strange and evil things, but few are those who will chase them down and kill them, once and for all. It occurs to me that I have accrued extremely specialized experience that too many others have died pursuing. If I quit now, others will perish where I might succeed. A few more scars upon my heart and body might yet preserve the freshness and innocence of others.

With these convictions upon me, I am compelled by conscience and need to take up quill and parchment to write of one of the vilest, most damnable beasts to plague the world: the lich.

I became especially aware of the extreme danger of these creatures because of an event involving a wizard friend of mine, named Shauten. Shauten was one of my comrades-at-arms in the battle against darkness, and a powerful one at that. He was ever secretive, ever enigmatic, yet I accepted his eccentricities because his part in my cause was indispensable. More than once Shauten cast a last-moment spell that saved us all.

Yet Shauten's own agenda might be called traitorous by some. His part in our hunt for the most powerful of the undead was a quest for ever more knowledge of necromancy. As the time of our association lengthened, Shauten grew increasingly withdrawn, preoccupied with certain research of his own.

In the end, I learned of his attempt to make the leap to immortality - he attempted to deprive me of my beating heart, to facilitate his transformation to lichdom. He relented only at the last moment, and I believe in my heart that his feelings of friendship for me ultimately spoiled his most crucial spell and saved my life. For that - for all the times he saved my life - and for the invaluable information that he imparted along that way, I shall always name him "friend."

The Lich of Darkon

It was Shauten who opened the door to a stunning discovery of relevance to this whole work. I am afraid that lich is among us on our world. I shudder at the realization that this monster has been in a position of ultimate power over us for as long as anyone here can remember.

Our illustrious ruler, Lord Azalin, is almost surely a lich! I fear that he is no more the wizard-king he outwardly claims to be than it is safe to walk the countryside at night during a full moon know not what he called himself - what his true name was - before he transformed himself to lichdom. It does not matter, though, since that person died with the drinking of the lethal potion that began the ritual.

What is important for us to keep at the forefront of our thoughts is that we may be living under the rule of someone who is far from human. Although there has been talk of his extended life span, of how it seems he has outlived everyone in the entire realm, and how this has been achieved through his own magic - such is not true. If he is indeed a lich, then we must, through some monumental effort drive him from our land.

My Discovery

My knowledge of our ruler's true nature was not clear to me at first. It was Shauten who put me on the scent that led me to the discovery. We were in a carriage on the road between II Aluk and Rivalis, in my native Darken. I was during the day, as we had left at the break of dawn in order to reach our destination before nightfall.

We were passing through a forest, roughly at the midpoint between the two cities, when we rounded a sharp curve and found the road blocked. To my horror, I realized that the road was littered with bodies! I looked for an overturned carriage, thinking one might have taken the curve at too great a speed and turned to its side, but I saw none. My thoughts raced as I considered my function as a doctor. How would I care for so many people? How many could we take to II Aluk for care, and how many would have to be left behind?

These thoughts were disrupted when Shauten alerted me to a more horrifying fact: the dead in the road were rising up and moving toward us!

Each zombie appeared to have been rotting for many days at the least. Their eye sockets glowed with a dull red gaze. They moved toward our carriage, making no sound save for their shuffling feet upon the dusty road.

I shouted to the driver to turn us around, but my call went unanswered. I exited the coach to see what had happened to him, and he was nowhere to be seen! I therefore took the reins of the horses myself, calling for the driver all the while. Shauten joined me at the driver's seat, and we turned the horses around quite easily; they were only too glad to retrace their steps. Nevertheless, the undead were upon us and it became necessary to fend them off.

I reached into my black satchel and produced my holy symbol - an iron and silver relic that has always afforded me protection - and thrust it confidently in their rotting faces. They immediately grabbed me and pulled me into their midst! Only the quick words and fingers of dear Shauten blasted them clear of me and enabled our fortunate escape.

As I sent the horses into a gallop to carry us as quickly as possible from the encounter, I saw a lone, tall man, dressed in the finest robes and with a crown upon its head, standing beyond the undead on the road. I recognized in moments the raiment of Lord Azalin himself on the man! In that moment of recognition, I espied a bright crimson fire in his eyes matching that of his undead host. He appeared no more alive than they did!

Later, when I remarked upon the monsters' immunity to my holy symbol, Shauten replied that they were minions of magic, not of death. It was not until much later, when Shauten nearly consumed me in a necromantic rite of passage, that I made the connection between Azalin and his minions, and I knew that my land was ruled by the hand of Death.

Now, with a core of research and yet a few more harrowing experiences behind me, I present the latest of my guides to the creatures of darkness. As always, the reader must bear in mind that the evidence presented herein is largely anecdotal and that nothing in these lands can be taken for the absolute truth. Still, if experience is the best teacher, then the reader may profit from this honest effort to expose the well-guarded secrets of the lich. May it shed light upon the subject as the sun casts light down upon the dusty remains of Baron Metus!

*Immortality is not a gift,
Immortality is an achievement,
And only those who strive mightily
Shall possess it.*

- Edgar Lee Masters
"The Village Atheist"
Spoon River Anthology

Necrology

As many types and races of people are scattered over the lands as there are species of wildflowers wistfully dotting the countryside. Strong elements of language, custom, and belief define these races, setting them apart from one another.

Yet one characteristic is common to every sentient being: the quest for power. Every thinking being has, at one time or other, wished for more control over destiny, more power to realize his or her greatest potential. Such a dream might be as mundane as wishing for a good sword and the courage to assault an evil master, or as grandiose as the conquest of a wicked nation. Dreams such as this motivate many people to undertake adventuring and fortune-seeking.

It is, in theory, possible for a serf to become an emperor if his determination and body are strong. This would require an incredible struggle, for the typical serf starts with nothing, but by the grace of the gods and the strength in his heart, the slave may become a king. Power and glory are there for the taking, and such earthly happiness is attainable by anyone, as long as one can be satisfied with the mere conquest of the world. (If the adjective "mere" seems out of place in this context, the reader must have patience until the subject of this book is addressed.)

The rogue has an entirely different dream and a decidedly different method of seeing it become reality, but the rogue's highest goals are as firmly set in this world as are the warrior's.

For priests, the most important quests of life are different, having not so much to do with power as with proving devotion to a god or building a great temple where others can enjoy the hospitality of the priesthood and its religion. The greatest achievement of priestly glory lie not in this world, but the next.

Such is not the case with the mage, which brings us to the subject at hand. To become a mage, one must be exceptional in ability from the start. Natural prerequisites - factors of intelligence, strength of personality, and persistence in the face of difficult matters of mind and body - must be present to learn the secrets of magic.

Once certain basic secrets are known, the mage can begin a pursuit that is endemic to all mages: acquiring the knowledge of more spells, the ability to command ever greater magic. This struggle continues throughout the career of the mage, one that never truly sees an end to it. The wizard's life begins in excellence, but life is seldom long enough to realize the full potential of that preeminence. There are always more spells to learn, spells of every sort. There are secrets that remain buried in arcane texts that have gone unread for thousands of years. There are puzzles that unlock the mysteries of the universe and lead to whole new planes of existence. For a mage who is foremost a scholar, these are secrets that must be found. The



passion to learn more is a driving flame within a mage's heart and spirit. The passion is a part of what makes him what he is.

For the mage, *knowledge equals power*, and the acquisition of unlimited knowledge often seems to be within reach. Whereas the serf begins in an environment where the ability to shape destiny is as rare as an eclipse, the mage begins his or her career already wielding power that only a few dream of manipulating. Developing this power can become an insatiable drive that goes beyond a career pursuit. It can become an addiction of the mind and spirit, and build beyond a driving flame into an insidious inferno that burns a mage hollow of other qualities from the inside out, until only the desire for more magical power remains.

In this quest for knowledge, a mage might pass a point where certain deeds are no longer unthinkable. The mage then pursues for long years the secrets of a certain arcane ritual that will grant a twofold prize: knowledge of forbidden secrets, and the acquisition of power that is unmatched - power gained over the span of an eternal life - or, rather, unlife. If a mage becomes a lich, that mage becomes the most powerful form of undead known!

The transformation of the mage's body into a lich grants incredible powers. The mortal individual that started the ritual of transformation and the undead being that ultimately results are no longer the same person. The lich is immensely powerful, and at the same time it is in a position to gain even more power and knowledge. A lich can exist for centuries, far outlasting any nonmagical race!

The lich's mind seems to withstand time very well, too. While the psychology of a vampire often deteriorates with time, something about the transformation allows the lich to remain sane during this virtual immortality - or at least motivated by its own goals, even though those goals may be unfathomable to humankind.

In this span of time, the lich can undertake projects so far reaching as to be beyond the scope of most mortals' apprehension. With enough time, the knowledge of almost any secret can be gained.

What troubles me the most is that mages walk this world who would sacrifice not just their lives, but their very humanity - the qualities of emotion and love, the aspirations of mortals made in the image of the divine - just for the sake of the acquisition of power. Such ambition makes any person dangerous, but if that person is made essentially immortal and given the power to realize any goal, what hope is there for the world?

Risk Factors

I propose an axiom: *One cannot acquire great power without already having it*. This suggests the level of expertise necessary to become a lich and thus the great power of that creature even at its inception. Given the relative rarity of the lich in comparison with the number of evil creatures who aspire to such wickedness, my axiom also suggests the inherent dangers involved in becoming an undead wizard. The quest for lichdom is a journey not taken lightly, for it is the most perilous one a mage can perform.

First among the mage's risks is the peril of simply acquiring the scholarly texts concerning the ritual. Not surprisingly, no known common source of these texts exists anywhere. No mage can simply walk into a library or scrivener and request the recipe for lichdom. Such texts are deadly in content, but they are just as deadly in their procurement, for the power they offer is potent and those who own them are most certainly neither weak nor willing to give them up!

Then, too, what if a source is false? The stakes of life are what a mage plays with when judging one source accurate, another partially so, and a third flawed in total. The test of this hypotheses might cost the mage his life. Whether the cost is permanent the wizard will not know - until it is too late.

Origin of the Lich

One must wonder what texts the very first lich worked from, how that ill-fated mage first came by the formula that dispossessed his body of his spirit. The lich is a solitary creature that does not tell others how to join its ranks. The thought of it speaking to others at all on a civil basis without a devious ulterior motive is almost laughable. For the lich, the fewer that play its manipulative games, the better.

During my research, I came across a peculiar item (translated here for the reader's convenience) from the *Haedritic Manuscripts*, purported to have been written by someone known only as the Dweller in the Jacinth Chamber. This text is

very old indeed, and I believe that many more liches are in existence today than when the text was written.

I was also told during this nether-spanning discussion that [this tanar'ri - name untranslatable] had decided to take control of a world wherein humans and demihumans lived together.

[The tanar'ri] first plotted to seed the world with his minions and take the world by force. This proved unsuccessful. Yet intent upon acquiring the world, [the tanar'ri] set about creating minions that were significantly more powerful than the troops previously used. It tempted the mages of the world with great power and knowledge, and it gave them instructions on how to transform their bodies, minds, and even spirits to a higher form of existence - one that would command great magic and allow [the tanar'ri] to assume control of the world with subtlety and plotting.

[This tanar'ri] still lives, as do its higher minions. The world it has tried to conquer is ours, and this is surely the origin of the lich, explaining how this pestilence came to exist. What our fates will be if we allow the liches to influence us is a truly terrible thought to contemplate.

This fragment suggests the origin of the lich, and I am inclined to believe. There had to be a first lich, someone to formalize a ritual for its creation. That a mortal should gamble without guidance with a ritual that would destroy him if it does not grant him unlife seems unlikely.

Considering the many complex factors involved in what is known about the ritual of lichdom, the odds that someone should get it right by pure coincidence are ludicrous. Perhaps their instructions came from a fiend from another plane of existence, perhaps not. But this fragment, couched as it is in mythic terms, is still as fair an explanation as I've encountered in my researches of the origin of the first lich.

How I Obtained the Knowledge

I tell you, there is a malevolence that lurks outside the vision of mortal. It, waits patiently, living for millennia, scheming toward a complex series of dark goals that serve only to produce more power for yet more evil goals.

Nothing stops it - nothing except the final destruction of its body and spirit. If allowed to continue, it will set in motion such plots that mortals could never hope to prevent. Mortals simply cannot live long enough to grasp the designs of] this nefarious creature. It seeks to wield ultimate power and claim the throne of the gods for itself, wreaking havoc upon the mortals with whom it once walked.

Read the journal I have sent with this letter, Van Richten, and study it well! I fear I have been compromised and that Mirinalithiar knows I have her journal. If this is so, you are the only person in all the realms who can give my death meaning!

- From a letter by Irithanar Millinius
to Dr. Van Richten

Thus did I come into the possession of the journal of a mage who supposedly died nearly a century ago.

The diary of Mirinalithiar chronicles her descent from humanity to lichdom. There are entries beginning almost from the moment she decided to become a lich to the moment she passed over. This has proved to be my most important source of information about the ritual and processes of becoming a lich. Of course, the existence of such a source is suspect in itself, as it might be a part of a subtle plan of the forces of evil.

Much of the journal is cryptic, extraneous, or highly empirical, but I will summarize some of the more pertinent data. Mirinalithiar began her quest for lichdom by investigating incidents of mysterious, high-powered magic. She was searching the telltale marks of what she surmised to be lich behavior. Mirinalithiar achieved a breakthrough when she happened upon an account of how, at a century-old battlefield, the dead rose from their graves - weapons, armor, and all - and marched into a nearby range of mountains. She began to study the history of the area wherein the peculiar events took place, paying particular attention to tales of the mages that lived there and their behavior. She found that the mages were quite powerful,

but preferred absolute solitude in comparison to most other mages, who gained power through heroic adventuring. The reclusive wizards defended their abodes from every sort of threat, but only if their keeps or lands were directly in the path of danger.

The startling level of their powers was documented, however. Mirinalithiar found that the mages made occasional trips to magical colleges and guilds. There, they impressed and intimidated the high wizards with their abilities. Most importantly, those mages' studies were invariably concerned with necromancy. All of them were especially interested in spells that allowed communication with the dead and those places where the dead reside.

It was Mirinalithiar's belief that they were seeking information about the processes of becoming a lich, and about methods of contacting some long-dead spirit. Perhaps they sought that most ancient of fiends referred to in the Haedritic Manuscripts. Mirinalithiar attempted to follow that same path to knowledge, and apparently she succeeded.

Her journal became decreasingly coherent as she went about the business of summoning and speaking with the dead, and it is difficult to reconstruct the facts from her text. Even so, with a great deal of study and the assistance of several scholars, I believe I have discovered the basic formulae for achieving lichdom.

Be warned, you who would use this information for evil intent, that Mirinalithiar was not sane when she recorded these procedures. I offer them only to shed light on the unspeakable desperation of a wizard who would be immortal. Used in the cause of justice, this knowledge is indeed power; used for evil purpose, this knowledge is certain death!

The Process

According to Mirinalithiar's journal, once the details of the transformation process are known, the scholar has to practice with rigor the newfound information.

Primary among the requirements is the ability to cast key spells. The spells themselves are rare, and only an wizard of great power and knowledge who fears not to dabble in the horrid art of necromancy can cast them. Still, this is not a particular hindrance to a mage whose hunger for knowledge is ravenous. As I have postulated, one cannot acquire great power without already having it. Hence, power is the key, power that begets power, ever corrupting the mage while preparing the mage to accumulate even more might.

The Phylactery

Once the spellcasting considerations are satisfied, the wizard proceeds to the next, equally important step: the making of a *phylactery*, a vessel to house his spirit.

The phylactery usually is a small boxlike amulet made of common materials, highly crafted. Lead or another black or dark gray material is frequently used. Inspection of an amulet may reveal various arcane symbols carved into the interior walls of the box, and those grooves are filled with silver as pure as the mage can find. These amulets are never made of wood, and rarely of steel. Brightly colored metals, such as gold, are infrequently used. (Mirinalithiar's account is extremely unclear, but it may not be the color that is the problem. The relative softness of the material and its subsequent likelihood of being injured may create this restriction.)

The mage understandably has no desire for anyone to learn what ritual is being undertaken, or the appearance of the arcane symbols and etchings he must use. Thus, the mage alone will melt and forge those precious metals, as well as learn whatever other crafting skills are necessary to design and construct the phylactery.

The vessel that becomes a lich's phylactery must be of excellent craftsmanship, requiring an investment of not less than 1,500 gp per level of the mage, with more money needed for custom-shaped amulets. It is, of course, possible to obtain a normal amulet of good craftsmanship without paying for it, but the amulet to be used as a phylactery must be constructed for that specific purpose. The craftsman who builds the amulet need not know of its true intended purpose.

Though the phylactery normally is a box, it can be fashioned into virtually any item, provided that it has an interior space in which the lich can carve certain small magical designs. Silver is poured into these designs, and

a permanency spell is cast on the whole. The designs include arcane symbols of power and the wizard's personal sigil. Should the Dungeon Master wish to actually illustrate them for the players, he or she should feel free to create unique designs to fit the campaign. The wizard's personal sigil is a mystical sign of personal significance, and identifying it may convey great power over a lich.

Once the box is constructed and the designs are crafted and properly enchanted, four spells must be cast upon the phylactery: *enchant an item*, *magic jar*, *permanency*, and *reincarnation*. When all of these spells have been cast, the amulet is suitable for use as a phylactery, but only by the specific wizard who made it. The manner in which the spells are cast and the time at which they are cast are not important, except that the *permanency* spell must be cast last of all.

The rules governing the creation of a phylactery are not immutable. A Dungeon Master can create a wonderful adventure around the attempted creation of a phylactery by a would-be lich. The necessity of fine craftsmanship, the ritual casting of powerful spells, the occurrence of a rare astronomical event, and many other factors might come into play in the completion of the device. The Dungeon Master is encouraged to customize not only the phylactery, but the process of creating it, too.

The Potion of Transformation

With the phylactery constructed, the next step requires the mage to cast his spirit into his newly enchanted box. To do so, however, requires the inclusion of the most secret aspect of becoming the lich - the potion of transformation. The ingredients of this potion are unknown to me, and it was only by chance that I even came to know of its existence. Mirinalithiar's journal mentions it but once as "that foul brew from the heart of evil."

After consultation and speculation with my many scholarly sources, I have concluded that the poisonous venom of a number of rare creatures must be involved, as the potion kills the mortal wizard almost instantly. Of course, after my near fatal experience with my old friend Shauten, I am sure that another one of the ingredients is the heart of a sentient creature.

In any case, I do know (from Mirinalithiar's journal) that the mage must drink the potion when the moon is full. If successful, the mage is transformed into a lich. Otherwise, the mage immediately dies. The success of the potion and the ability of the mage's constitution to handle the consequences are the ultimate tests of the mage's skill, knowledge, and fitness.

To initiate the transformation, to break the link between his body and spirit and forge it anew between his spirit and the phylactery, the mage must drink a special potion that is highly toxic. This potion, if properly made, will cause the mage to immediately transform into a lich. If any error is made in the formula or in the concoction and distillation of the potion, irrevocable death results.

To create the potion, the mage may blend several forms of natural poisons, including arsenic, belladonna, nightshade, heart's worry, and the blood of any of a number of poisonous monsters. Also necessary are a heart, preferably from a sentient creature, and the venom from a number of rare creatures such as wyverns, giant scorpions, and exotic snakes.

When the ingredients are properly mixed, the following spells must be cast upon the potion: *wraithform*, *cone of cold*, *feign death*, *animate dead*, and *permanency*. The potion must be drunk during a night with a full moon. Upon ingestion, a System Shock roll is required. If the mage passes the test, then he has been transformed by the potion into a dreaded lich.

If the mage doesn't survive the shock, he is dead forever, with no hope of any sort of resurrection. Not even a *wish* will undo the lethal potion. Only the direct intervention of a deity (or the Dungeon Master) has any hope of resurrecting a mage killed in this manner.

The Change

The mage's physical form reflects the transformation of his spirit. Where the mage in life might have been beautiful to the eyes, the potion turns the body into something profoundly hideous to behold.

I have recorded a tale of an old man, shrunken and weary of heart, who states he was not born in these lands, but came from a far off place with a strange name. He served as a scout in the army of the king of that region. In his youth, he recounted, he served the king in a great and noble battle against forces of evil, which had swelled unknown like a hidden cancer and were now erupting upon the surface of the land. As an advance scout, he and two others rode out on fleet-footed ponies toward the enemy forces, to determine their number and position.

He said that his patrol surprised and, in turn, was set upon by a dozen undead skeletons, each armed with archaic armor and weapons from an era and army he didn't recognize. Commanding the troops was an undead wizard. During the encounter, the scout had the misfortune of looking directly at the lich for more than a few seconds.

The skin over its entire body was shrunken and wrinkled over each bony limb. It was as dried as parchment, and rough to the point of being able to grind marble into dust.

The sockets of the eyes were the most terrifying to behold. Instead of eyes, it had sunken pits as black as the most evil heart that ever pulsed. As the skirmish wore on, from within the sockets came a harsh reddish glow, two fiery blobs of light that sparkled and illuminated the sockets and the area around the lich.

The scout was wounded and fell to the ground. He looked back at his comrades, but they too had fallen. Their bodies were being stripped of their gear by the spiritless minions of the lich. Just as he was about to say his final prayer, the lich strode over to him.

The old man swears that, although his elder years have been ones of commonplace fears - of whether the crops would wither of disease or whether his grandchildren would remember to not talk to strangers - that this moment was fear itself. Next to it all the other fears of his life had been mere worries about the weather. That was the most terrible moment that he had ever undergone. Here are his exact words, as I wrote them down.

"I looked back at the lich Just in time to see it walk toward me. Its wretched gaze never wavered as it stepped onto and over the bodies of my comrades. Its vulgar sockets fixed themselves upon me, and I felt the evil pour upon me like it was water, as if the lich exuded a palpable evil.

"Then it came to stand next to me. Gods and goddesses, I have never felt anything so foul! A terrible cold came over me, the likes of which were worse than the icy blasts of the northern wastes. It numbed me completely, and I started to shiver violently. I was choking - I could not breath for fright.

"My lantern had fallen with me, and my left hand still had a grasp of it. It was still lit. When the lich stopped next to me, and the cold came over me, I looked to the lantern for comfort and warmth, thinking it might be my last sight.

"I saw then that the light from the lantern had grown dimmer somehow, The flame was of normal size - this I saw plainly through the glass. Yet, the light from the flame had somehow shrunk. From the weakened light of the lantern, I could barely make out my own forearm.

"Suddenly there was a red glow upon me, and my arm grew plainly visible. I realized to my horror that the lich'ch had come even closer to me, and I was seeing my arm by the glow of its diabolical eye sockets.

"Despite my fear, I turned to look at the lich, which had squatted down next to me. I would at least look upon my death. Rotted, stinking robes clung to its skeletal form. It was also wearing some kind of chain of office. I did not recognize the chain, nor the kingdom nor office it represented. I could tell, though, that the lich was some kind of nobility.

"It looked at me for a few seconds, then smiled. Its ancient muscles pulled its lips apart with a crackling sound. It opened its mouth as if to speak, but no words came forth.

"Bathed as I was in the darkness, the light of its sockets and the numbing cold, I passed out. My last vision was of those terrible piercing eyes, looking directly through me to my very spirit.

"I thank every god of good and purity that the lich never laid its foul hand upon me, and that for some inexplicable reason, I

was spared death. "

Into Unlife

In order to affect the world, the lich must have a method of interacting with it. This means the spirit of the lich must attach itself to a body. After entering the phylactery, the spirit must remain for at least three days (perhaps less for extremely powerful mages). After those days have passed, the lich may reenter the body from whence it came. This act of transference is quite demanding upon the host body. Because of this, the lich must rest for a week after reentering its former body. During this week, the lich is unable to cast spells or undertake strenuous physical labor. It is only able to exert enough energy to care for itself, and perhaps read and meditate.

The astute reader will realize that this is an opportune moment to strike down the lich. That is why the receding information is so valuable.

To know the process is to know the lich's vulnerabilities. An alert person may spot the prospective lich as it pursues its deadly goal, then be ready to strike when the creature is helpless. Once the week has expired, the lich is never so helpless again.

When the lich rises, the precise location of the mage's spirit is debatable, but I am inclined to believe that its body is just a shell, a rotting puppet through which it works its will upon its surroundings. The phylactery is now what truly contains the essence of the lich. In any case, if the lich's body should "die", then its spirit is already safe within the phylactery. If the spirit is not already within the phylactery, the transference is instantaneous, and I believe not subject to distance, magical, or even dimensional restrictions.

As many sources speak of the disappearance of certain liches after their documented destruction, it is presumed that once back in its phylactery, a lich has some method of inhabiting a new body or creating a new one. This "transcorporeal inhabitation" is not, however, part of the journals of Mirinalithiar, and so I am left speculating upon this point, and am at a loss as to the truth of it.

Rituals of Sustenance

I propose that the lich does not have the ability to sustain itself over the centuries without some sort of ritualistic practice.

- Harmon Ruscheider, scholar

A classmate and colleague of mine, Dr. Harmon Ruscheider was more gifted in the rigors of empirical research than I. Our friendship was based upon a mutual fascination with biological processes, but his was a desire to advance the capabilities of the medical profession whereas I was more interested in the application of proven practices. Understandably, we drifted apart when our tenures at the university ended.

Then, a few months after I began my investigation of the lich, he came to me by the dark of night, foolishly traveling during the hours when the dead walk freely. I very nearly refused to allow him entry into my home, but he frantically convinced me of his identity and good intentions. Dr. Ruscheider was one of the most stoic and controlled men I have ever known, but the blithering person whom I reluctantly admitted to my abode was scarcely the same fellow. The poor man was teetering on the brink of sanity, clutching at the remaining strands of his once formidable mind with a steadily weakening grasp, dissolving into a lunatic before my eyes.

We talked through the night and well into the following morning, but it was not a nostalgic chat of past loves and classroom exploits. Ruscheider had been a prisoner of an Invidian lich for the prior seven months, and he was desperate to impart his knowledge to me before his faculties left him for good. What I wrote down as my old friend babbled through the night proved to be my most important resource regarding liches, next to the journal of Mirinalithiar.

Ruscheider was studying the necrology of liches as part of his research on the postmortem decomposition of the body. Such

analysis inevitably necessitated the observation of a subject, but Ruscheider tragically became a subject himself.

Fortunately, the lich understood an obsession with knowledge that would lead a man down dangerous paths, and it allowed Ruscheider to live long enough to learn some of its necrology. Even more fortunate, the lich destroyed itself in an unsuccessful *power ritual* (see Chapter Five), and Ruscheider was eventually able to escape the clutches of the lich's suddenly ungoverned minions.

Harmon Ruscheider's knowledge was dearly bought, and I present it to the reader in his memory. When he had exhausted himself of both strength and information, he died in my arms.

The Ritual

A lich need not partake of food, water, or any of the things we mortals must, but it still must conduct rituals that are designed to renew its powers and sustain its physical existence. When the lich has learned enough to satiate its gluttonous appetite for power, it abandons its solid form for the exploration of realms beyond mortal comprehension (see Chapter Ten), but until then it must sustain its body against the ravages of time. This ritual of sustenance is also necessary if the lich is to maintain control over undead servants, cast spells, and conduct other rituals (discussed later in this text). The lich undergoes a ritual of sustenance approximately once each century.

The undead wizard begins by acquiring the main ingredient in lich preservation: a fresh heart.

Ruscheider's research indicates that the kind of heart - that is, its owner's specie - is not relevant. The only important characteristic is that it must belong to a sentient mortal. Also, it must have been beating less than three nights earlier. Since the ritual apparently requires tapping the life essence of a sentient being, it is reasonable to conclude that a living body or one freshly killed is best for the lich's purposes.

Once the lich has found such a victim (usually by having its undead minions prey on nearby villages or by capturing mortals who pass too close to the lair), it steals the heart. The lich itself needs to take the heart from the body, as this act is part of the ritual process.

Once the body, living or dead, is transported to the lich's lair, it undergoes embalming processes and several incantations. My notes from Ruscheider's testimony are rather incomplete regarding what the body is embalmed with, and what spells are cast, but the embalming fluid is highly lethal. Ruscheider claimed that two pints delivered into a small lake would kill all who drank from it. If the victim is not already dead at this point, he soon will be.

The heart is then removed in a ceremony requiring a few hours to complete. During this time, the lich is completely involved in the ritual and is able to control only a fraction of its minions, due to the great mental and magical efforts directed at the heart and corpse. The corpse, at a latter point in the ritual, is reduced to a husk and is unusable for any other purpose whatsoever.

Once the heart is removed, it is placed in a brazier along with a multitude of arcane and alchemical materials. The heart, made flammable during the ritual, is incinerated. Reacting with the materials in the brazier, a bizarre dust is created which is then sprinkled onto the lich's body and into its eyes.

This is the life-giving dust that the lich needs to survive. Without it, the lich gradually loses magical power and control over its minions, and it slowly deteriorates until its body crumbles into dust.

Even if this occurs, the lich's spirit still exists, having returned to its phylactery. Once there, it is apparently able to claim other bodies for its own use. For reasons of its own - perhaps vanity, perhaps the demands of its peculiar state of existence - the lich definitely prefers to retain its original body.

The Negative Material Plane

A not uncommon theory is that evil is an actual force, rather than a characteristic assigned to behavior. This philosophical topic must be avoided in this text. However, I have considered a theory of duality, of the so-called Negative and Positive Material Planes. Theoretically, there is a positive and negative polarity to the universe. Proceeding from that idea, we may suppose that these polar aspects of the multiverse are woven into the ethereal framework of the physical world.

Sadly, I have come to the conclusion that the lands of my birth have more of the negative than positive - thus, there is more of evil than of good in this realm. The undead that curse the land - dread vampires, walking skeletons, stupefied zombies, and hosts of ghosts, ghouls, and evil spirits that run like ivers through our realm - are spun of or powered by this negative material. If intelligent undead like the vampire and the lich can manipulate this material of which they are hypothetically composed, this may explain their control over things evil and undead.

The connection between the lich and the Negative Material Plane magically would be forged during the transformation ceremony, most probably at the moment of mortal death and rebirth into unlife. The period the lich spends in the phylactery most likely creates and reinforces this link between its spirit and the Negative Material Plane. Of course, this discussion remains completely within the realm of the hypothetical, yet it easily explains much of the lich's powers which I shall address in the next chapter: the chilling touch, the black aura, the eyeless sight, and so forth. Perhaps the phylactery is some sort of conduit to or pocket of that Negative Material Plane, wherein the lich may roam and familiarize itself with the rank eddies and flows of power of that foul plane and the methods of manipulating them.

In spite of its disputable existence, I fear that I shall often lean upon the crutch of the Negative Material Plane as I attempt to uncover facts about liches. In the absence of hard data, the learned must rely upon supposition. Whether valid or not, the approach leads to practical, usable results, which is the goal of my work.

Compilers' Note: Dr. Van Richten, though he greatly doubted the existence of other planes when he wrote this work, eventually came to accept them as real later in life. However, he always retained a certain skepticism about such matters, particularly in matters relating to the supernatural effects other planes have on the material world, including ourselves. He believed intelligent Powers directed matters more than did blind, unthinking forces.

- GWF

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Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

- Lord Acton
letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton

Powers

Know that the planes are filled with all manner of strange creatures, each one unique. This applies to creatures of magic most especially. While they are often of the same ilk, they are also clearly different from one another - different in creation, purpose, desires, and potency. Realize this and know that no two supernatural beings are alike, and that one cannot wholly predict their actions. Look instead upon each being individually, and make your predictions for the behavior of that one.

- *The Gnomics of Bilerius*



The logic of Bilerius's passage above may seem obvious or trite, but I have lost too many comrades to the assumption that individuals in a certain category of undead "are all alike." *Never make this mistake!* While the skills and powers of a given creature may be shared by most or all of its breed, the most powerful of supernatural beings remain ever unpredictable, ever singular.

With the lich this is particularly true, for its province is the arcane, a subject of apparently unlimited scope, and each lich is as unique as the power it pursues. Legends proliferate with theories about what is gained by becoming a lich. Some locales have folk songs about liches becoming ghostly skeletons whose bones are as strong as iron, while others tell of lich spells powerful enough to reduce mountains to dust. Yet another tale promises that standing water freezes when a lich is nearby, even in the height of summer. These songs exaggerate the reality of lichdom, but only slightly so.

The research that led to my *Guide to Vampires* was greatly aided by the fact that vampires are notoriously egotistical creatures. In hindsight, I realize that much valuable information regarding the extermination of these monsters came from the monsters themselves, anxious to tell their own stories at whatever cost.

Unfortunately, the lich is not so eager to justify its existence as is the vampire. Holding a lich at bay has not been achieved, and a straightforward interview is, of course, out of the question! I am afraid that the only way to learn about the lich is through direct observation and careful conjecture. Secondhand information is occasionally helpful, but it must remain suspect at best.

I believe, based on my experience with the undead in general, that liches are intimately connected with that dimension of negative energy, the Negative Material Plane. It is from this plane that the vampire draws its unholy powers, and I suspect that the lich shares this source. Several of the lich's native abilities are otherwise simply unexplainable. Those investigators who follow in my footsteps would be wise to continually doubt this hypothesis, however. Otherwise, any immediately unanswerable question will be foolishly attributed to the powers of this merely theoretical place.

Whatever the actual source of the lich's faculties, the manifestation of that power is obvious to anyone present to witness it. Here, I shall address the various "common" powers of the lich and also reveal abilities I have encountered in my research

that are possessed only by the rarest of all liches.

Lich Sight

Little escapes the eyes of a lich. I recall waiting in ambush for a lich in a cell deep underground, without a source of light for thousands of yards (we had thoroughly cloaked our own). I was immersed in a blackness so deep that I could almost feel it, and only shadow-sparks swam before my mind's eye to remind me that light had ever existed.

After a long wait, the deliberate, unearthly shuffle of the lich eased through the thick darkness to signal the monster's approach. We held our breath in absolute silence and waited as the red pin flares of the lich's eyes came into view.

It entered the cell, advanced until it stood nearly between our positions on opposite walls, then stopped abruptly. With an eerie air that makes my skin crawl even to think of it, the lich turned its gaze from one side the other, looking upon our party as if we stood in full light of day! Thus did our own trap betray us, for we were the only blind ones in the room! The lesson we learned is that darkness is not your friend when dealing with a lich. But neither is light your ally against the undead wizard. The lich is not intimidated in the least by sunlight, nor is it blinded.

I surmise that the visual spectrum of the lich is not dependent upon light itself. Rather, its connection with negative energy allows it to somehow perceive the very presence and location of material objects and beings, situated in a dimension physically and diametrically opposed to its own frame of reference.

The Black Aura

My painstaking research has detailed many lethal attributes to liches. A certain subset of those attributes is often repeated among my texts, and it seems to point to a core feature of the common lich: an aura of fear, darkness, and cold that I call the *black aura*.

A lich can't see with normal vision in even the darkest of environments, but it is unaffected by the brightest light, even by magical *light* cast upon its eye sockets.

Any creature of fewer than 5 Hit Dice or levels of experience that looks upon a lich must roll a successful saving throw vs. spell, or flee in terror for 5d4 rounds. The effect tends to descend upon the victim rather than strike him (as would the effect of a *fear* spell), so the chance to drop held items is optional. The viewer must see the lich in its true form in order for the effect to manifest; a lich disguised with an illusion would not evoke fear unless the disguise was a frightening one.

Fear

It is thoroughly understandable that anyone coming face to face with an undead wizard of enormous power would react with direct and abject fear. Although I am not a great warrior or a powerful wizard, I have seen much of that which lives by the dark of night and terrorizes the living; I have become much inured to sights of the most ghastly nature. Nevertheless, I will always view certain monsters with unreasoning terror, and the lich is one of them.

However, the black aura of the lich is not a thing that can be faced down with sheer courage alone. Even the most stalwart hero instinctively flees in terror from the presence of a lich. Fear precedes the lich like the stench of its minions. Some brave souls may withstand this demoralizing effect, but none deny the cold grip on the heart when a lich appears on the scene.

However, such fear only occurs if the lich is revealed for what it is. Liches who utilize illusion or magical items to appear as normal mages, clerics, or other beings do not automatically cause this reaction. The fear is therefore all the more powerful when the lich is discovered.

Cold Darkness

It is the experience of all who make contact with a lich that this aura of fear also manifests itself in cold and darkness.

Sources conflict as to the nature of this. Some say that the darkness is an actual physical emission, similar to the spell *darkness*, and it coincidentally causes fear because it evokes the frequent dread of darkness in humans and humanoids. Accepting this premise, the cold would be spell-like in nature, too. I disagree.

Others theorize, and I side with them, that the cold and darkness are a physical manifestation of the magical icy darkness of the creature's being, and its aura of alien and horrifying power causes fear in all who draw near to it. As with vampires, this phenomenon may be attributable to that theoretical connection between liches and the Negative Material Plane, and the cold and darkness might simply be a cloud of that extraneous negative energy. As such, the aura does not exist as a physical absence of heat and light, but rather is a field of malignant power that viewers perceive as "frosty darkness" in their futile attempts to grasp its true nature.

The cold darkness of the lich's aura is created purely for dramatic effect and should be so used for the Dungeon Master's convenience. The area of effect may shift freely to prevent players from using the aura as a homing device or other source of information. However, some Dungeon Masters may wish to treat the aura as a quasi-magical one, creating a modified form of the *blur* spell, for example. Other vision- and temperature-oriented spells may be similarly used for the Dungeon Master's purposes.

The Chilling Touch

Woe to the person who is grasped by the lich! Its touch will freeze the skin of anything as would the coldest ice. For a living person, this can mean severe pain and epidermal damage. Furthermore, the pitiable creature so touched may be chilled literally to the bone, becoming completely immobile until aided by magical or priestly powers. In several texts are accounts of death caused by the icy touch of the lich.

What is the cause of this chill touch? It is possible that it is, after a fashion, a curse of the gods of Good upon the lich for betraying its mortality. Since the lich has willingly thrown over all that is warm and kind and human in order to pursue with cold dispassion the acquisition of power, the gods may have punished the undead wizard by making its touch a reflection of its inner, coldhearted nature.

Compilers' Note: I think this is unlikely, as this "curse" is more troublesome for the hunters of the undead than for the lich itself. Powers of Good would not give an evil being more power.

- LWF

Others maintain that the lich's icy touch is simply the cold of the grave, amplified by a score of magnitudes during the ritual that transforms the lich from living being to walking dead. Being a man of learning and medical arts, I am sure that this is not truth. Dead beings are only cold in relationship to their living counterparts and are, in fact, simply the same temperature as their surroundings. What amplification of room temperature could result in a cold that could cause a man's skin to stick to the lich's bony claw and peel from his arm like the skin of a fruit? No, this theory is flawed. Numerous wizards have confirmed that both common and essential components used in the casting of spells would be ruined or rendered inert by freezing, yet I have found no evidence of any lich keeping its spell components warm. I have also inspected numerous objects for signs of contact with significant coldness after they had been handled by a lich, but found nothing to suggest that they were affected by the black aura. It is apparent, then, that this chill touch is a selective ability of the lich, rather than a physical characteristic of the state of living death.

Once again, it may be put forth that the icy touch is a manifestation of the twisted link between that hypothetical plane of negative energy and the lich. In that case, the energy-sapping nature of the Negative Material Plane leeches the very heat from the air through the lich, which serves as some sort of mobile portal to that domain. Or, possibly, the physical contradiction of positive and negative energies coming into contact may cause damage to living tissues.

Whatever the case, I must remind the reader that I am not versed in planar theory, and I cannot confirm the existence of a plane of negative energy. However, the existence of such a place or thing certainly explains much.

Should a lich touch a living creature, that creature immediately suffers 1d10 points of cold damage. The victim then must roll a successful saving throw vs. paralysis or be suddenly and completely unable to move. The

paralysis lasts until magically dispelled.

Weapon Immunities

As with many undead things, nonmagical weapons inflict no damage upon the lich. If that weren't enough, it takes a sword master of considerable experience to find the soft spots and "make them bleed," so to speak. The density of magical energy concentrated within a lich's being is so great that it takes a weapon with magic and a well-trained arm to harm it. This is not to say that nonmagical weapons and inexperienced warriors cannot strike the lich's form; rather, their weapons appear to be thrown back as if they had made contact with a stone too dense to scratch. I recall one instance in which a rambunctious young blade-wielder of some renown stabbed the skeletal form of a lich between the two bones of its forearm, which were open to the air due to its advanced decay. With an idle twist of its arm, the lich broke the youth's blade in two, then slew him.

Liches can be hit only by weapons of at least +1 enchantment, by spells, or by creatures with at least 6 Hit Dice (or levels of experience) or possessing magical properties typical of most monsters.

Additional Protection

This need for magic to damage the lich's form extends in a dual fashion into certain immunities in the lich. However, from what I have read, I do not believe that the lich is immune to the effects of sorcery, except for magic designed to disrupt the biological nature of a living being. A spell cast to impart insanity to the target is one example. Such spells have no effect, as the lich's mind works in such an arcane, twisted manner that "sanity" has no practical meaning. *Death spells* are also ineffective, regardless of who casts them. Likewise, spells of *sleep* or *enfeeblement* have no effect, and the lich's mighty and inhumanly transformed intellect makes the use of charming magic against it utterly futile. As cold and electricity also commonly depend upon a living biological state for the majority of the damage that they cause, the dead flesh of the lich, combined with its ensorcelled toughness, renders such damaging magic useless against it. Finally, the lich seems to be unaffected by *polymorph* magic. Apparently the lich's intimate connection with negative energy confounds the workings of a spell affecting positive material.

I hasten to add that, for all these many immunities, the lich is vulnerable to a plethora of magic. Indeed, magical attacks from a distance remain one of the best offenses against these beings.

Some priests have managed to present their holy symbols with such faith and authority that liches have (at least temporarily) fled the scene, but these were mighty clerics indeed. I hesitate to mention that it is possible to turn a lich away through such priestly virtues, for I have lost several holy friends who miscalculated the power of their adversaries. Nevertheless, liches are certainly undead creatures, and as such they are vulnerable to the bane of the undead: righteous faith and the power of the gods.

The magical nature of the lich and its dead state make it immune to all forms of *charm*, *sleep*, *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, *cold*, *electricity*, *insanity* or *death* spells. Priests at least 8th level may attempt to turn a lich, as may paladins of no less than 10th level.

Spells and Spellcasting

Of course, one important skill that a mage does not lose when he transforms into a lich is the ability to cast spells. To my surprise, I found that the lich remains under the same basic restrictions as living mages when casting spells. For example, the lich still has to keep its spells recorded in a spell book, and it still has to go through the rituals of spellcasting.

One aspect of spellcasting that does change upon the transformation of a living wizard into a lich is the need for sleep - liches never need it. However, they do need to spend time equivalent to a normal mage's rest in a light, meditative trance, in

order to reimpress upon their minds the magical words and energies that compose spells. However, whereas the typical mortal mage must have a certain period of uninterrupted rest, the lich does not. (After all, being undead, the lich can never rest as does a mortal.) Once it has spent the total needed amount of time in meditation upon the unseen configurations of the treads of magic, it can consult its spell books and memorize its spells, *no matter how many times it has been interrupted*. (Practically, I would suppose that these segments of meditative time cannot be fragmented into spans of less than a quarter of an hour each to be of any use). This light, meditative trance would account for the various descriptions of tiches as "brooding" or "lost in arcane thought." But-any man who thinks a meditating lich is unaware of its surroundings is doomed.

This piece of information is useful inasmuch as it serves as a warning: A party of lich hunters cannot interrupt a lich's rest and hope to deprive it of its ability to learn spells. More likely, the lich will dispense with the party, then continue from whence it left off.

The lich's undead, evil nature grants it particular expertise when casting necromantic spells. The lich is a dealer of death (and a dealer with death), and it has many spells and abilities available to it for this nefarious use. In general, it is agreed upon in authoritative sources like *The Journal of Moritaius Jouanoulch* and the scholarly *Divers [sic] Meditations Upon the Higher Magicks* that liches are able to wield necromantic magic with at least twice the effectiveness of living mages. While there can be no question that liches are adept at the use of necromantic magic, I attribute their general potency to their vast experience and the time they spend developing their talents, rather than their special, undead natures.

Liches do not require uninterrupted rest or study time in order to learn spells. The amount of time required to memorize a full complement of lich spells is equal to the number of available spell levels times 10 rounds. For example, if a lich wishes to memorize one 1st-level spell, one 3rd-level spell, one 4th-level spell, and two 5th-level spells, it would need 180 rounds (18 [spell levels]x10), or three hours. If the lich interrupted after the first hour but casts no further spells, it need only meditate for two more hours to complete its task.

A lich performs in all respects as a specialist wizard of the school of Necromancy, with the following exceptions: It suffers no penalties when learning spells from other schools, and it is not prohibited from employing spells of the opposite school (Illusion/Phantasm). To the contrary, liches are adept at casting illusionary magic.

Control Over Undead

One of the most commonly invoked powers of the lich is its ability to control a variety of undead creatures. The lich is able to command a number of undead to protect it. The number of undead it can control at one time depends largely upon the mental abilities of the lich. Generally, the more intelligent the lich, the more undead it can control. However, I have rarely heard of a lich being able to control more than a score of undead at once.

Magical devices are known that allow the liches that constructed them to control many more undead creatures than they presumably could normally. These items often resemble necklaces or amulets, and they are frequently carved with mystical signs of dire import.

If one is pursuing a lich and encounters a band of undead that protect it, one can only assume that more undead guardians are nearby. The distance over which a lich can command these undead soldiers seems to be without limit. I have even read a tale of a lich that instructed a ghoul to travel to another land to fulfill a task, and the lich was able to see through the undead creature's eyes and into the far distant land to more closely direct the ghoul in its task.

Many types of undead can be commanded by a lich. Essentially, a lich can command any undead creature less powerful than itself, including skeletons (probably the most common minion, as they are so easy to make), ghouls, zombies, shadows, and the like. A distinguishing characteristic of a lich minion is that its eyes bear the same fiery gaze as the commanding lich, but the minion possesses none of the lich's powers or auras. The minion completely loses all form of independent thought. In fact, the will of the lich inundates the undead creature totally, so that the lich alone is able to control it. Should the lich die, all undead that obey it simply fall to the ground motionless, or so I would hope.

This ability to control the undead seems to be a natural part of lichdom. The lich is able to raise skeletons from the ground with great ease and on some occasions can raise corpses without even visiting the graves. Animated corpses are able to

perform only physical labor that requires little or no degree of mental input. However, since the lich is able to use the corpse's senses when it desires to do so, freshly dead corpses are preferred as they are relatively "complete."

Several of the minion's physical senses can be used by a lich, depending on the condition of the minion's sensory organs. Eardrums, for example, are still usable after the lich animates a corpse, as is the sense of touch as long as the skin is relatively intact. As these components begin to decay, the lich becomes less able to distinguish the surroundings of the minion. However, the lich is always able to see through a minion's eyes or eye sockets with the same degree and clarity as if the minion's eyes were healthy and intact.

This ability to use a corpse's senses is very useful to the lich. With it, the lich can cause the minion to perform almost any sort of physical action that the lich itself could (short of spellcasting), including reading texts and preparing alchemical solutions or traps.

A lich is able to attempt to control any form of undead with half (round up) or less of the lich's Hit Dice. For example, a newly formed lich has at least 11 Hit Dice, so it has immediate potential dominion over wraiths and lesser undead. To assume control, the undead creature must be within the lich's range of influence, which is equal to the lich's Hit Dice times 1,000 feet. A typical lich can raise and command undead more than two miles away.

Once a corpse or undead creature is within range, the lich asserts control by conducting a mystical attack, during which the lich mentally imposes its will upon the victim. This attack automatically succeeds against undead that have (or had in life) 3 Hit Dice or less. Those with more than 3 Hit Dice can make a saving throw vs. spell to avoid being controlled. The lich is free to repeatedly impose its will upon undead that have made their saving throws, once per round, until they succumb to its influence or escape its range of command.

The lich can control a number of minions with total Hit Dice equal to three times its Intelligence score. There is no limit to how many of any particular kind of corpse or undead the lich can control, only to the raw number of possible minions.

It is possible for a minion to be controlled outside the lich's normal control range. Once every 24 hours, the lich can command one of its minions to perform a special task, placing the minion under an effect similar to the wizard spell *geas*. The minion will perform that action no matter how long it takes or how great a distance is needed to travel to reach the goal.

The actions assigned to a typical minion must be simple and not contain more than four steps. An example command might be: "Go west until you find a castle; kill the red-haired guard at the drawbridge; take his gold amulet; return here."

Only one adjective may be used with each step in the quest. Of course, intelligent undead can understand and act upon more complex orders. Such creatures can even be ordered to take command of the lich's legions on the front line of a battlefield or to lead a reconnaissance team on a mission.

The minion, whatever its level of intelligence, will not stop in its pursuit of the special quest. It will become single-minded in its pursuit and never stops until it is destroyed, its assignment is complete, or it is willed to do otherwise by the lich.

Priests can turn the lich's quest-filing minion, but turning it has the effect only of making it stand still. When no longer subject to being turned (such as being beyond the radius of effect of the turning cleric or paladin), the undead being continues on its way. The minion ignores all distractions during its quest, but it instinctively avoids villages, campsites, fire, and other places or creatures that would lead to its discovery or delays.

The minion attempts to overcome any obstacle. If it is physically unable to complete a mission, it returns to the lich and communicates its difficulties to the lich by telepathy.

Once a minion leaves the lich's radius of control, its senses (other than vision) cannot be used by the lich. The lich can always see what the minion sees, at any distance, regardless of circumstance.

The number of minions the lich can assign to perform special quests is equal to its Intelligence score.

Retained Abilities

The lich, despite its incredible transformation from mortality, in all probability retains most or all of the nonwizard skills it had as a living creature. This was confirmed for me in Barovia, when I hunted for a lich that had taken up residence in the southern Balinok Mountains. The appearance of the lich, which called itself Crimson Arcanus, coincided with the disappearance of a somewhat well known and very powerful Falkovnian mage called Antirius the Red. Aside from his magical powers, Antirius was locally known for his ability to throw two darts simultaneously, one from each hand. Later, when we first confronted the Crimson Arcanus and forced it to employ combat techniques against us before fleeing, it used that ambidextrous dart toss. (Sadly, a poison-coated dart cost the life of my dear comrade Nadin the ranger.) I remembered a tale that Antirius of Falkovnia used the same tactic, so I journeyed to Falkovnia and learned all I could about the "deceased" Antirius.

One key fact I discovered looked at first to be a relatively trivial one: Antirius was fond of dancing in his earlier years. Returning to Barovia with a mercenary who combined sword fighting with dance techniques, I sought out the Crimson Arcanus and forced the lich into hand-to-hand melee, introducing the mercenary fighter at a crucial moment. To our lasting delight, the lich counterstepped to the mercenary's moves with an arrogant grace! Its identity thus confirmed, we were able use our knowledge of Antirius the Red to defeat the Crimson Arcanus, and we located and destroyed its phylactery.

It was remarkable to me that a lich should possess such a high level of agility, despite its heavily withered state, but the important fact that I learned was that the lich had not lost those skills that it had in life.

I think it reasonable to conclude that if abilities requiring agility are retained, then all former life skills of the lich may be retained. This includes thieving and weapon skills, as well as psionic and spellcasting knowledge. It is also reasonable to assume that these skills can continue to be honed until they are far superior to those of any mortal. In fact, any skills the lich had before its transformation most likely carry over to a high degree and are an essential part of the lich's knowledge and abilities. These skills can be perfected by the lich if it continues its study of them.

It seems logical that any physical skills (carpentry, sword fighting, swimming, and the like) the lich learns after its transformation cannot be learned to the same degree of perfection, as the lich's undead body will not respond as well as a living body. On the other hand, if the lich does not require the same amount of rest and sleep that the living do, it may accelerate its learning of physical skills compared to when it was living.

Assuming that my chain of logic is sound, any mental skill such as navigation or alchemy probably can be learned to perfection after the change, since the lich's mind does not deteriorate as does its body. As it is impossible to ask a lich what activities it has taken up since becoming undead, I have no means of confirming this. Even so, it is better to give the lich too much credit than not enough!

The Dungeon Master should assign nonweapon proficiencies to a lich as appropriate to the campaign. A lich that has been in existence for more than a few years has plenty of time to develop an assortment of near perfect skills. It would also be reasonable to award a lich all weapon proficiencies allowable to its former class, even allowing it some proficiencies not normally used by members of its former class. After all, the lich has virtually an eternity to study any skill that it wishes to acquire.

Salient Abilities

From some sketchy commentary and glosses drawn from sundry sources, it is apparent that certain liches are able to cast necromantic spells that are not commonly available to living mages. Whether these spells are of the lich's own devising, drawn from further research, or special abilities of a spell- like nature that these liches possess, I do not know. Even living mages do not commonly reveal the extent of their spell-weaving knowledge to those not of the magical brotherhood; what is a common spell and what is a personal piece of sorcery is not a topic upon which I can venture to guess. Nevertheless, I have been a witness to many strange and terrible powers engendered by liches, and I shall speak briefly of some of them here.

Considering their undead state, it should come as no surprise that a lich would be a craftsman in bone. In Valachan, I encountered a lich that had created an entire laboratory made of humanoid bone! At the first I thought the monster had commissioned some dark craftsman, but when my hunting party attacked the lich in a graveyard, it suddenly erected a protective wall of bone around it. To see humanoid bones emerge from the ground all around us was quite alarming, but to watch them bend and meld together was positively horrifying!

The lich's affinity for creating and controlling undead should be self-evident to anyone who has had any dealings with these monsters, but few suspect the depths to which the liches have honed that accomplishment. I know of one particular lich (that to this day has confounded and eluded me!) that is able to animate the dead with disconcerting ease. In our last confrontation, the lich sent a veritable army of undead creatures at us. Where they came from we knew not, but they arrived in seemingly endless numbers.

Fortunately, we were prepared for a large-scale battle, and we cut down the lich's forces with alacrity. To our shock and horror, the lich moved about the battlefield with magically enhanced speed, reanimating the bodies we had laid to rest with a simple touch of its bony claw. Thus, we found ourselves facing and fighting the same undead beasts again and again, until we were forced to retreat.

I have learned of a particularly cruel lich from one of its pitiable victims. The monster had mastered a technique of entering the dreams of its enemies. Night after night, it haunted the poor fellow to whom I later spoke, preventing him from resting until he sickened and went mad. No spell or prayer was able to shield his mind from the lich's mental onslaught. Sadly, I have since heard that the man to whom I spoke became a murderous lunatic, was hanged by his people, and now serves the lich as an undead thing.

Still another lich of which I have heard is apparently able to capture the residual magic from other casters' spells and recreate the same effect under its control. One survivor of an encounter with this particular lich told me that a wizard in her party cast a *fireball* at the lich, who suffered considerable damage from the spell. However, the flames of the *fireball* did not dissipate, but rather withdrew into the lich's hand as if pulled there. Then the lich sent the very same *fireball* back into the face of the unfortunate wizard, who died of it. The witness assured me that she saw no spellcasting or use of any item on the part of the lich. Instead, it seems that the lich merely took hold of the dweomer and reenergized it!

The sheer scope of possibility dictates that countless salient abilities may be available to the lich. Being virtually immortal, these wizards have an eternity to develop spells and powers beyond our imagination. Some liches might generate unique and bizarre talents. Other liches might require ever more powerful magical weapons to hit them, have the ability to cast more deadly magic than usual, and so forth. A so-called "common" lich is incredibly powerful, but these "uncommon" liches seem nearly indestructible! There are few ways to challenge them, power vs. power.

The best hope of the lich hunter is to understand the lich. While each lich - nay, every creature that walks the land - has its strengths, so does it have its weaknesses. Once again, as a lich itself might point out, knowledge is the greatest power. Know your enemy, and you may live to defeat it.

If the Dungeon Master wishes to determine salient abilities randomly the following procedure can be used: For liches with an Intelligence of 19, roll 3d3 to determine the number of abilities of the lich. If the lich has an Intelligence of 20 or more, roll 1d3+1. Then roll 1d20 and consult the table below. Each of these powers is an innate ability that the lich can invoke at will. No rituals or components are required to activate them.

Table 1: Lich Salient Abilities

1d20 Lich Ability

- 1 *Animate dead by touch*
- 2 *Bone command*
- 3 *Chilling wind*
- 4 *Coldfire*
- 5 *Control undead legion*
- 6 *Doom gaze*
- 7 *Dream manipulation*
- 8 *Fool's feast*

- 9 *Grasp of death*
- 10 *Grasp of enfeeblement*
- 11 *Ignore metal*
- 12 *Imitation*
- 13 *Improved defense*
- 14 *Improved spellcasting*
- 15 *Meta-polymorph*
- 16 *Painwrack*
- 17 *Regeneration*
- 18 *Skull scry*
- 19 *Voice of maleficence*
- 20 *Vortex of evil*

Ideally, the Dungeon Master will custom design a lich especially for the current campaign. Salient abilities are created to challenge high-level parties and to create surprises for those gamers who make a habit of studying the Monstrous Manual tome and "Dungeon Master only" text.

Animate dead by touch: The lich is able to cause zombies and skeletons rise with a mere touch. Such creatures are turned by clerics at a level equal to the lich that raised them, as long as the lich is within 200 feet of those undead. The lich may raise as many creatures as are available. All undead created in this fashion rise as 2 Hit Dice creatures that behave as common zombies and skeletons, except as noted above.

Bone command: The lich is able animate bone and shape it at will. With this ability, the lich can call up splinters of bones from anywhere bones are present and animate them into a protective barrier similar to the priest spell *blade barrier*, except the damage inflicted is 10d8. The lich may also form bones into any structure it desires the only limit being the amount of bones available. Structures created in this manner are only as strong as the bones used, though some creatures may have very strong bones. The Dungeon Master should determine the structure integrity based on the campaign and scenario, the type and amount of bones available, and the resistance the bones offer. Generally, a Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll is sufficient to breach a bone wall. Inflicting 25 points of damage creates a human-sized hole. Any structure - huts, arches, bridges, and so forth - can be created. The structure stands until it is destroyed or the lich commands it to disintegrate into its component parts. Structures created in this way cannot be dispelled magically, as the bones are actually melded into one another to make a solid mass.

Chilling wind: The lich is able to blow a freezing blast of wind in a cone 100 feet long and 50 feet wide at the base. The wind is short, lasting for only one round, but during that round a howling, screeching wail accompanies it that requires a fear check for anyone within 60 feet of the cone. Heroes within the area of effect of *silence*, *15' radius* or similar spells do not need to check. The wind also freezes standing liquids and chills bottled liquids. Anyone caught within the cone of chilling wind suffers 1d10 points of cold damage. Any magical item designed to warm or otherwise protect a hero from cold (magical or otherwise) negates this damage, but the fear check still applies.

Coldfire: The lich is able to produce a negative energy fire so cold that it inflicts 3d10 points of freezing damage upon anything it touches. Being of Negative Material Plane energy, even objects or creatures that are by their nature immune to cold will suffer damage. Also, the coldfire penetrates the protection offered by magical objects that are designed to prevent cold damage (such as a *ring of warmth*) if the owner fails a saving throw vs. death magic. The lich may produce the coldfire as glowing, blue-green flame that can be thrown as a missile weapon, or it can place the fire inside any skull. Flames placed within a skull last for 30 days unless a *permanency* spell is cast upon the flame. Anyone who touches the skull suffers damage. A *Dispel magic* spell extinguishes the flame.

Control undead legion: The lich is able to control a number of Hit Dice of undead creatures equal to its Intelligence score times 10. All undead of 8 Hit Dice or less are automatically controlled, while those of 9 Hit Dice or more are immune to this special power. All undead involved must already be animated. The range of this ability is equal to the lich's Intelligence score times 1,000 feet. The undead will respond to a limited form of telepathic command that allows the lich to either summon the monsters or direct them toward the target or

heroes to be attacked. Specific commands are not possible-the legion simply attacks anything in the area to which they are directed. Undead within hearing range of the lich may be commanded vocally, responding to more specific instructions.

Doom gaze: The lich is able to cause the instant death of a living person just by looking at him. The lich is successful if the hero fails a saving throw vs. death magic. The victim may be resurrected, but only by a good cleric and not by potions or magical items. The victim need not look at the lich in order for the attack to be successful. The range of this attack is 90 feet.

Dream manipulation: The lich, if it knows the exact location of a living person, can infiltrate that person's mind and manipulate his dreams, turning them into nightmares of the lich's design. Pervading the dream is the face and gaze of the lich. The receiver of the dream manipulation is aware that his dreams were tampered with, but he is unable to prevent this. This is a mystical, rather than mentally oriented, phenomena- Sleepers affected by dream manipulation awaken having suffered any damage incurred during the nightmare. (Dungeon Masters may roleplay a nightmare or simply assess 3d10 points of damage upon the hero.) Furthermore, the affected hero must make a horror check upon awakening.

Aside from the usual effects of failing a check, the hero is unable to sleep peacefully for 1d4 nights afterward. During this period of insomnia, no hit points are restored, the hero's THAC0 drops by 1 per day, thief abilities drop by 5 percentage points per day, and no spellcaster may memorize any 3rd-level or higher spell. Dream manipulation, is not possible if the intended target is sleeping in holy ground such as a church or consecrated graveyard. The range of this ability equals to the lich's Intelligence score in miles.

Fool's feast: By merely passing within 3 feet of openly displayed food, the lich can taint the edibles with a deadly, mystical poison. A hero who eats of the food will die within a number of rounds equal to her Constitution score unless she rolls a successful saving throw vs. poison at +2. The food gives off a magical aura if a *detect magic* spell is cast, and the effects of the mystical taint can be negated with a *dispel magic* or *purify food and water* spell. The food to be tainted must be out in the open, such as a vegetable stand or a buffet. A poisoned victim can be cured if she is healed by a cleric, if a *neutralize poison* or *wish* spell is cast, or an appropriate curative potion is used.

Grasp of death: If the lich touches a living person, the victim dies instantly unless he successfully saves vs. death magic. The person can be *resurrected*, but only by a good priest casting the spell, not by potions, magical items, or other means. This power operates only when the lich wills it so. When the grasp of death is active, a nimbus of coruscating black flame surrounds the lich's hands.

Grasp of enfeeblement: When the lich touches a living person, 1d10 Strength points are lost for one hour. (A saving throw vs. paralyzation may be applied.) If the lich reduces a hero's Strength to 1 in this manner, the hero is paralyzed until six turns have passed, at which time full strength is restored. If the hero's Strength is reduced to zero or less, the hero dies. The lich cannot reduce a hero's Strength two or more consecutive times with this ability, as its grasp does not have a cumulative damaging effect. However, the moment that a hero's strength returns to him, he is once again vulnerable to the grasps of enfeeblement.

Ignore Metal: The lich is able to temporarily ignore the existence of metal with its physical body (including possessions) by magically putting itself slightly out of dimensional phase. It can walk through metal objects and walls of iron as if they were not there, and metal weapons inflict no damage except for bonuses conveyed by magic. (Since Strength aids the metal's effect, the damage bonus provided by a high Strength score is also negated). Metal armor also has no effect, with only magical bonuses conveying a better Armor Class. Dexterity, however, still has its normal effect on Armor Class. Spells cast by the lich while in this state interact with metal normally, however. Magical effects created by objects of metal that are used against the lich, such as wands made of metal, also have their normal effect. The lich can maintain this state for no more rounds than it has Hit Dice, and it can use this power but once per day.

Imitation: The lich is able to harness the spell energies expended by other wizards and recreate the effect under its control. Any spell cast in the presence of the lich may be recast by the lich in the round immediately following without the expenditure of any of the lich's carried spells. For example, a 7th-level mage casts *fireball* at a lich. The lich makes its normal saving throw and suffers damage accordingly, but also captures the

magical energy, reshapes it into another *fireball* (at the 7th level of ability), and sends it back at the attacking party. The lich need not either know or carry a spell in order to imitate it. The lich must perform the imitation in the round immediately following the spell effect, or the magical energies dissipate and are lost. The lich might be able to use this power a limited number of times per day.

Improved defense: The lich may be hit only by weapons of +2 enchantment or better, or by creatures with 10 or more Hit Dice/levels or magical properties.

Improved spellcasting: The lich is able to cast double the amount of 1st- through 3rd-level spells normally available to a wizard of the lich's level of experience.

Meta-polymorph: This works as the 4th-level wizard spell polymorph self, except that the lich performs this as an ability and not a spell. If the lich takes the form of an undead creature, it also assumes the undead creature's abilities, excluding saving throws. For example, if a lich were to meta-polymorph into a wight, it would assume the wight's ability to drain levels. The single exception is that a lich can meta-polymorph into the form of a vampire, but it does not gain any of a vampire's abilities. The acquired abilities last only while the lich is changed. No matter what form the lich assumes using this ability, the form will have the lich's fiery red gaze, which the lich can conceal with the casting of a magical illusion.

Painwrack: The lich is able to project almost numbing pain through its eyes. Any living creature that makes eye contact with the lich suffers 2d10 points of damage from severe pain unless a successful save vs. spell is made.

Regeneration: The lich regenerates 5 hit points per round, regardless of circumstances or surroundings. The lich's body can even regenerate after being reduced to ashes; however, if its ashes are scattered, it takes the lich one month to regenerate completely for every 10-foot area over which the ashes are scattered. If the lich's phylactery is found and destroyed before the body can re-form, the ability to regenerate is neutralized and the lich is destroyed forever.

Skull Scry: The lich can see and hear activity through any skull. The skull must not be part of a living being or attached to a skeletal spine, nor can the skull be animated. The lich is able to see through skulls that are up to 10 times the lich's Intelligence score in miles away.

Voice of Maleficence: The lich can wear down the willpower of anyone to whom it speaks for a duration of one turn or more. Nonpsionic liches sometimes take prisoners to gain information from them using this power. The voice of maleficence puts the victim into a hypnotic trance, granting complete cooperation from the prisoner. A victim can resist the uoice of maleficence by making a saving throw vs. spell after one turn of interrogation. Failure results in a sleepy trance wherein the victim reveals any secret known. The saving throw may be rerolled every hour. For every hour the lich talks to a victim, a -1 penalty is applied to subsequent saving rolls, making it more difficult for the victim to resist as time passes.

Vortex of Evil: The lich is able, once a week, to summon any and all evil creatures and living persons of evil alignment to its side. This summons isn't overriding, but rather instills a sense of greed and curiosity that is difficult to ignore. The range of the vortex of evil is equal to the lich's Intelligence score in miles. Those within this radius are drawn to the same location of the lich, though they are not sure why. They cannot state the reason for the attraction, but if asked, they will respond with a statement similar to: "I feel a great opportunity waiting for me." The summons can be ignored if the hero makes a saving throw vs. spell.

*Lead me from the unreal to the real!
Lead me from darkness to light!
Lead me from death to immortality!*

- Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

Psychology

I was alone in my study, conducting some meditation, when I happened upon a secluded mind. I say "secluded" because I do not think it meant to be heard by someone such as me. Nevertheless, I saw what its mind generated. I looked into the eternal despair that utterly gripped it, until all it could think of was a final death where there would be no pain, where everything would finally, mercifully end.

I was moved to weep for this poor soul, but I then caught Just a glimpse of what this creature truly was and I was instantly repulsed. I had that night accidentally looked into the mind of a lich. I doubt I will ever again see such pain or despair - or evil.

- From the private journal of
Kilrinia Trynar, mentalist



This was the first description of lich psychology to cross to my desk, the first hint of its inner thoughts. I wondered if other interests of the lich - evil ceremonies, quests for power and knowledge, and so forth - were a gift or a curse. For an instant I felt pity. Fortunately, I also have found other texts that gave me a far different perspective on the matter. Be forewarned: Pity for a lich will cost you your life!

The first thing I should say about this foul creature of the undead is that no good-hearted lich exists in my land. This may seem obvious, but every lich I have encountered was completely evil, though tales tell of liches in far-off lands that are supposedly less malign. Perhaps the lich can know suffering, experience joy, and feel pain, loneliness, passion, and all emotions in between. However, at its core it is evil and wholly undeserving of any sympathy. Nevertheless, I would like to try to impart some understanding of this monster so that the lich hunter may comprehend what motivates it.

While liches may be of any alignment in other AD&D campaigns, those creatures that reside in the Ravenloft campaign are uniformly evil. They are, however, free to pursue lawful, neutral, or chaotic lifestyles.

Dealing With Other Creatures

The lich certainly possesses enough poise to manage dealings with other creatures. I am sure no being can live its entire existence without contact with any other creature, if only an enemy. (I once experienced the odd feeling that my hostile intrusion upon one lich's privacy was met with a sort of relief. This is not to say that it was glad to see me!) The lich is hardly a conversationalist, and by its general nature is an isolationist. It approaches every situation with a self-centered perspective. All of its activity is aimed at gaining information or whatever else it desires.

Such objectives might be hampered by the lich's use of social graces and turns of phrase that are generally a century or more

out of date - an eerie yet marginally amusing trait. One good way to spot a lich in disguise is to carefully watch any individual using speech older than that used by the eldest villager - particularly if a stalwart young lad is the speaker! A lich can *polymorph* itself into any shape, but its behavior can thwart the disguise. On the other hand, recall that this creature is extremely intelligent and cunning and tries to be convincing in any guise. Doubtless, a lich will take steps to learn most of the behavior patterns of any creature it impersonates. A tiny slip may be your only clue at breaking the ruse.

Dealing With Lich Hunters

I believe that the outright destruction of a lich's adversaries is a plan of last resort for this evil being. It seems to believe that there is merit in preserving other creatures - even enemies. After all, important secrets might be gained through interrogation of a captive, and servants of goodly deities might be subverted. Either outcome represents a terrible victory for the lich against the forces of good, as well as the acquisition of powerful weapons to use against all mortals.

We tracked the Hazlanic lich that called itself the Moonbane almost to the Nightmare Lands. We passed through a system of catacombs in which we would have been hopelessly lost without the keen eyes of Torenor the dwarf. At last we found the lich's lab and broke through the false ceiling, right where I guessed it would be.

Therein we found the enraged lich, guarding a large ruby with all its gruesome defenses. A bloody battle ensued. Through some apparent stroke of both bad and good luck, I was the sole survivor. With my last ounce of strength, I drove my short sword through the breast of the monster, and it collapsed to the floor in a pile of dust and bone.

Though my wracked muscles forbade me to move another inch, I drew forth a hummer from my trusty satchel and smashed the ruby. The stone exploded with a firestorm of blazing mists, and I fell, exhausted and near death.

I was torn by the deaths of my comrades, and unable to understand how I had survived the onslaught. It seemed that the lich had not used its magic to greatest effect. As soon as I was able, I hired a new termination crew and returned to the lair. As I suspected, the lab and every other trace of the lich were gone.

The whole thing had been but a ruse, but I was on to it now. I publicly declared the hunt a success and left, secretly planning to return a day later.

Sure enough, the next day, the lich had slipped back.

- From the private journal of Dr. Van Richten

Despite its best-laid plans and careful measures, the machinations of the lich (and even its main lair) are sometimes discovered. In these situations, I have found that the lich often makes an attempt to trick its enemies into believing that it has left the area.

Rather than make a display of outright defiance, it seems that it is of paramount importance to the lich to convince the hunters that they have succeeded in their task. The lich usually destroys everyone in the hunting party but one. (In three separate cases of this sort, I was the sole survivor.) It then depends on the surviving member to carry away the news that the lich has been killed. Once that is done, the undead wizard returns to its dark designs in peace, comfortable in the knowledge that no more living creatures will come after it. A crafty lich may even scale down its operations in the area for a period of years, perhaps for one or two generations of the creatures living in the area, to convince the hunters of their success. After all, what are fifty or a hundred years to such a creature, except as time to research an ultrapowerful spell?

Virtual Immortality

A lich was once a mortal. Somewhere at the core of the lich is a mortal mind, suddenly made immortal though its living flesh is now insensible and rotting. Being an undead master of magic complicates matters, making a stable mind rather difficult to come by in a lich - at least during the early years of its existence.

I noted in my guide to vampires that newly created vampires go through several psychological stages, from elation to apathy. I believe that liches experience a similar rush of power at the realization of a successful transformation, but I do not

think that liches ever feel the vampires' weariness with the passing of eons. While the intensely magical nature of liches remove them from accepted standards of sanity and insanity, no evidence suggests that the strain of immortality has any deleterious effects on them in the long run. Having entered into extensive discourse with divers wizards, priests, sages, and mystic philosophers, I have drawn the following conclusions from my observations of a number of liches.

Each lich must undergo a transformation of its mind - the higher mind - in addition to the physical and mystical changes. It must grasp the ramifications of eternal life so that it can function effectively in its new form. Immortality can make one drunk with carelessness, but the lich must remain in control of its emotions and intellect, lest it put itself in unnecessary danger.

Aspects of life upon which mortals depend are daily rituals of maintenance. We sleep, eat, and perform many duties that divide our days into sections in which we can more closely devote our energies. I discipline myself with a reward system - if there I must perform a duty of which I am not particularly fond, give myself a reward once the duty is performed.

Now, imagine having nothing to add variety to your day other than the countless conjurations of spell research. Imagine not having to sleep or eat. When night comes, it has no effect upon you. You need no light to see, nor a moon to sleep under. You do not eat, so your senses of taste and smell would be worthless if they were not already gone with your mortality. Lacking skin, you cannot feel things as do mortals. And, as I have previously speculated, vision (and probably hearing as well) grants no more beauty to a lich's senses than a wall would to a bat. All your senses are gone, so you have nothing stimulating to look forward to at the end of the day - no ale after a long journey, no fresh meat after a good hunt, no scent of your home as you enter it, no sweet caress of a child or lover to comfort you. Can power or evil wash away the appreciation of these things?

Time loses meaning. Each day becomes the same, with the concept of time a vague memory. All that is for you is only your own self. You may monitor the outside world, sometimes very closely, but it is easy to lose track of what progresses outside your lair when you neglect to peer outside a window for a decade, favoring instead to research a newfound text or create a particular amalgamation. What if you sat down to read a book, then looked up from it a generation later, when no one was left alive to recognize, no peers with which to debate a fine point?

Perhaps the lich undergoes a psychological ordeal similar to that of the vampire, when boredom (for lack of a better word) erodes its will to exist. Mages in all likelihood undergo the transformation to lichdom in haste after discovering the secret, but they may pay the price in personal anguish for many years.

Nevertheless, they all seem to recover. Some aspect of the lich's mind is able to undergo those torments and weather them out. It may take a few months or a century - but all liches eventually become accustomed to their existence and function comfortably.

It may also be that some - perhaps even most - liches despair and die, fade away, or otherwise terminate their existence as some vampires do. If so, this is a blessing to the living as well as a mercy to the lich. How many more liches would plague the world otherwise?

What Goal, Then?

What, then, does the lich do with the time it has? What time-consuming diversions stir its black heart? What goals that the lich undertakes during the early part of its existence are likely determined by its interests previous to its transformation from a living creature?

Generally, a mage who undergoes the transformation is already well established with riches, a well-secured lair, a library, and a laboratory in which to carry out its arcane rituals. For this lich, there remains the quest for rare spell materials. Indeed, the pursuit of magical components may be a lich's first order of business because it presents a familiar activity in which to engage while the freshly altered monster adjusts to its new form. (Take note: Sometimes the best way to find a lich is to find that which it seeks!) Once its lair is built and stocked, the lich will surely turn to the next logical pursuit: power. Being an undead master of magic is of little meaning if the power is not exercised. To this end, the lich can undertake any number of efforts designed to test and expand its power base.

One common method of bolstering one's authority is to attempt to gain control of a kingdom by planting a lich-controlled king upon a throne. But this sort of power may be fleeting to the lich, as the king and his subjects die too quickly to provide

lasting entertainment or any use beyond the experimental. Such a lich must eventually find a new arena to exercise its prerogative, and that means finding whole new concepts of power and control-and this means exploration into other realms of reality, beyond human ken.

I have heard a quaint phrase that goes "There's a whole world out there." A lich with the knowledge and ability to leave our world and travel to undreamed-of realms of existence has a vast arena of experiences from which to choose. Perhaps a lich may undertake the conquest of a small realm that is generally ignored by other world-traveling mages. This would certainly present much stimulation and opportunity for evil. The planning and organization alone could take decades, the execution centuries.

Among all of these plans is, of course, the quest for higher magic. This quest, as I have stated, is a never-ending, all-pervading characteristic of the lich's existence. There is always more magic to command, secrets to learn, and artifacts to find or create. The lich is driven to find the answers - sometimes for its own sake, other times as a means to more power. Always, however, it is for the cause of evil.

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Malygris sat unbowed and upright, his black and tattered fingers clutching the ivory chair arms as of yore, and his empty orbits glowering still at the eastern window. His is face was little more than a bearded skull; and his blackening brow was like worm pierced ebony.

- Clark Ashton Smith
"The Death of Malygris"

The Lair

The lich takes enormous care to secure its domicile from the prying eyes and attentions of other creatures. Even its most trusted minions are ignorant of the true nature and plan of a lich's lair. It spends many years planning and constructing a perfect stronghold from which to operate. Given enough time and resources, both of which the lich has in abundance, it will surely construct an impregnable fortress.

You fools! You hurl yourselves into the void without the slightest notion of who or what awaits you.

- Kanar-Ri of the Ebon Eye



Where They Lair

Of paramount importance to the lich is its own security. Before any other factor is considered, the lich will seek a locale that is defended by natural barriers or allows for easy construction of superior defenses. Once that prerequisite is satisfied, two schools of thought govern the choice of lair: a need for privacy vs. a quest for political power.

Liches who crave privacy enjoy locales that are in a hostile environment. The more that mortals dislike a place, the more favorably it is viewed by liches. Cold bogs, frigid wastes, burning deserts, deep sea floors, and the highest peaks are popular places for liches to settle.

Since it likely began as a mage, a lich usually chooses as its first domicile a tower or similar construct. This soon proves inadequate, however, as a tower is vulnerable to attack. The lich might then seek an area that is difficult to reach by any means, serving as an intermediary home until the lich is established and powerful enough to begin construction of a more elaborate haven. Ruins are popular, as they already contain foundations and raw materials necessary for additional construction. In addition, a ruined castle (for example) will almost always have a great deal of dead buried nearby. These serve as a pool of labor upon which the lich draws to create its lair.

However, no matter how far removed or impenetrable the lich's lair, it must remain at least partially accessible. Servants, living or dead, must come and go. Also, there is a strategy among both liches and mortals to take and keep hostages. In most situations, the hostage-taker must allow verification that the hostage is still alive, so the lich's lair must be at least partially accessible to mortals. Therein lies the hope of all lich hunters: There must be a way into the lair.

If the lich seeks to establish itself as a political entity, it is virtually required to pick a well-known location to facilitate relations with the local mortal authorities. (Such a lich recognizes the mortal's need to associate a place with a leader and his power.) This may compromise privacy and present the lich as an inviting target, but the creature will assuredly take steps to

remain secure against all attacks, so the lich will gain respect as it gains power. A lich with a gift for illusion might build an empire right under the noses of its most adamant enemies. If my theory about Lord Azalin is true, that he is a lich, this would certainly be the case for him.

Magic Within the Lair

I have dreamed many nights of what a lich must guard in the deepest recesses of its lair. Such treasures might be known to no more than one person in ten generations. A lich has dealt with magic during all of its existence, even when it was mortal. Considering the ultrapowerful wizard's capacity to enchant, the number of magical wares contained within the lich's private stores must be staggering. A king's treasure vault might not compare to the magical richness and variety of a lich's wealth! The lich treats magical items as we mortals treat tools. A wand that delivers lightning from its tip would be to a lich as a writing implement to a scholar—a common thing taken for granted.

I am told by many mages that the enchantment of common objects is a tedious, exhausting practice. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that a lich would rather steal a magical item than make it. I have confirmed this idea by luring a lich out of its lair with the rumor of a powerful magical item. (The lich made off with nothing more than a common twig; that small coup undeservedly enhanced my reputation among my cohorts, but it also earned me a blood vendetta from the lich.)

The methods by which a lich will gain what it desires are invariably circumstantial. The lich will always study and deduce the most efficient approach to the theft. Anything from extreme subtlety and quiet deception to a bold, horrific, and lightning-quick assault might occur. Only one thing is certain: If a lich desires something, it will not cease in its efforts to acquire it. It doggedly pursues anything it feels is necessary to its arcane practices.

Based on the aforementioned opinion regarding the enchantment of common items, I believe that the lich spends most of its efforts in the creation of strange and dire artifacts. Centuries of research, investigation, and exploration by a lich yield enchantments that even the most powerful living mages will never comprehend. Who knows what manner of arcane object one might find within the lair: conch shells that spew sheets of lightning when blown, or cauldrons that bubble with pitch-black liquids, seething with a life and evil of their own?

Perhaps the only comforting thought we mortals may entertain is that the lich rarely ventures outside its lair with the most powerful artifacts it possesses. Their terrible functions hopefully will remain locked away with the lich, to be discovered and experienced only by the courageous few who hunt that cursed creature of darkness.

When creating a lich's lair, the Dungeon Master is encouraged to manufacture bizarre and terrible devices of magical destruction. Such items should reflect the individual personality of the lich, and most of them should not be usable by anyone but the lich under any circumstances, except as cursed items, in order to preserve game balance.

It was in the deepest pit beneath the mountain that we came upon the heart-loved treasure of the lich called Phantom's Bane - we found its library. Here was a prize beyond the value of all the gold in Darken, beyond the price of life and death, beyond the worth of all the magic that Phantom's Bane had ever created or wielded! Row after row, shelf upon shelf, stack against stack, the volumes climbed the walls to the ceiling and stretched into a seeming eternity of darkness beyond.

Standing in the center of the room was Phantom's Bane itself! The monster regarded us with a mixture of impatience and amusement, as if we were a band of noisy children disturbing its private study.

"Well met, my intelligent little gadflies," said the lich in a whisper that issued from within our heads. "You have slipped through my screen in your efforts to taste of my sweets, and now I shall be forced to swat you dead. "

"Blast him!" shouted Geddar Ironheart to the mage Shauten. I recall thinking it odd that a dwarf would call for the use of magic, but Shauten stood and did nothing. Shauten did nothing at all.

Then I understood. It was not any spell of Phantom's Bane that stayed the wizard's hand. It was the prospect of destroying the accumulated knowledge of a millennium with the wane of a band and the release of a fireball. The lich understood, too, and it laughed aloud.

The Library

Has any creature in the universe not aspired to immortality? Some seek it through their children, others through works of artistic or academic achievement, but a few seek to live beyond the bounds of natural life through most unnatural means. In this ambition - to live forever - we certainly may identify with the lich.

Yet physical immortality is so far removed from personal mortal experience that it represents little more than a dream's goal, an end in itself. For the lich, however, immortality is merely a means to an end, and that end is power - specifically, the power of knowledge. It follows that the lich's greatest treasure of all is its library.

The span of subjects that undoubtedly fill the shelves of a lich's library would be exhaustive. As a scholar, I could spend hours or even days merely sifting through the titles found upon those shelves, and I would salivate in jealous desire as I deliberated. Of course, central to a lich's library will be the tomes filled with lists of rare and exotic components and processes needed to perform the rituals of spellcasting, but countless other subjects might demand the undead wizard's time and study. Besides, even a lich has intellectual pursuits other than the study of magical artifacts. (There is no law stating that a lich may not have an appreciation of art or literature.) To this end, the lich keeps a book collection the likes of which few mortals have ever laid eyes upon. The lich has literally all the time in the world to study any subject, from the construction of a trap that will confound a master thief to the preparation of a gourmet feast laced with deadly yet delicious spices.

The masterpiece of the lich's library, of course, is its spell book. Since the lich is subject to the mortal restrictions of spellcasting, it must scribe its spells in a tome of some sort. There cannot be a more closely guarded item within the entire lich complex. I feel confident that no more than two mortals of our lands have viewed a lich's tome of spells and lived.

Deception Within the Lair

We broke through the final block of stone just before the moon sank below the horizon. Ahead of us was a long, smooth, circular tunnel that twisted and turned in many directions. We eventually followed it to a chamber where we discovered a most unusual laboratory. There was a place for alchemical studies, as well as facilities for astrology, magic, and a host of other philosophies that I hardly understood.

Shortly after this discovery, we were set upon by some sort of mystical ghastr that seemed to leech energy from us. With the aid of our priest, we were able to defeat it, but this was only a sample of the type of minions that the lich had placed in guard of its lair.

We had to withdraw and return a total of five times before we were confident that all of the minions were defeated. We searched the lair for three months. During that time, we found close to five score dead-end tunnels, false doors, and empty chambers. Our search culminated in the discovery of a room secreted in a pocket of space hollowed out of the mountain itself. Sorcery was responsible for it, and it was by sorcery alone that we discovered it. By the time we tunneled to the room, the lich had long since departed, leaving behind a magical trinket as bait for us.

Undoubtedly, the lich still resides somewhere in the mountain, secluded in some deep, secret lair that we will never see. It eluded us masterfully, taking us down so many false paths, forcing us to waste so much time, that the lich could have prepared many an elaborate trap for us in the meanwhile.

I can only guess at why we were not killed, one by one. I believe it was so we could live knowing we were defeated so completely by the lich. It is still active, still spinning its terrible political webs, and still laughing at the mere mortals who like toddlers fumbled in the dark for it.

- From the notes of Hachein Pirol, scholar

A lich's library is the ideal place for adventuring parties to uncover clues that will take them on extraordinary quests or to find vital information that will solve a long-standing mystery. The casting of a *legend lore* spell

allows heroes to locate the book wherein relevant information lies, but the Dungeon Master is always free to mislead the party in whatever way best serves the campaign. Note that the casting of the spell requires 1d4 turns - plenty of time for the party to be discovered.

Most liches would rather destroy their book collections than let a group of "mere mortals" comb through them. Some liches may even have duplicated their libraries for just such an emergency.

As the account of Hatchein Pirol attests, the lich practices extensive deception within its lair. Whole complexes within complexes are built to lure intruders to their deaths, lead them on futile chases, and even fool them into thinking they have accomplished their objectives.

This deception is carried as far as the lich can take it. A lich will construct duplicates of nearly everything it owns, preparing copies of texts, objects, rooms, chests - everything. It will even enchant objects to trigger magic-seeking spells and devices. A group of mortals will seldom find the true objective, the lich's inner sanctum, without finding multiple fraudulent chambers in the interim.

There is really no way of discerning which chamber is the true sanctum, for each chamber may be guarded in some manner by a creature that closely - or exactly - resembles the lich. Who would not believe that after many trials of courage, mettle, and magic, the discovery of a hidden and guarded chamber is not the true sanctum, especially when a lich enters the chamber and lays waste to half the party in a foul effort to expel them from the room? Such trickery has been a double disappointment to many who have labored long and dangerously to destroy the monster.

Take extreme care. The only way to be absolutely sure of success is to reduce the entire lair complex to dust then search again. Only intensive excavation will provide confirmation, and maybe not even then.

Guards of the Lair

For the true master of evil, an efficient method of preventing heroes from tampering with one's dungeon is to dispatch servants to kill trespassers. No matter how extensive the magical capabilities of the lich, this additional ring of defense must be placed, for if left to their own devices, most lich hunters will eventually defeat any physical or magical traps that prevent their entrance.

To this end, the lich usually maintains a heavy guard of undead soldiers whose sole purpose is to keep watch over the lich's surroundings. Therefore, the reader must understand that in order to face a lich, one must first face its army of minions. For most hunters, this means wasting the precious power and magic needed to defeat a lich by fighting only its subordinates. Although the master possesses the might to destroy a mortal army by itself, the lich will prefer to face even a few hunters after they have been drained of strength and spells. Understand this, lich hunters, before you step boldly forth to vanquish this foe!

Since they are the easiest to control, the most frequently used guards are animated skeletons. These minions are used to patrol the outer, less secure areas of the lair, as they are easily turned by priests and paladins.

Deeper, more secured sections of the lair require minions that are more difficult for priests and other adventurers to deal with. In these sensitive sectors, the lich will typically employ wights, wraiths, mummies, spectres, and ghosts, and even more potent undead minions (see Chapter Seven).

It should be noted that the lich may allocate its guards in a deceptive manner, deluding the mortals into thinking they have discovered a vital area of the lair. As always, the Dungeon Master is encouraged to be cunning.

*Double, double toil and trouble;
 Fire burn and cauldron bubble.
 Fillet of a fenny snake,
 In the cauldron boil and bake.
 Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
 Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
 Adder's fork, and blind-worms sting,
 Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing,
 For a charm of powerful trouble,
 Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.
 Drouble, double toil and trouble;
 Fire burn and cauldron bubble.*

- William Shakespeare
 Macbeth

Lich Magic

The lich is an undead thing. Its body is a twisted mockery of what it was in life, and its very spirit is something that can even change bodies, having nothing of worth to call its own except its hard, heartless receptacle, the phylactery. The lich's life is an alien form of existence, one against which every mortal heart should naturally rebel.

One thing, and one thing alone, drives a mage to accept this state. One thing persuades a living person to consign himself to an eternally torturous existence: *magic*. Magic lures the lich, and magic is the fruit it eats. Worst of all, the appetite of the lich for magic is insatiable.

"Mages aspire to greatness through their magic. Some seek personal fame and fortune, or perhaps greater understanding of the unseen world around us. Others seek positions with royalty as advisors, enforcers, or even war wizards.

"Then there are others who seek to gain even greater stature. 'Stature' as they would see it, 'inescapable doom' as we would view it. For these mages seek to become the ultimate wielders of magical power - they seek to become liches.

"It means great power, yes, but it also signifies eternal damnation as a walking corpse. The lich is cursed to Hue forever in torment, with brittle skin, rotten flesh, and crumbling bones that serve as a vessel for a spirit bereft of the passions and concerns it had when it was a living thing.

"Nothing can save the lich - there is nothing it can ever do to repent or avoid the consequences of its power-hungry fever All liches are doomed not to die, but to live forever in a hell of their own creation!"

- From a letter by Father Ligutious to Dr. Van Richten



Necromancy

The most common magical discipline for a lich is, unsurprisingly, necromancy - "death magic." Spells that deal with death are as much a part of the lich's existence as water is to a fish.

I am a scholar and a doctor, not a mage. Therefore, I cannot convey the whole picture where necromantic spells are concerned. I fear that all I can provide to you is a mere outsider's sampling of what evil lurks within the school of the necromantic arts. However, I have been able to enlist the assistance of a few mages who are sympathetic to my cause of alerting the unsuspecting to the dangers of lichdom, and who would further educate those who wish to oppose the lich's influences. What follows is a compilation of several discussions held in secret rooms, away from prying ears, and information from texts that more than one person risked his life to provide.

Great evil thrives here, in this land of mine, and it flourishes even as you read this. Take this information and use it to fight the lich at every opportunity!

I turned the corner and came upon a figure leaning over one of our crystal balls. It surprised me, as the library was closed for the night in celebration of a local festival. Even though I approached the figure from behind, it sat up abruptly; I must have made some noise to alert it to my presence. I called to it, as I did not recognize the person as any of my students.

What turned in answer nearly frightened me to death. It was wearing a fine cloak, though a bit old, so I was completely unprepared for the dry, tight skin, and the empty black eye sockets which seemed to draw in the darkness around them, except for two crimson points of light that served as eyes. I recognized it immediately as a lich and raised my hands to cast a warding spell. However, it employed some device and faded from view before I could complete my incantation, most likely returning from whence it came.

I inspected the crystal ball upon which the lich had been gazing and noticed that several modifications had been made to it, particularly on the enchanted lattice of the base that supported the ball. I then attempted to use the ball, but was unable to do so. We have since studied the ball and its base thoroughly, but we cannot discern the true extent or purpose of the lich's work.

- From the private journal of Mirinalithiar

A lich performs in all respects as a specialist wizard of the school of Necromancy, with the following exceptions: It suffers no penalties when learning spells from other schools, and it is not prohibited from employing spells of the opposite school (Illusion/Phantasm). On the contrary, a lich is quite adept at casting illusory magic.

The Importance of Research

As much as the lich might desire it, the undead wizard is unable to learn the secrets of magic by any quick method, except for certain highly dangerous rituals that, even if successfully realized, might not reveal the specific secrets desired. Just as living mages do, the lich must undertake extensive and far-reaching studies into rare, usually unique texts in order to learn more of the mystic arts.

I have postulated that the lich perpetuates its existence solely for the purpose of augmenting its magical prowess. It comes as no surprise, then, that it must continually develop its arcane abilities in order to survive. Hence, research is more than an intellectual pursuit; learning is life itself to the lich. Without study, the lich is unable to survive, let alone reach its potential. There is not a single lich in existence that is not seeking some crucial text with answers for which mortals do not even know the questions.

The previous passage, from the journal of Mirinalithiar, relates one method of acquiring knowledge that liches occasionally use. At times, even the most extensively appointed lich must visit public or semiprivate collections of writings, such as those of a college library or nobleman's book pile. In such cases, the lich will (as surreptitiously as possible) use its magic to enter the place where the articles are kept. This generally means coming during the night or otherwise when the lich is certain to be alone. The lich will very rarely, if ever, damage or remove those articles of research, so the owners are not often aware that there has been any tampering or covert use of their facilities.

On the other hand, a lich that operates in an environment where no opposition exists will not hesitate to take what it desires, additionally destroying as many magical artifacts, tomes, and sources of information as possible to keep others ignorant of

the ways of magic.

No doubt the perceptive reader has already discerned the importance of this information. In either case, the lich is compelled for its own sake to visit repositories of arcane knowledge. When seeking to destroy a lich, the hunter is much safer if he never enters the lair of his prey. Better by far is it to lure the quarry into a trap. All one needs is the right bait.

Seek the lich in places of learning, when mortals have gone for the night. Place the rarest of tomes in a defensible position and prepare your deadliest traps. Let fly the rumor of strange and powerful texts, and wait in ambush with all the might you can muster. With a stroke of luck, the prey may come to you!

Power Rituals

When considering specific subjects the lich is most likely to study, we must first consider what a particular lich desires most from magic. For example, the lich's proficiency in necromantic magic may be directly attributable to the fact that the lich is (technically) dead. Its unliving existence provides a powerful incentive to master the ways of death and to manipulate all things dead. Of course, Necromancy is among the most potent schools of magic, and that is quite appealing to the lich as well.

Potency is the key, I think. The mage of doom has embraced an unnatural existence for the sake of power; perhaps it has also accepted living death in order to practice magic so powerful that it would kill any mortal mage. Such was the quality of magic to which Harmon Ruscheider, whom I introduced in Chapter One, was a witness. I cannot say whether he came to the same conclusion as I - that the lich that destroyed itself by accident was practicing a rite that ultimately annihilated it. If such magic is not imperative to the monster's well being, it must at least be irresistible to its psychology.

The account below, dictated to me by Dr. Ruscheider in a lucid moment on that last night of his nightmarish life, illustrates my point.

"I was transported, in my cage, to a point where I might look upon the lich's activities from a great distance, using a magical device it had given me for this express purpose.

"As I viewed the lich through the device, which somehow afforded me the ability to hear what watched as well, it called out unusual words and gesticulated in a most harsh, abrupt manner, working its way from point to point around a circle of bones. This continued for some time-perhaps three or four hours-when suddenly the sky above the lich blazed with light. A large patch of the sky about the same dimension as the lich's circle of bones became agitated and illuminated in its own magical tempest. The chaos mounted with alarming speed while the lich stepped to the center of the circle.

"Just as suddenly, the lich raised its arms toward the sky and was immediately struck by a tremendous bolt of lightning whose accompanying thunder deafened me to my own scream! I had the luck to have blinked just as the flash exploded over the mountain peaks, else I would have been blinded permanently. Even as the light-burst penetrated my eyelids and forced me to drop the spy-piece to clutch at my face, a wave of heat washed over my body and threw me against the back of my cage. Mercifully, I fled consciousness.

"Only the gods know how much head I came to a groggy awareness. It was almost dawn, and a wound on my head was bleeding in a slow trickle, fortunately slowed because of the alpine cold. After a brief self-search for broken bones and other injuries, I was able to retrieve the seeing device and look for my captor.

"I discovered that the lich had been forced into a shapeless heap upon the ground. The circle of bones was gone, as was a good part of the mountain peak and everything upon it. I was sure the lich had gone too far and obliterated itself, and I rejoiced.

"Then, to my lasting horror, the lich arose! Its back was to me, but I could clearly make out the brilliancy of its eyes, bathing the entire peak in a bloodred wash of light.

"It turned toward me slowly, as if it were not quite sure of its footing after such an explosive experience. Perhaps I was fooling myself, but the monster seemed to be as exhausted as it was invigorated. Had I not felt another wave of power when it looked upon me - a wave as intense as that which had assaulted me previously - I would have been certain that the lich would expire upon the spot.

"I know not how it could see me at that extreme distance, but when its head was toward me it raised its death-cloaked hand in my direction and smiled with a gruesome, vainglorious grin. "

Ruscheider's story suggests that there are occasions when a lich needs to channel a great deal of power through its body, for a significant spell or ritual. To address this issue, I have coined the phrase *power ritual*. I am given to understand that a living mage's only option for gaining additional power from an outside source is to employ magical devices designed to amplify specific spells or energies. However, a lich apparently is able to draw upon unknown energy sources, perhaps from the Negative Material Plane itself, to amplify its powers.

If the lich's remarks to Ruscheider following that exhibition are to be trusted, the power ritual is one that requires only components that are used in common rituals and alchemical projects. What is important is the time and location of the ritual. The lich must find a place that is high above the ground - the higher, the better, at a location that (ideally) was once used for worship. This place must also have relatively smooth ground covered with vegetation. The best site has been blessed or cursed by a priest at one time in the past. The current use of the land is not important, although I'm sure that a lich would take great delight in destroying a religious structure to clear an area for the ritual.

Once the lich has secured an appropriate area, it rings the ground with bones that serve as some sort of circle of power. This circle must be in place for a fortnight. During this time, the lich casts an assortment of spells each day and night when the moon reaches its apex, as it waxes from new to full phase. This apparently prepares the ritual area for the influx of power and serves to harness the power of the blessing or curse that permeates the site.

If the ritual is performed during a key astronomical event, the resulting power surge is spectacular. Ruscheider's captor referred specifically to an event that I have never witnessed: a point when the light of the moon is blotted from the sky and the moon itself becomes an eerie, dim, orange ball. The event is called a lunar eclipse, and it produces - or releases - certain mystical energies that apparently generate a particularly powerful surge.

After the ritual is performed, the lich is infused with staggering amounts of power. Fortunately for us mortals, the power begins to deplete instantly - a lich cannot store this power once it accepts it. This power can be used for a variety of tasks, including the casting of spells and rites. Ruscheider's keeper told him that it could immediately cast far-reaching spells to whisk it away to planes, dimensions, and worlds so far away and fantastic that few mortals can even conceive of such bizarre, eldritch places. Several mages I consulted have suggested that such a ritual might also result in temporary physical invulnerability, keenly raised awareness to the point of godlike omniscience, and the ability to carry more spells than a wizard could cast, back to back, in an entire day! Those same mages were quick to point out the dangers of such a ritual. An extended period of unconsciousness was the least of the dire possibilities.

Planar travel, apparently, was the intent of Ruscheider's jailer, but he believed that the attempts were completely unsuccessful. The lich left the doctor in his cell to perform these feats, only to return shortly and, in a tantrum, torment him to the brink of insanity.

One month later, the lich repeated its power ritual, again allowing Ruscheider to watch, and achieved an even greater reaction from the elements. Prepared for the firestorm this time, Ruscheider lay low until the blast had passed over him. When the smoke cleared from the peak, no trace of the lich remained. Shortly thereafter, the prisoner escaped his cage, which had been damaged by the blast, and made his way to my doorstep.

Did the lich achieve its objective? I think not; at least not in the sense that it expected. I am confident that the monster blew itself to dusty particles. So much the better for us all!

Dungeon Masters are encouraged to create their own power rituals for liches. Here are some guidelines.

Optimum results of a power ritual occur at altitudes exceeding 5,000 feet. For every 1,000 feet below 5,000 (beginning at 4,999 feet), the possibility of any effects occurring - positive or negative - is reduced by 25%. (The ritual is ineffective at 1,999 feet or less.)

The Ravenloft environment often twists and negates the power of spells and magical items. Lich magic, no matter how powerful, cannot overcome this.

The circle of bones is vital to the success of the ritual. It defines the area in which the power is encapsulated and concentrated. The circle must be exactly 100 feet in diameter. Every living thing within the boundaries will be absorbed when the ritual is completed (no saving throws allowed). If there is the slightest error in the lich's measurements, the resulting explosion inflicts 20d10 points of damage upon everything within a 1 - mile radius of the circle (save vs. spell for half damage).

Eight spells must be cast in rapid succession each night, one at each of the eight compass points in the circle of bones, beginning when the moon reaches its apex in the sky. (In realms where no moon exists, the ritual must begin at the exact same time each night.) This ritual begins when the moon is new and continues until it reaches full phase, including the first two nights of the full moon, for sixteen ritual castings. Each night the castings begin at the next compass point from whence the ritual began the night before, resulting in two castings of each spell at each point over the sixteen rituals. Failure to strictly adhere to the ritual results in a 25% chance of a power ritual malfunction and the explosion described above. The spells to be cast are: *wind wall*, *contact other plane*, *distance distortion*, *guard and wards*, *legend lore*, *wildzone* (Tome of Magic), *binding*, *wish*, and *stabilize* (Tome of Magic). On the third night of the full moon, the lich stands at the center of the circle, casts *chain contingency* and *wildfire* (both from Tome of Magic), and the power ritual is initiated.

When a lich completes a power ritual, the Dungeon Master should roll the percentile dice. There is a base 75% chance (modified as above) that the ritual has been a complete success, and the lich (the Dungeon Master) chooses one of the enhancements suggested below, or the Dungeon Master is free to create a different one. Bear in mind that the lich is already an extremely powerful creature, and that excessively potent powers may put it beyond the scope of most parties.

Titanic Power Increase: The lich is granted an influx of power that will persist for a period of 1d20 hours. During that time, any spells cast by the lich will have triple the normal effect. This includes range, duration, damage, and area of effect where applicable.

Personal Mystical Shield: The lich acquires a mystical, invisible aura that completely protects it from all physical harm for 1d20 days. The lich cannot be physically touched by any object, magical or nonmagical, while the aura exists. Exceptions are weapons with bonuses vs. undead, weapons with bonuses vs. enchanted creatures, and weapons with a +4 or greater magical bonus.

Accelerated Learning: The lich's capacity to conduct research is greatly multiplied, enabling it to study arcane texts without a break over a period of one month and gain sufficient experience to raise it to the next Hit Die or level. During the month of study, the lich cannot be interrupted for more than one turn, cumulative, or the attempt is wasted.

Spell Knowledge: The lich is permanently able to instantly learn any spell that it finds, then scribe it into its spell book without the need of casting a spell. In effect, the lich develops a photographic magical memory. The new spells are not magically put into the lich's mind; it must first amass the proper information from other texts, then scribe the spells.

If the result of the percentile roll indicates failure for the power ritual, the ritual has broken down. In this case, the Dungeon Master can roll on the table below or make up a different failed ritual effect.

Table 2: Power Ritual Failure Results

1d10 Ritual Effect

1-3	Coma
4-5	Power depletion
6-7	Extended weakness
8-9	Death
10	Complete disintegration

Coma: The lich falls into a coma, on the site of the power ritual, that lasts for 1d20 days. Once the coma passes, the lich suffers no ill effects.

Power Depletion: For 1d20 days, all activities the lich undertakes are less effective, determined by rolling

percentile dice and assigning the resulting chance to spellcasting and all other actions. Furthermore, all physical and mental abilities (Armor Class, Hit Dice, morale, and the like) temporarily function at the percentage level of the roll. Psionic talents are unusable during this period as well.

Extended Weakness: The lich cannot employ any spell higher than 6th level for 1d20 days. Furthermore, the lich always moves last in combat and can attack only during every other round. Finally, it can regain hit points only through magical means.

Death: The lich dies, and its life essence returns to its phylactery.

Complete Disintegration: The lich is disintegrated and its phylactery shatters. This is a permanent state from which the lich can never recover. The body of the lich is reduced to fine powder that is extremely flammable (functions as smoke powder).

Lich Spells and Magical Items

A lich corrupts spells that living mages use for less nefarious purposes. I am told it is possible for a mage to study necromancy or, at the minimum, learn a handful of spells from that school without subscribing to evil temptation, for some of these spells are not in themselves instruments of torment or evil. A lich, however, takes spells that by their nature are fairly benign, then imparts its own tormented psychology upon them, warping the effects to produce black incantations that no one should utter! Through means I thoroughly do not understand, the lich most often expands upon existing frameworks to achieve desired effects, rather than Grafting spells of its own. A majority of its time, then, must be spent in researching preexisting magical lore. This does not deny the lich access to a certain twisted creativity. I personally have disposed of a number of trinkets created by a few liches - items of terrible power and dire consequences, such as rings that steal memories or false body parts that graft themselves to unwary finders, forever altering and disfiguring them. A lich has a private collection of magical items that product as many effects as there are stars. Should any such bauble fall into the hands of the reader, he would be wise to destroy it immediately, regardless of the powers it may offer!

A complete list of lich-enhanced spells and their descriptions is in the Dungeon Master Appendix at the end of this section. Also included are a number of new spells and items created especially for the lich in the Ravenloft campaign. If the Dungeon Master can create specialty items specific to a lich or campaign, so much the better, but heroes should not be allowed to acquire and keep them in general.

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

- Edmund Burke

Keys to a Successful Hunt

*And the monster comes out, out,
And the bodies come up, up,
And evil goes forth, forth,
And eyes glow brighter, brighter,
Until no one stands mightier, mightier.*

- "The Magic Man"
(Darkon children's poem)



As the following statement from my scout Markil illustrates, distinctive characteristics may alert you to a lich's presence or influence.

"I'm lyin' on the ground, recouerin' from a few scrapes, when our camp is attacked by a bunch of skeletons. What makes these stiffs so alarmin' to me is the small red points of light in their eye sockets, which Dr. Van Richten had mentioned. Luckily, we're on our guard and to arms before they can penetrate camp. The fight's pitched, but not too much; we're pretty handy at dustin' stiffs of all kinds.

"Durin' the scuffle, Belinderissa decapitates one of the skeletons and its head rolls near me, I pick it up and look into the eyes, to check out those mysterious red flames. I'm starin' right into the eyeholes of the thing, when all of a sudden the fire in those sockets staarts to burn right into me! I mean, all of a sudden I'm dunked into a terror so mind-numbing, I nearly black out!

"So I heave the skull away from me, but the time I stared into those eyes is a lot longer than I remember - and all that time I'm walkin' punch-drunk-like through a rush of brain-crushin' images I can't control. Next thing I know, the battle is over. My head finally clears, and I look at my companions.

"The llich is behind this attack, ' I tell Van Richten. 'We got to be real close!'"

These lands hold so many evil powers of so many varieties, and each with such different goals, it's nearly impossible to explain all the events that unfold around us. However, when one is on the hunt for a specific monster, it is possible to identify telltale patterns - especially as you draw near to your quarry.

Using Minions to Your Advantage

It must be remembered that a lich rarely acts on its own behalf in matters of defense. A lich is the general who formulates the master plans from the rear lines. Its undead soldiers hold the front, capture prizes, and kill (or kidnap) the unsuspecting enemy during the night.

A key to recognizing a lich, then, is to understand how it uses its minions, and to recognize a lich minion when you see it. As Markil's example points out, it is possible to spot a lich minion by its unusual traits. Markil had battled many animated skeletons before - indeed, as undead minions, skeletons are common. But Markil, sharp lad, immediately noted their eyes. (I, too, was recuperating when the skeletons attacked, but remained too weak to participate in the skirmish.)

The eyes of many undead glow with eerie power, but I hypothesize that the eyes of lich minions glow with an intensity that exactly matches that of their master. I have not proved it, but I suspect that liches' eyes glow in a singular manner that is as identifiable as a fingerprint. I had imparted this suspicion to my hunting party, and Markil attempted to verify the origins of these skeletons. Unfortunately, he was unprepared for the consequences; we were fortunate not to have lost him.

Let Markil's lesson be one to all: If you see something that is unusual, point it out to your comrades! Any information can be useful - even essential - in identifying the master of an undead creature, and keeping suspicions to one's self may deny allies the opportunity to save their lives.

Do not be too quick to scrutinize what you suspect or discover, for the lich quickly makes corpses of the impetuous! For example, as Markil's report also attests, peering into the eyes of a lich minion may result in an attack of ghastly mesmerism that plays havoc with one's senses and attachment to reality. The effects of this attack vary from mild dizziness in one instance to requiring immediate assistance in another. I am uncertain as to how to wholly avoid such contact in combat.

The lich is quite able to enforce its will upon even highly intelligent forms of undead, which leads me to another point of consideration: A lich might actually use a system of organization not unlike modern armies, with subordinate commanders leading individual groups. Thus, if an important undead minion is destroyed by undead hunters, the lich might not be able to control its lesser forces. Depending upon the situation, attacks might be directed at that particular undead in the hope of disrupting the lich's control over many other minions.

Lich minions are treated as creatures with a gaze attack; the rules for such combat are found in the *Dungeon Master Guide*. Heroes who fall victim to a gaze attack must make a fear check (see Chapter Six, *Domains of Dread*). On a natural roll of 1, the hero becomes comatose for 4d4 days. Optionally, the *Dungeon Master* may require a horror check upon waking.

Using the power to control under described in Chapter Two, the lich may appoint lieutenants from its intelligent minions and put them in command by instructing lesser undead to "follow the orders of this creature" (or some similar, simple directive), if the lieutenant is destroyed when the undead army is beyond the lich's radius of control, of the lieutenant's subordinate undead become unguided and behave normally.

Recognizing a Lich

If a lich wishes to reveal itself, there is no mistaking it. If you have ever seen a lich undisguised and lived, you surely will recognize another instantly (though it will probably be the last thing you ever recognize - few escape that deadly grasp twice). As a solitary creature, a lich generally takes little trouble to mask its appearance. Thus, the lich in its lair is not the subject of this particular discussion because once you have found the lair, you almost surely have found the lich as well.

It is in the case of the disguised lich that a hunter must be on his guard. In most cases, the eternal quest for power is bound to force the lich into some contact with the outside world. Also, the lich might take an active role in the affairs of the living, seeking to manipulate the balances of power to its own ends or manipulating the living for its own sake. Either way, the lich eventually deals with living people.

In such cases, the undead wizard may assume the guise of a charismatic, benign appearance. On the other hand, I know of a case where a lich disguised itself as a destitute beggar and thus gained entrance to a heavily guarded temple where a holy artifact was thought to have been sufficiently protected. The lich is able to disguise itself almost perfectly, no matter what the facade. It is undead and therefore resistant to the magical prying of detection spells and abilities. Furthermore, with the aid of cosmetic spells and magical items, it can assume the completely convincing appearance of any mortal.

A few spells enable the caster to see through magical masks and disguises, but the lich will guard against such intrusion. I know of one lich that was able to change its shape so effectively that, in effect, it actually became the creature it mimicked. Such a monster would be impossible to detect through most means, magical or otherwise.

The key to foiling the lich is, once again, knowledge. If one knows that a lich walks among mortals, if one knows what a lich seeks, if one knows what poses a threat to a lich's plots, then it is possible to spot the disguised creature, possibly through telltale behavioral inconsistencies or through a process of elimination. Remember that a part of the knowledge

equation is what the lich knows, too. In other words, what the lich doesn't know, or what the lich knows that you know, or endless combinations of both factors can come into play. The lich is a monster of genius intelligence; knowledge is its best weapon, but so is knowledge the best weapon against it.

A priest of extreme piety and ability can turn away undead, including the lich. The presentation of a holy symbol by a powerful priest may be the only sure confirmation of a lich's presence, but be warned that a lich can resist the effects of such an attack. A foiled attempt may put the hunter off the scent, discredit him, or worse may alert the lich to the hunter's suspicions. For this reason, I would warn the hunter to reserve this means of discovering his enemy until he either has no choice or no doubts left.

Dungeon Masters are encouraged to be creative in disguising a lich. Remember that these monsters are ultrapowerful wizards who are constantly experimenting with the bounds of magic. While no lich should ever become magically omnipotent, one might create numerous magical items and spells to defy detection and confuse heroes.

Gathering Intelligence

As I have read accounts from lone survivors and witnesses of battles with liches, one thing occurs to me again and again: *It is absolutely essential to gather as much information as possible about a lich before battling it.* In every case I have reviewed, hunters were surprised by magical attacks or traps for which they had no defense. They thought they had prepared for any onslaught, but they always overlooked something that proved to be their downfall. Although I cannot say that they would have been otherwise successful, I can still point out that too many have died through a lack of research and preparation. I may also boast that I have seen two successful lich kills, thanks to exhaustive groundwork.

Unfortunately, there are few ways to observe a lich with one's own eyes without fighting it. Obviously, the best way to observe one is to be very surreptitious. If a lich is within its lair and you must observe it, introduce some sort of spy. A method I would suggest is to trick the lich into accepting a magical device that has some sort of clairvoyant magic attached to it. Since liches rarely leave their lairs if they can help it, there is a good chance that a minion will retrieve the item and, thus, ignorantly lead a hunting party to its master's front door. This spying device also may yield a brief glimpse into the lich's inner sanctum, suggesting a possible route of travel through the lich's lair. You must be prepared to identify the lich's surroundings quickly, though, for the lich is sure to examine the item, identify its treachery, and neutralize it immediately.

As with all plans, there are bound to be some drawbacks in introducing a spy or spying device to the lich's lair. First, it alerts the lich to your intentions. Second, the lich may guess your plan and mislead you. Third, as the following passage from my journal attests, such tricks may bring doom upon some or all of the party. Finally, the lich's lair is the last place one wants to meet with a lich. Far better is it to lure the lich out of its deadly haven, away from its long-considered defenses.

Efforts to defeat a lich within its lair have never succeeded, to my knowledge. In every case, the hunters have succeeded only in driving the lich from its home. I, myself, had a hand in the destruction of but two such creatures (only outside their lairs), a fraction of my general success rate against other undead, even vampires. In only one case was I able to locate and destroy a lich's phylactery.

Belinderissa was stout of heart and more than dedicated to the task of necromantic cleansing, but her seething hatred of undead made her as dangerous to herself as to them. Therefore, I took the precaution of planting a tracking device upon her person when we began our hunt for the Bloody Hand of Souragne. It was but a brooch with some magical identification abilities, but I told her - and let it be generally known - that the jewelry had some power of revealing the past of objects that it touched. I suggested that Belinderissa might use it to tell if the lich had been in contact with this object or that place, so I could truthfully call it a "tracking device" without offending her pride. What made the brooch important was that I had engraved it with my personal mark, and that I had a ring that would point the way to any object so identified.

Little did I suspect that the Bloody Hand would hear of and come to crave such a device, although I might have guessed as much, had I thought about it. It grievously pains me to remember that Belinderissa was taken and murdered for that relatively useless bauble, yet we were thence able to track the lich through the labyrinthine swamps, prevent it from

reaching its safe house, and ultimately exact our revenge upon it.

- From the private journal of Dr. Van Richten

Lich Bait

I'm afraid I have few answers with which to console and edify the lich hunter when he asks how best to defeat a lich. Destroying one of these cursed beasts is an act of such great significance that it pains me to think of a parallel. A simple answer is to attack the monster with a lightning offense, hope to catch it off guard, and pray for a pound of luck! A more difficult answer is that the lich must first be drawn from its lair. One would rarely try to conquer an army ensconced in a fortress; rest assured, the lich is an army in itself, and its fortress is much more than thick stone walls!

Depending on the lich, it can be quite easy or very difficult to lure one out. The easiest method is to defeat a large number of the lich's servitor undead. Since the lich is able to see through its servitors' eyes, it can identify the responsible mortals and make attempts to track them down with more powerful undead.

This strategy has two beneficial yields: First, it reduces the pool of soldiers at the lich's command. Second, and more importantly, it may encourage the lich to take the battle into its own hands, thus forcing it to abandon the safety of its lair. Perceptive strategists may argue that the lich would foresee this tactic and foil it, but I offer this counterstrategy: If the lich attacks the offending mortals personally, it can choose the time and place of the attack, gaining an advantage of surprise. Leaving the lair also prevents mortals from learning its exact location. Should the lich be destroyed during the combat, its soul will return to its phylactery, which is more likely than not secured within the darkest recesses of its lair.

I know of another method for luring the lich from its lair, yet I hesitate to offer it, for it has resulted in the death of a friend. As the last passage from my journal ironically illustrates, the lich may be drawn out of hiding with the promise of magic. If you have something that the lich wants, there's a good chance that it will come to you to get it. Of course, it's not good enough for a lich hunter to walk the streets, shouting, "I've got a very powerful magical item!" The lich is no fool. This ruse worked against the Bloody Hand of Souragne because I, in effect, did not know that I had baited the hook. We were all ignorant of the impending result of my white lie, and so the lich detected no trap.

Can the bait be successfully presented? I believe so, although I have never been able to do so; liches always seem to know, or find out, when you are spreading false information. Take warning: If you do convince a lich that you have something it wants, you may well be courting the fate of Belinderissa.

In the Lair

It's unfortunate, but it should come as no surprise that most hunters will eventually be compelled to enter the lair of a lich. Doing so enables a hunting party to test the lich's defenses and learn more about its tactics. With luck, the party may find a clue to the former identity of the monster - a powerful weapon.

The lich will attack with certain fervor if mortals enter its lair and approach its person, and it will very rarely flee its lair without offering mortal combat to anyone who enters and defeats the safeguards and traps. One can always expect a stand-up (albeit magically intensive) fight with a lich, but within the lair the chances of a fight are even greater. Remember that the habitation is little more than a fortress designed to repel attack of any kind. Numerous traps, both physical and magical, will be around every corner. Faced with this onslaught of artifacts, spells, traps, and innate abilities, I'm afraid that many groups of brave warriors, mages, and priests are defeated all too easily.

For those parties who discover the location of a lich's lair, I suggest starting with short reconnaissance missions that probe bit by bit into the dwelling. Upon any indication that the lich is aware of your presence, ignore all previous findings. You will surely have been duped.

Never, ever challenge the lich if you should stumble across it within its home. Collapse the roof, invoke a magical wall, summon minions of your own to hold it off - but whatever else you do, run!

Death for the Undead

A lich's body is merely a corrupted, decrepit, temporary vessel for its soul. Destroying its body merely releases its soul to its true resting place: the lich's phylactery.

The phylactery is amulet-sized and shaped. It is typically made of heavy metals or stone and is highly ornate. I have already elaborated upon phylacteries in this text, but I have painfully little other information about them. For all I know, the pendant I wear around my neck - a trophy from the hoard of the Bloody Hand - might be a phylactery, and the lich within is waiting for me to die so that it might occupy my body.

Generally, a lich is able to attempt taking possession of a body from its phylactery, but only a corpse can be possessed. The body must lie within 60 feet of the phylactery for the lich's essence to reach it. There is no limit to the amount of time that the lich may remain within the phylactery. For example, an unsuspecting person might claim the amulet and pass it through multiple generations of his family before it finally gains an opportunity to take possession of a dead body. However, the target body must remain within range of the phylactery for a full day, during which time the lich locates it, deems it suitable for habitation, and performs its ritual of possession.

To make the transfer, the lich conducts a sort of attack against the body. The lich may attempt the transfer only once per corpse. The corpse is allowed a saving throw vs. death magic at the same level that the body possessed in life. If the corpse's saving throw is unsuccessful, the lich inhabits the body and is fully restored to its normal Hit Die level of ability.

The lich can also attempt to take over an undead creature. The creature makes a saving throw vs. death magic with a +3 bonus. Failure indicates the undead creature's "spirit" is overtaken by the lich, and the undead being ceases to exist.

As always, Dungeon Masters are encouraged to create variations of the rules so that all-knowing players cannot use them to their advantage. The lich might cast *magic jar* from the phylactery, thus possessing a living hero's body and either killing him or trapping him within the phylactery until the lich can perform a power ritual. The range of the lich's ability to possess a dead body might be extended or made unlimited. Touching a phylactery without casting *dispel magic* on it first might result in instant possession of the person who touches it, or possession of a random person in the room. The possibilities are endless.

Destroying the Phylactery

The only way to destroy a lich completely and irrevocably is to destroy its phylactery. The lich is trapped in a curious predicament in the storing of its phylactery. If its body is destroyed, the spirit instantly becomes trapped (or secured) within the amulet and remains there until it is able to secure another body. If the lich hides the phylactery where it can never be discovered, then it risks eternal imprisonment. It is, therefore, in the lich's best interest to put the phylactery where it could potentially encounter a body to inhabit; the hiding place should be accessible at least to its minion undead, who can provide host bodies. On the other hand, if the lich selects a place where the phylactery might be found, the lich runs the risk of the phylactery being discovered and destroyed.

My opinion is that a phylactery will always remain within relatively easy reach of the lich who made it. If a person has a treasure of inexpressible value, the compulsion to keep it near at hand is almost irresistible. There may be a solid wall and a dozen traps between the phylactery and the rest of the lich's lair, but it will be there, I'm certain.

Destruction of the phylactery is not the simple matter, either. The amulet itself will be protected with magic that prevents its destruction by common, physical means - one cannot simply grasp the vessel and smash it against a rock. It might be made of sturdy materials that naturally resist damage, and upon it are laid enchantments that make its existence fairly permanent, even if it is made of lead. If properly constructed, the phylactery is nearly impossible to destroy with simple physical might.

Perhaps a mage with the ability to undo a multitude of enchantments could destroy a phylactery. Then again, I would not underestimate the power of the priesthood in such matters. Such talent and power are difficult to find, yet the same magical might should be present to battle the lich the first place.

Here is a sample game scenario for the destruction of a phylactery: First, a *permanency* spell must be negated to make the amulet vulnerable to destruction. Next, a mage or priest must cast *dispel magic* directly upon the amulet. Doing so will not alter the amulet's ability to contain the lich's soul, but for 1d4 rounds it will make it possible to reach the amulet's protections. At this point, 25 points of physical damage will crush the amulet, releasing the lich's spirit into the ether, forever dispersed and ineffective. For the purposes of determining the success of the *dispel magic* spell, assume that the lich is at the 18th level of experience.

Other means of smashing the phylactery are possible. Any blunt weapon of +3 enchantment or better would harm an amulet. If an amulet cannot be destroyed, it could be blessed and buried in a hallowed grave, forever trapping the lich within. Imagination is the only limit.

Ramifications of Lich Destruction

When a phylactery is destroyed, a vacuum of power is created that may have various effects. The most hopeful outcome is that the evil will dissipate and those creatures and objects under the lich's control will be either free or inert. However, if another lich or other powerful being resides nearby, it may simply step into the place left behind.

Rival beings aside, another concern of those who have defeated a lich and destroyed its phylactery is the possibility that a majority of the lair, if not the entire complex, may be dependent upon lich magic for structural integrity. Persons within such a lair should keep at hand provisions for surviving the lair's imminent collapse.

Even if the victorious group is not in danger of a lair's collapse, the heroes must deal with any surviving undead minions. These servitors, now completely uncontrolled, will revert to their normal behavior. This situation can be nearly as bad as when the lich was in direct control, for the undead creature's hunger for living flesh and souls is well known. Fortunately, servitor undead are largely drawn from less sophisticated undead who have little mental capacity. Their attacks will be undirected, uncoordinated, and less effective compared to when they were guided by a higher authority.

The destruction of a lich's phylactery should send shock waves through the lands for miles around, if not the entire campaign world. This presents an opportunity to introduce new villains, destroy the lich's hoard, and give the heroes a sense of spectacular accomplishment.

The Mystical Hoard

The extreme wealth a lich bequeaths to victors is both a fantastic asset and perhaps the most dangerous cargo possible for people to bear. The sum of a lich's vault can propel a mortal to wondrous status overnight. With so many items, information, and raw power at a person's command, there is little that would not be possible. However, making productive use of such a cache is difficult at best. Possession of even a single object from a lich's lair may draw the attention of unscrupulous mortals bent on securing power for themselves - regardless of the source - and of powerful undead as well, especially other liches.

It is said that in some lands, liches wage open war against each other. If one of them dies, the others are sure to become aware of it within a matter of seconds. (I suspect that each of the other liches have a variety of spells that will alert them of any change in the balance of power.) If knowledge of the demise of a lich is widely known, other liches will hunt any prize that they were unable to gather when it was first discovered. In the eyes of an evil creature, taking a coveted item from even a powerful hero is much easier (and likely more appealing) than taking it from a lich. Considering the power of even a "common" lich, the sentiment is understandable.

Then, too, it is far simpler (relatively speaking) to defeat a lich than to destroy one. A hero who satisfies himself with the acquisition of a lich hoard, without destroying its owner, is taking a terrible risk! Liches have formidable memories, and they will exterminate one's children's children's children to retrieve what has been taken from them.

I suggest that the only act that would ensure that mortals are no longer troubled by a lich's "toys" is for lich hunters to destroy every object they encounter in a lair, the lich included. Only then can they return to their homes in peace and without the fear of retribution or ambush. Devices held within such lairs are the products of evil. They were forged by black fires,

crafted with dead hands, and enchanted with arcane necromancy. They should be destroyed, for they were not ever meant to be used by mortal hands.

Purification

The presence of the undead is a boil upon the land. They must be removed if the rightful owners of the world - the living mortals - are ever to enjoy the peace they deserve. I strenuously recommend the destruction of all a lich's enchanted items, including its alchemical notes. Even that will leave us with a lair that may tempt other creatures of evil to inhabit it, to stoke the cold fires within once more like a recurring malignant growth. It is best to convert the lair, if possible, to uses that are beneficial to humanity. A responsible lich hunter will notify local authorities and priests of the vacancy of a lich's lair, as well as the status of its phylactery.

Still, the stench is thick amongst temples of evil, and they are not easily cleansed. Barring conversion to more a useful state, the best course of action is to completely reduce a lair to dust, then seal it from intrusion for all eternity.

At the Dungeon Master's option, every (or nearly every) object found within a lair may be considered to be cursed. The use of such items may result in reversed effects, the summoning of a powerful evil being, or a powers check (perhaps at double the normal chance of failing).

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The dead were housed in deep catacomb-like caves behind the mansion, lying all night in stone coffins, and coming forth in daily resurrection to do the tasks ordained by the masters.

- Clark Ashton Smith
"Necromancy in Naat"

Strange and Deadly Minions

I have compared the lich to a general who commands his forces from the rear lines. Continuing the analogy, mindless undead are the foot soldiers and intelligent undead are the lieutenants. In this chapter, I will discuss beings that comparable to the general's majors, colonels, and aides-de-camp. These are undead peculiar to the legions of the lich because they are the products of the powerful black magic that only a lich can wield.

Specifically, I am referring to the magically endowed undead creature, which I have named the quasimancer, to the fallen wizard, which I have called the vassalich; and to the abominable lich familiar. These are servants that, to a small degree, mimic their master's deadly combination of magic use and undead status. Their special powers raise them above the ranks of common minions, yet their superiority is little cause for rejoicing, even if they possess the free will to do so. They are pitiable creatures, miserable wretches who serve an evil master, battle fodder to an amoral commander who knows no shortage of replacement troops.

The extent to which these monsters pose a threat is variable. Taken by themselves, they offer a mildly dangerous combat adversary, certainly nothing beyond the skills of most seasoned adventurers. Yet each of them serves the lich in a special capacity that greatly multiplies the master's effectiveness, performing functions that hitherto required the presence of the lich itself. With the emergence of these creatures, the lich can remain safely out of harm's reach and thus create even more complex and wicked schemes. To the lich hunter, these minions represent yet another ring of defense to penetrate and another depletion of precious strength and magic.

Quasimancers

The lich's ability to manipulate the dead comes so naturally that it should be no surprise if the lich were to improve upon the method. The powers of a lich are limited only by the scope of its imagination, intelligence, and research. In other words, the lich only need practice more powerful sorcery in order to create more powerful undead, and garnering more potent magic is about as natural an act as a lich can manage.

I wish that I had come to this conclusion myself - it seems so obvious - but it was my prized scout Markil who put me on to it during our hunt of the lich called the Bloody Hand.



"First a pack of zombies comes pilin' through the hedges-no problem; we pound 'em into dust. Then some ghouls come draggin' behind-pretty smelly, but again no big issue; we hold our breath, and we burn 'em down. 'Course they all have the red-eye, but we know how deal with that, thanks to you, Van Richten. I, myself, like to look a stiff in the breadbox when I

take it out.

"Then what I think is another ghoul comes into view and just stands there, lookin' at us. I finish off my last stiff and head for it, when I hear it whisperin' and see it wavin' its hands at me. Well, I never saw any stiff weaker than a vampire throw a spell, but I know what I'm lookin' at, so I yell 'duck' and then do the same. It's a damn. good thing too, Doc. Sure enough, the stiff dumps a ball o'fire into the party!

"To make a long story short, we dusted the magic cadaver, then headed back here to tell you what happened. "

It was not long before we encountered more of the Bloody Hand's special minions, and I was given the opportunity to observe them myself. They introduced a new complication to our hunt, forcing us to change our combat strategy, advance even more cautiously, and rest even more often. Meanwhile, the Bloody Hand was absent from the war, taking advantage of our delays to advance its agenda elsewhere.

Despite those setbacks, I made good use of the spare time and studied these magic-using undead minions with an educated eye. Based on my observations, and the collective opinion of a dozen scholars, I have valuable information to impart to the reader regarding the creatures I call quasimancers.

Let us begin with two basic prerequisites. First, the use of wizard magic apparently requires some force of will. It is not enough to simply comprehend the workings of a spell; one must have the determination to drive magical forces to a desired end. Therefore, a candidate for quasimancer must retain at least part of its former life essence - its personality, if you will - in order to use magic. Second, the casting of magic almost always demands the use of the hands and other body parts in order to shape the spell. Therefore, a quasimancer must have a physical body, possessed of some dexterity.

Mummies, vampires, and liches satisfy both prerequisites, but mummies and vampires are difficult to control, even for a lich. (I do not believe it is possible for one lich to control another.) Also, both vampires and liches are already capable of wielding magic, so endowing them with spell abilities would be redundant.

I conclude, then, that the lich raises a special form of wight to serve as a quasimancer. The minion retains a small part of its former identity, and a freshly animated wight still maintains a viable physique for spellcasting. Furthermore, such a creature is subject to the same absolute control exerted by the lich upon its lesser cousins, yet its orders from the "general" would include the use of offensive magic. To support my hypothesis, I have observed that quasimancers exhibit hand-to-hand combat techniques and other innate abilities common to the wight.

Let me caution the reader not to take this text too literally. The ghast also satisfies the prerequisites for a quasimancer. Perhaps the lich can endow even the lowly skeleton with the ability to cast magic. Then again, perhaps such magic is not possible. Whatever the case, we cannot rest upon absolutes, for liches make new breakthroughs in spell research even as I write this guide, and even as you read it.

A quasimancer can command a company of skeletons and zombies, send them into a fray, then saturate the area with highly destructive magic, obliterating its own troops and even itself. Indeed, one should not expect a quasimancer to stand aloof from the battle or the rest of the undead as a mage would, for it carries no expectations of survival into battle. The monster has no concerns for its underlings or for itself, so it makes an ideal leader for a suicidal mission. And, because it outwardly appears to be no more than a common ghoul or wight, its actions may not always be noted or anticipated until too late, so it is all the more deadly.

I have no positive suppositions to contribute to this matter, except perhaps that the knowledge of the quasimancer's existence should be enough to keep the hunter of undead monsters on constant guard. If these minions encourage the reader to be ever vigilant, ever ready to face the unexpected, then that is the only good they will ever do for us.

As always, the Dungeon Master is free to vary the origins and powers of the quasimancer. Some guidelines follow.

The quasimancer is specially raised by the lich, then magically endowed (see the spells *create minion* and *confer* in the Dungeon Master Appendix later in this volume). After it is successfully raised, it is allowed a saving throw to avoid being automatically lich-controlled, as are other undead of less than half the lich's Hit

Dice (see Chapter Two). This saving throw is allowed because of the artificially enhanced Intelligence granted during the creation of the quasimancer. If the roll succeeds and the minion is able to escape the lich, it can be a worthy opponent of the heroes for as long as the *create minion* spell lasts. (A clever creature might attempt to get a *permanency* spell cast upon itself, thus negating the expiration of the spell.) At the Dungeon Master's option, the quasimancer may reroll the saving throw to avoid the lich's control, once per week or more.

A quasimancer enjoys the statistics and abilities of its common cousin (as per the *Monstrous Manual* tome), with additional qualities from being the minion of a lich. It makes all saving throws at the level of the lich that controls it; it is immune to *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, electricity, insanity, *charm*, *sleep*, cold, and death spells; and, it exudes a *fear* aura over a 5-foot radius, requiring a save vs. spell or else a victim must flee for 2d4 rounds.

Vassaliches

"It was the most terrible thing I have ever seen, Dolf! No! Not the most terrible - the dreams it put into my head when I could no longer stay awake. . . . when I put my wife's hand into a - No! I didn't do that! I didn't do that! Don't look at me!"

"It was the lich that put those thoughts in your head, Harmon. Let them go, they are not yours!" I cajoled him, realizing that his reason would not remain much longer. "Tell me about the minions. You were talking about the lich's minions, remember?"

"Yes, yes! It was horrid, horrid! Not just dead things - living things too. Men! A man became a lich before my eyes! He swallowed a stone - a diamond or something, I don't know. Then the lich slit its rotted wrist open with its own fingernail and blood - no, not blood ooze, gray ooze ran from the black hole! And the man drank it! He drank the lich's blood! He drank it, Dolf! And he fell down and screamed. And he changed. He shriveled. He died! He lay there, dead, and -"

"And what, Harmon?"

"He got up and spit the stone into the lich's hand. Then he was a lich, too."

- From the private journal of Dr. Van Richten

I have never met a creature like the one Dr. Ruscheider described on that evening when he came to me like a crazed animal beneath the full moon, but I have little doubt that it exists. So much evil is around us, and so many people are exposed to temptations proffered by agents of that evil. It is sadly simple to conclude that a wizard of questionable values might strike a pact with a lich and become immortal, albeit undead. What mage does not crave the arcane secrets of the universe? What wizard would not consider the advantages of unlimited time to learn new magic? Who among any of us does not wish to live forever?

These sentiments are the genesis of the vassalich: a wizard who undergoes the transformation to lichdom under the sponsorship of a full lich, thus becoming an undead magic-user long before he could accomplish the feat himself. Such a foolish mage is a free-willed individual who is yet a slave. He is capable of independent thought, abstract strategy, self-conducted research, and intellectual processes available to a living human, but he has committed himself to eternal bondage to a master who inevitably will use him as nothing more than another means to its own ends.

As people who are more intelligent than the average, mages should know the consequences of entering into such a relationship, or so I would assume. This may well be why I have never met a vassalich; it is extremely uncommon. Even so, I have shared Harmon Ruscheider's remarks with a few scholarly wizards, and I have made the following speculations upon the nature of the vassalich.

A vassalich ideally much rarely than a lich; such a slave is bound to be more than a handful, and it is sure to draw undue attention as well - something few liches desire. If a Dungeon Master wishes to roleplay the creation of a vassalich, a number of conditions can be created to carry off a successful transformation. Heroes who prevent these conditions from occurring also prevent vassalich creation.

For example, the wizard might have to fail at least two powers checks before the transformation will work. Perhaps the phylactery must be a gem of not less than 10,000 gp value which the lich can wear ornamentally or keep with the rest of its treasure. Perhaps the new vassalich must rest after the conversion, like its master, but for 10 full days.

The transformation itself might consist of joint spellcasting by the sponsor and aspirant. Perhaps the casts enchant an item on the phylactery while the wizard drinks prepared potion: (see Chapter One) then the wizard casts *magic jar* before he dies. Next, the lich casts *reincarnation* on the wizard's body, and the vassalich is created.

The vassalich's phylactery would likely not be nearly as magical as that of the lich. It might be destroyed merely by inflicting 25 points of damage upon it using any nonmagical weapon. (A saving throw vs. crushing blow might apply.)

Necrology

I would guess that nearly all vassaliches were once living students of the wizards' college of Necrology. A preoccupation with or sheer ambivalence about death would certainly render the prospect of becoming undead less daunting. Hence, it is expected that a vassalich can wield death magic as a specialist of the dark school of Necromancy.

A vassalich most likely undergoes a process similar to his master's when he becomes undead. He might drink a poisonous potion or partake of the lich's body fluid as Ruscheider suggested, but his soul then occupies a phylactery. Ruscheider's story also implied that the phylactery is given over to the lich, who presumably keeps it as the perfect instrument of leverage over its new minion. The lich gains an absolutely loyal servant in complete control of its sophisticated mental faculties. As long as the phylactery remains in the lich's possession, the vassalich must do its sponsor's bidding.

Quick-thinking hunters will realize that he who holds the phylactery of a lich, be it a vassal or otherwise, controls the lich! Furthermore, the phylactery of a vassalich may not be subject to the same security standards as the master's. The captured phylactery of a vassalich may be one of the deadliest weapons that a lich hunter could ever hope to wield.

A vassalich is reincarnated, as a monster with HD equal to half (round down) its former experience level, but retains its former spellcasting abilities. It gains 1 HD every 10 years, equal to two experience levels in spellcasting abilities. It becomes a full lich upon reaching 11 HD. However, it must first gain control of its phylactery, then follow all normal procedures for becoming a lich.

A vassalich can be hit by nonmagical weapons, but it remains immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *feeblemind*, *polymorph*, cold, electricity, insanity, and death spells. It is turned as a lich. It can make the gaze attack that all lich minions enjoy (see Chapter Six), and it also exudes a fear aura with a 5-foot radius (save vs. spell, or flee for 2d4 rounds). Finally, it possesses a chill touch for 1d4 points of damage save vs. paralyzation, or behave as slowed for 1d10 rounds). It is suggested that heroes who have never seen a vassalich be required to make a horror check upon the first such encounter, unless they have had at least two previous encounters with an actual lich.

Powers

A wizard who becomes a vassalich probably gains its master's black aura to some extent, and it probably shares the lich's resistance to holy symbols and certain types of magic, but it surely lacks its master's experience and level of magical power. I suspect that a vassalich retains the same spellcasting ability as it had in life. If there is any such gain upon transformation, then it is probably paid for with the loss of endurance, mobility, or strength.

Psychology

The mind of a vassalich is sure to be an incredibly complex thing. It retains its memories and force of personality after its transformation, which must mean that it continues to harbor within its breast the same intense ambition that drove it to

pursue vassalichdom in the first place. How it must grate upon it to become the absolute slave of another! No doubt, a candidate for transformation is absolutely loyal to the sponsor lich while courting immortality, but once the deed is done, how long is it before the intelligent minion comes to resent the bond of slavery?

This line of reasoning leads me to two conjectures about the "lesser lich." First, a would-be vassalich might be more dangerous to our world while he is still a mortal, for he can act as a spy and thief for the monster whom he wishes to please. While he remains a living man, he is capable of insidious and far-reaching damage, for who would guess at the ghastly station to which he aspires, and realize that he is already a minion of a lich? Second, he may be more dangerous to the lich when he is no longer mortal, for such an ambitious creature is sure to plot against the one who holds its phylactery. After the transformation, egotism and ambition, to say nothing of basically evil character, quite likely estranges the vassalich from its master. As long as the lich has its very life essence in its keeping, a vassalich's existence hangs upon the whim of an evil persona. I think that I can safely say that such an arrangement cannot be tolerable for long.

While I have little advice to offer regarding living spies, I think that it may be possible for a clever hunter to poison the relationship between the lich and its vassal undead. The trick is to establish an alliance with the vassalich without the lich's knowledge. The vassal is sure to be nervous about such an arrangement - after all, its master will crush its phylactery at the first hint of rebellion. However, there is more than enough incentive to turn against the lich, and that is one fact upon which a lich hunter may almost certainly depend.

Many interesting adventure scenarios are possible with the inclusion of a vassalich. It may serve as a nemesis to heroes who simply are not strong enough to deal with a true lich; in such cases, the lich may be busy in another realm while the vassalich runs the lair or initiates plots of its own. A vassalich can be powerful, but never as much so as a true lich.

Another adventure possibility lies in the attempted mental and emotional seduction of a player's mage by a lich. Of course, it is expected that the heroic mage will respond to the temptation only as a way to infiltrate the lich's defenses. If roleplayed well, the game of cat-and-mouse could be very exciting.

A player's hero may actually find himself forced by the lich, physically, magically, or otherwise, to undergo the transformation process as a result of roleplaying. In this case, he becomes a nonplayer character until his companions can destroy the vassalich's body, gain control of the lesser phylactery, ctonize the player's wizard (use of other bodies, alive or dead, may call for a powers check, depending on the circumstances), and cast *magic jar*, then *raise dead* or *resurrection* (apply all saving throws), A *wish* may be substituted for either spell.

Lich Familiars

There is but one priest of nature among the hunters of undead with whom I have traveled: Alannthir the half-breed elf. Until I met him, I believed that lawful priests of goodness were the stoutest foes of the walking dead. but this druid proved me wrong. Alannthir's utter condemnation of the unnatural state of living death was matched only by the ferocity he exhibited when he met one of them face to face. He wielded a magical scimitar that blazed like the sun in the faces of the undead, but often he actually cast it aside to tear skeletons literally limb from limb, reducing them to piles of bone with his rough, bare hands! Here, I thought, was the ultimate ally to my cause.

Finally, we met the lich Redfist's familiar - once a red-tailed hawk, but now a molting, rotted, batlike thing with a scream like an infuriated banshee. We first encountered it in the company of its master and were forced to flee for our lives, but Alannthir was choked with horror at the sight of the undead hawk, and he had to be dragged screaming from the battlefield. He became hopelessly obsessed with the bird - his eyes never left the heavens, and he muttered through every waking hour, complaining, "We must move quickly, quickly!"

When we had finally laid our deliberate plans for approaching the lich, Alannthir agreed to the strategy. Nevertheless, while we were still many miles from the suspected location of the lair, he espied the familiar circling high above, shifted his shape to that of a small bird before my very eyes, and darted into the sky before we could stop him! The undead hawk, apparently senseless of its master's will at the time, gave itself over to predatory instincts and gave Alannthir chase.

The druid could not hope to elude the hawk's talons, but he lured it into our midst before it snatched him in midair and they

both tumbled to the ground in a death struggle. We immediately seized the opportunity and pounced upon the unnatural monster, even as if snapped Alanthir's neck. With similar speed, we released the creature from its gruesome existence, driving a silver dagger through its leathery breast.

It seemed that Alanthir breathed a sigh of joy as he regained his humanoid form and died, but it was drowned by a long, hideous shriek from Redfist, which echoed across the realm.

- From the private journal of Dr. Van Richten

Insofar as a lich is a wizard, it is reasonable that a lich might have a familiar. Such a creature not only conveys special powers upon the lich, but it provides perhaps the only faithful company that a lich will tolerate. The relationship between a mage and his familiar is quite intimate, but the lich's familiar may be the only friend it has in the entire universe.

On the other hand, the familiar of a lich must certainly be or become an evil thing. It may be that a lich familiar endures an antagonistic tie to its master and must be ruled with an iron fist. Perhaps this creature rightly hates its master, even more so because it cannot survive without the lich. This might explain why Redfist's familiar chased Alanthir, putting both itself and its master at risk. I do not mean to suggest a familiar may be turned against the lich in the same manner as a vassal lich. Rather, I think that some familiars may abandon their primary directives at crucial moments, heeding more basic instincts.

A wizard who has a familiar is faced with a dilemma when he contemplates lichdom: Perhaps his death may simply dissolve the bond between himself and his familiar, but it is quite possible that the separation adversely affects the mage. If upon the change he suffers a shock like that which mages experience upon the death of a familiar, the result could be absolute death. Therefore, I am inclined to believe that a lich will insist on taking its familiar into unlife with it, and that the familiar's life essence resides in the phylactery with its master.

However, I doubt that unliving immortality is acceptable to a natural creature, even if it is inextricably bound to a wizard. I would not be surprised if such a familiar actually rebelled in the face of this predicament. I do not wonder at Alanthir's rage over Redfist's hawk; I'm sure the poor beast was thoroughly miserable.

As an aside, I see no reason why a lich could not call a familiar after its transformation, but I seriously doubt that any natural animal would answer its summons. Rather, the familiar of a lich would most likely be an undead thing itself.

A wizard can take its familiar with it into lichdom by forcing it to drink the potion of transformation. After doing so, the familiar makes a System Shock roll at same level as the wizard. If it fails, the familiar dies and the lich must make a second System Shock roll. If that roll fails, the lich dies irrevocably, just as if he had failed his first roll. If the roll succeeds, the lich still loses 1 point of Constitution permanently, and it must rest two full weeks before memorizing spells or conducting any strenuous activity.

A lich familiar's spirit resides in the phylactery with the lich's. Therefore, it cannot be completely destroyed until the phylactery is destroyed, as with the lich.

For a lich-summoned familiar, the Dungeon Master can consult the Monstrous Manual tome and choose a familiar appropriate to the campaign. A familiar may also be selected from the three (now out of print) Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium appendices or other sources. The familiar could easily be a monster whose power falls outside the normal bounds permitted to familiars, as the nonplayer villains may have to fight against powerful groups of heroes. The Dungeon Master may declare that a lich can create an undead version of virtually any living monster by casting *raise dead* upon the expired monster of its choice, then binding it by casting *find familiar* and *charm monster*, or something to that effect. Examples of lich-summoned familiars could include the imp, necrophidius, nightmare, or undead animals with additional powers, like a skeletal bat with supernatural vision and hearing (in addition to being magically able to fly in complete silence).

In any event, a lich and its familiar exchange the same benefits enjoyed in all such bonds (see the wizard spell *find familiar*), with possible enhancements. The range of the lich familiar's empathic link to its master can be equal to the lich's Intelligence score in miles, and naturally intelligent familiars can communicate telepathically with their masters.

As all liches in the Ravenloft campaign are evil, so are their familiars, but a familiar's lawful or chaotic disposition can affect its relationship with its master. A chaotic evil familiar might abandon its master's commands and satisfy its basic instincts when out of range. A neutral evil familiar might rebel (10% base chance) against strongly lawful or chaotic instructions when out of range. A lawful evil familiar is always loyal. A natural animal becomes neutral evil upon becoming the familiar of a lich.

If a lich familiar's body is reduced to 0 hp, it immediately rolls for System Shock at 85%. Failure indicates that the familiar's spirit is destroyed, and the lich must make a second System Shock roll (at 85%) to avoid its own destruction. If the familiar's roll is successful, the familiar's spirit returns to the safety of the phylactery and can later inhabit another animal's corpse. The lich is deprived of speltcasting ability until it animates a new body (same species as before) for the familiar's spirit to inhabit.

Regardless of whether the familiar resides in the phylactery with its master or is a monster summoned after the transformation, the lich loses 1 point of Constitution permanently if its familiar is destroyed, just like a living wizard.

*My mind to me a kingdom is;
Such present joys therein I find
That it excels all other bliss
The earth affords or grows by kind...*

- Sir Edward Dyer
Rawlinson Poetry MS 85

The Mentalist Lich

I will not be able to speak of my experience in detail until I have put to rest the terrible visions I have suffered at the hands of Master Ulathar the lich. It has no remorse or regard for the living - it barely took notice of us during a pitched combat that was for us most dire. Only a fateful twist of luck turned the encounter from disaster to narrow victory. It used its twisted powers of the mind as freely as me breathe, and with an effect that I had never conceived. Its mind was the blackest pit of evil, and it reached out for us, twisting our spirits and tainting us in mere seconds. My will now has been purged of the evils implanted in my mind. My spirit has been blessed and redeemed by the highest priests. Yet I cannot sleep at night, for even in the darkest rooms or the brightest days, I still see the lich's eyes boring into my mind like daggers of fire.

- From the private journal of Matthew Swiftsinger of Skald, in Kartakass

Woe to the person who encounters a lich possessed of the secrets of the mind - who can, by hypnotic will alone, look into the depths of a human soul. These beasts are towers of iron fortitude, creating and driving their unlife not by magical means, but by the pure desire of their evil will to continue, to enlarge their mental prowess, to stand upon the pinnacle of all that is human and to look beyond at any cost to the rest of the world. The information about liches with these strange mesmeric abilities is very sparse. However, I have been able to knit together some few threads of knowledge into tenuous conclusions.

Although some liches command powers that are assuredly will-driven in nature or effect, a lich whose very undead state is derived from its mesmeric abilities is quite rare indeed. In fact, only three other such liches have been rumored to exist aside from the entity of evil spoken of in the journal of Matthew Swiftsinger. (Swiftsinger seems to have served such a being before later confronting it while part of an adventuring group led by the infamous Harkon Lukas of Kartakass.)

As a scholar of the profane and evil, I have learned to accept much that defies the very precepts of logic-there is very little that I will ever call "impossible." Even so, I was predisposed to dismiss the existence of the mental arts as chicanery or magic. I found it difficult to distinguish between a master of mental powers and an archmage of the arcane, until the journal of Matthew Swiftsinger came into my hands some time ago. Swiftsinger was a bard, himself, but he was also a practitioner of the mental arts.

I was given Swiftsinger's personal journal while on a werewolf-hunting expedition in Kartakass (yet another subject about which I will write someday). It was in that shadowy realm that I first heard stories of the mesmeric lich. As I am well aware of the preponderance of bards in that land, I was inclined to dismiss the notion as dramatic narrative. However, my exhaustive research techniques inevitably led to the bard's journal.

Now, having digested its contents, I conclude that his account rings true on so many points that I am forced to consider Swiftsinger's mental talents as a force apart from that of magic. Even more disturbing, it would seem that he honed his talents under a mentalist lich. I have included a pertinent passage from his journal below. I think the fact that he never spun a tale or lyric from this experience lends credence to the truth of it.

Although I was ever possessed of the gift to look into men's minds and see the secrets they withheld from the world, I believed it to be but the intuition of the artist, a mere conceit of sensitivity that opened my mind to truth and the human heart.

Then did I make acquaintance with Master Ulathar (as he named himself, though it was just another of his prevarications), and he inducted me into his elite circle of mentalists. He taught me not only how to probe the secrets of others' minds, but how to subvert their convictions with my own notions.

Quite nearly did I lose sight of the truth, and my power to tell it, before I glimpsed the mind of my master and turned against him-it-afterward to return to the true calling of the bard.

The Mind of the Master

In my research on ghosts, I recorded many stories of unfortunates set upon evildoers in the guise of friends, and of innocents fatally betrayed by loved ones. These tragic Figures, by sheer force of will, reanimated their mortal shells to wreak vengeance on their murderers. While this type of reanimation is fueled by outraged spirits determined to forestall or avenge their own deaths, the state itself is not one specifically sought by the revenants. In such tales, once revenants' goals are fulfilled, they happily seek the afterlife for which were destined.

Mentalist liches differ from such beings on several points. First, and most obviously, the liches purposefully sought their undead state. Second, they do not end their unnatural lives with the accomplishment of any goal; rather, unlife t's their goal, and it now serves them in the pursuit of further mental endeavors. Finally, these liches are masters of the mental disciplines, rather than unfortunates whose emotional state combined tragically with their force of will to enable them gain a temporary semblance or extension of life.

While it is a tortuous and near impossible thing to grasp the mind of the mentalist lich, it is not beyond mortal ken to understand the drives that led it to its undead state: a lust for knowledge, a drive for excellence, and an unquenchable thirst for power - the very same ambitions that possess all of its kind. More specifically, it would see that the mentalist lich has a burning desire to outstrip all others in mental capabilities. It craves a discipline that will raise it above all other beings, even those of its own ilk. It passionately craves the self-knowledge that it is the best, the supreme master of the mind, and that no other of its mental stature exists. Indeed, to survive it needs the same power that allows it to pursue studies beyond the laws of mortals, beyond the reach of human comprehension, and across the very planes of existence, life, and unlife.

Mentalist liches are by their nature the most studious of their breed, and so they are the most reclusive. They commit their life spans of millennia to honing their disciplines beyond the aspirations any mortal creature.

Spending years in the refinement of one hair's-breadth of improvement, one tortuous point of logical control, one meditative discipline of mind over matter, is nothing more than a schoolbook exercise in penmanship to these masters of arcane will. In the end, they transcend the realm of human thought and enter a mental world beyond mortal understanding.

Mentalist vs. Mystical Lich Auras

A striking difference between the mentalist and the mystical lich lies in the nature of their auras. The aura of cold darkness that commonly accompanies a common lich is absent in the creature of mesmeric power. Where other sources speak of the intense cold of a lich's presence, the tales told by Swiftsinger speak only of a prickling of the skin, an undercurrent of power that was evident as he neared the foul beast, evident before the nearby creature was even seen.

As Swiftsinger drew nearer to the lich in their final encounter, the lich completely revealed for what it was, a mental oppression came upon the youth such that he was unable to think clearly. Every action became an effort of extreme will, and he was convinced that some sort of power had seized his sword arm and made it strike poorly. A mage of some power who was in the group was reported to speak with extreme effort, as if spitting words into the wind of a hurricane.

This effect would seem to be some clouding of the mind which is caused by the aura of the mentalist lich. I surmise that it is an innate quality, ever present and requiring no effort or concentration to put into effect, just as is the aura of cold that enfolds a mystical lich. Whether or not this clouding has some special effect on those of exceptional mental or mesmeric ability, I am unable to say.

Even worse, this cloud of confusion can be directed by the dark thoughts of the mesmeric lich. A mental blow from this creature causes not only physical damage, but also a psychic repercussion that feels as if it tears away at the very mind and

spirit of a being. Swiftsinger described it, saying, "It was as if the icy fingers of death had picked at the raveled edges of my mind, then yanked loose a handful of the threads of my life."

Other powers that the mentalist lich manifests are difficult to discern. Swiftsinger's tale speaks of people set upon by their own shadows; forced to fight hordes of imaginary spiders, snakes, or wolves (in each case, the creature feared most by the victim); or battered by mental waves of hatred and terror until they crouched as gibbering fools, drooling upon the ground. He also speaks of mighty warriors forced to commit the most horrific acts in their own minds, forced to feel themselves enjoying their foul deeds, then released to suffer pangs of remorse and confusion. Truly, the ability of the mentalist lich to climb inside an individual's own mind, elicit that which most horrifies him, then torment him with it, is the mentalist lich's most insidious and vile capability of all.

The Lair of a Mentalist Lich

As a devotee of cognitive pursuits, the mentalist lich rarely needs to leave its lair - it can conduct experiments within its own mind. Even when it does venture forth, I speculate that it does so through its mental devotions, transporting itself through a refined exertion of mind over matter. These peculiar abilities and exceptional reclusive tendencies make the discovery of its lair an arduous task.

Nonetheless, there are logical places to search. As usual, the lair would most likely be secluded and unvisited by mortals. Also, the lair would be relatively close to a repository of knowledge, such as an ancient and well-established library or a college of mesmeric discipline, as the lure of accumulated knowledge and wisdom would be a siren call to a being devoted to perfecting its mind. A third area to which the lich would be drawn is any site of mass carnage. Like the lich of magical derivation, the mentalist lich seems to feel an affinity for places imbued with the psychic resonance of death. Places with a history of great tragedy - huge battlefields, castles buried by landslides and volcanic eruptions, colleges swamped by tidal waves so that they are drowned beneath the seas - these are the places that call out to the mentalist lich. Perhaps the lich feels kinship to the many wispy echoes of mental agony left from the tragedy. Or, in a revelation of its momentous ego and hubris, perhaps it equates the massive human tragedies embodied by such places with its own tragic transformation.

The juxtaposition of these three requisites can sometimes create a nexus wherein the lich's lair may be pinpointed. Such is the place for the hunter to begin his tracking. Of course, many of the devices and strategies used by the more common lich to protect its lair are also undoubtedly employed by mentalist liches. As always, an abundance of lethal tricks and traps remains the surest sign that you are getting close to the lair of a lich.

Servants of the Mentalist

While a lich of the arcane derivation uses primarily undead as its minions, the mentalist lich is more likely to draw upon living persons for help. I base this hypothesis upon the assumption that sentient creatures are of much more use to a mentalist than mindless undead. I doubt that most servants of a mentalist lich truly know what they serve, for surely their sharp minds are muddled by their master's still sharper will.

From Swiftsinger's accounts and what little I have gleaned from other texts and stories of travelers from afar, mortals who are possessed of the rare talents of the mind and who wish to develop them are often at a loss to find teachers under whom to study. True masters of the mental arts are so few and far between that even those of good heart may be tempted to study at the feet of one of such evil as the mesmeric lich. Such a creature would be the ultimate sage, as it has manifestly looked far beyond what a mortal mind could experience or grasp.

Such liches may use their powers to cloud human minds and make themselves appear as normal mortals wisdom. They would then attract students to perform quests in distant lands, labor as experimental subjects, and serve as guards and soldiers. It would not be beyond a mentalist lich to set itself up as the head of a mystic cult to a nonexistent deity, or to masquerade as a minor god itself, to gain followers of use to it.

Unfortunately for students ambitious and gifted enough to study with a mentalist lich, the master is as likely to fatally entangle them in its web of subtle and devious plots as it is to impart to them the knowledge they so passionately seek. Furthermore, once a servant has served his master's purposes, he might well find himself serving one last, less profitable service - I shudder to guess at what awaits even the most faithful servant of the faithless lich when his usefulness is exhausted. For the lich, dismissing a loyal student who successfully completed many arduous quests would carry all the

pangs of saying "farewell" to Lord Azalin's tax collector, yet that student would be extraordinarily fortunate if a dismissal were all he got for his troubles. And woe to any student who displeases or annoys the lich! Killing a student who failed the least task or who dared to remain beyond his welcome would equate in the monster's mind to squashing a roach under a boot.

The point of this discussion is that the the path of a mentalist human is probably the clearest path to a lich of the same bent. Those who devote their lives to pursuing the powers of the mind are few and far between. Even if the student fails to learn the true nature of his master and repudiate it (unlike the bard Swiftsinger), a resourceful lich hunter may follow the cerebral river to its source, then choke off the flow once and for all. On the other hand, followers of a powerful mesmeric master would certainly be extremely intelligent. Whether they might be useful as instruments of betrayal is questionable.

The Face of the Master

The appearance and abilities of the mentalist lich are difficult to detail, as I have only the journal of Matthew Swiftsinger and some bits of rumor upon which to base my conclusions. I must speak in generalities, and the wise reader must be wary of my speculations.

According to the account of Swiftsinger, the mentalist lich shares a superficial physical similarity with the lich of arcane origin. The flesh is shriveled upon the bones, giving the creature the appearance of a corpse dried by a desert wind. The eyes have disappeared from their sockets, or been transformed, and twin points of crimson illuminate the spaces.

This creature seems to prefer loose robes of colorful design, but it does not maintain its garments, except perhaps by illusory means. Thus, the finery is tattered and torn when the mentalist lich's true form is at last viewed.

As may be expected, the mentalist lich is inclined to collect magical items with which to defend itself and enhance its powers, rather than make them. Even under the guise of an illusion, the presence of curious baubles and intricate jewelry may give away the lich.

When he speaks of mesmeric disciplines, hypnotic powers of will, and mental powers, Dr. Van Richten means psionics. Two types of liches may have psionic abilities in the Ravenloft setting: liches of magical origins who had psionic wild talents while they were alive (and retained their psionic abilities when they became undead), and psionicists who have managed to achieve lichdom - not mystically, but through a very specific psionic process. The details of this process, and all necessary information regarding psionic liches, can be found in Chapter Eight in this section.

Psionics in a Ravenloft Campaign

The psionic disciplines of liches are changed in the dark, dreadful atmosphere of the Ravenloft setting. The effects on psionics are consistent with those on magic. Roughly, they are changed to reflect the following principles.

Anything summoned or otherwise transported from another plane or world into the Ravenloft campaign cannot return home automatically. Divination abilities, spells, and powers are weaker in this campaign, favoring the secret ways of evil. Good and evil alignments cannot be detected by spells or other powers, although law and chaos can be so divined. Powers, spells, and magical items that are wholly evil or can be used only for evil purposes require a powers check of players' heroes each time those items are used by heroes. This applies to most forms that are necromantic in origin or that drain life essence. Spells, powers, and items that create or assist the undead, and similar necromantic spells with wicked purpose, may actually work better in the Ravenloft campaign. Many psionic sciences and devotions have specific changes that are not detailed here.

Dungeon Masters must consult Chapter Ten in *Domains of Dread* for a complete discussion of psionics in a Ravenloft setting. Each intelligent undead horror in this campaign can put up a shield of false thoughts indistinguishable from the thoughts of living intelligent beings, even if scanned using ESP or similar powers. The undead creature must consciously choose to do this, but it does not penalize the creature to do so, and it can move, attack, and defend normally. The undead being can choose to portray any emotion or thought, even love or friendship, although it finds "good" thoughts distasteful.

Every undead being is immune to any mind-control or mind-aitering ability in the campaign. This means that most telepathic disciplines are useless against them.

Psionic strength points (PSPs) are regained by players' heroes at a much slower rate in a Ravenloft campaign, because of the world's oppressive nature. The table below reflects this.

Table 3: Recovery of PSPs

Activity	Recovery Rate
Hard exertion, fighting	None
Walking, riding	1 per 2 hours
Sitting, reading	1 per hour
Rejuvenation *, sleeping	2 per hour

* **Rejuvenation:** Here, this is a psionic nonweapon proficiency from PHBR5 *The Complete Psionics Handbook*.

Finally, bold but foolish psionicists who make mental contact with any undead (in any of a number of ways, but most commonly while using a telepathic science or devotion) can be forced to make a madness check, at the Dungeon Master's option. The madness check and its consequences are discussed at length in Chapter Six of *Domains of Dread*.

Such evil deeds could religion prompt.

- Lucretius
"On the Nature of Things"

The Priestly Lich

When I last prayed to my goddess, I saw that she was sad beyond words. She had witnessed the mournful transformation of one of her priests into undead form - a lich. The priest had abandoned all that he had learned and forsaken his blessings to suck from the rotten fruit of evil power. I do not know what has happened to that priest, other than he is doomed to suffer eternally for the betrayal and forgiving his spirit over to a malignancy which serves to curse this world by its very existence.

- Tregarde of the Misty Dales

In general, the priest lich is much rarer than the wizard lich. The introspection common to secular magical studies promotes a greater number of mortals to lichdom. Clerics tend to have duties that mandate their association with other mortals, keeping them more "human." Service to another being, by its nature, also inhibits turning to lichdom since it suppresses the pervasive self-absorption necessary to drive the aspirant.

While mages are considered the most likely candidates to fall prey to the lure of lichdom, it should not be forgotten that priests may walk the road to unlife as well. In most respects, the processes are similar. The priest must, like the mage, discover the ritual to lichdom, whether it is revealed by beings from unseen planes, unearthed from ancient scriptures where it lay hidden in riddles, or unveiled by an evil deity through prayer. The priest, too, must manufacture a phylactery and concoct a poisonous potion to go with it. However, the transformation for a priest is based in priestly magic, ritual, and ceremony. A ritual designed for a mage would afford certain doom to a cleric.

Since a priest gains spells through ritual contact with a deity, it is beyond belief that the deity would not know of such a profound change as the follower transforming into a lich. The very thought of being able to hide such a thing from a deity that a person serves so intimately is absurd. It is almost universal that a cleric lich is of a neutral or, more likely, evil bent, as a power of good certainly will not tolerate such an unnatural and wicked transformation among any followers.

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Goodly Priests and Their Deities

I cannot imagine what would cause a priest serving the cause of good, justice, and order to turn against everything he has devoted his life to preserving. Nor can I imagine what the wrath of his betrayed god would be in a case like this.

During his research, a priest sometimes encounters the secrets to lichdom. Perhaps these secrets are given to him surreptitiously by an evil deity, or perhaps they are revealed by the priest's own god as a test. Whatever the means, a priest who comes by the secret might elect to take full advantage of it for his own gains. He may justify his actions by saying that in this manner he will serve his deity better, perhaps more powerfully or more everlastingly, but these are rationalizations. The transformation to lichdom is always, at its heart, a selfish course of action.

Even acquiring the necessary components for the lichdom ritual - organs from slain, sentient beings and poisons of dire repute and illegal status - is enough to cause the priest to be banished from his church if he is discovered. Surely he would be excommunicated when he undergoes the transformation ceremony, for then his deity will certainly know what happened

and inform other followers of his actions. When a priest is so banished, he loses all of the support of his religion. He can seek no lodging within lands or buildings owned or run by his church, nor can he associate with priests of his former religion or lay followers who know of his new status.

Worse, the priest loses his ability to cast spells of healing, protection, and blessing, and he finds that the strength his deity gave him to confront the undead is taken from him. We people of common peasant stock can survive without the ability to turn undead away from us, without the ability to bless or heal, without the ability to inspire the faithful to victory. If a priest should lose these abilities, it represents the collapse of the priest's very reason for being. He has turned his back on his life and jeopardized the very society he was trained to protect and nurture. Who will be there now for the people he served, to heal their wounds of body and spirit and to turn away the undead?

The deity who influenced that person into becoming a priest and welcomed him into the church is not likely to embrace the priest's treachery. In fact, the deity is more likely to react with a terrible curse upon the fallen priest. So, a cleric of good is unheard of among liches, or so I've read. His deity has abandoned and cursed him, and to continue existing he must forge a pact with a darker deity - at best, the disinterested and cold gods of pure knowledge, but at the worst the gods of evil and decay. In short, I conclude that so priest of goodness can ever become a lich.

In some AD&D campaigns (notably the Forgotten Realms setting), liches may be of any alignment. However, cleric liches, as well as wizard liches, are uniformly evil within the Ravenloft campaign. The dark powers that guide the Demiplane of Dread select only evil liches to bring to that place, and the native inhabitants of the demiplane who have the abilities, resources, and who escape the notice of the lord of their domain long enough to become liches are nearly nonexistent.

Neutral Priests and Their Dieties

It seems reasonable to me that priests who who espouse neither morality nor immorality, neither good nor evil, are the most likely to become cleric liches. In the main, these priest serve gods of knowledge, who are often revered by mages. These deities promote an ethic of rising to one's own level of ability by one's own hand, which promotes aspirations to lichdom.

It might be in the best interests of a neutral deity (for who am I to know the ways of gods?) to allow a servant to remain on the mortal world long beyond the age of mortal men, in order to accumulate and relate knowledge and experience to the church. While potions of longevity or elixirs of youth seem a logical resort in such a case, these concoctions are known to be of questionable effect. They cause stress in the normal fabric of a person's physical being, stretching it back and forth like a piece of rubber, until one potion too many is consumed, and snap! - the body disintegrates. One might rely on potions of longevity for a span of decades if one knew their mysteries (which I, alas, do not), but in due course the hand of death must close upon us all - or most of us, at any rate.

Therefore, in the mind of some coldly calculating and inhuman god, it might seem an eminently logical and necessary step to endow a faithful and trusted servant with the information needed to transform into a lich. The scrupulous performance of the research and processes necessary to complete the ritual of transformation, and the success or failure of the rite, would then prove the ultimate test of whether this servant was worthy of lichdom.

I find myself unable, no matter how broad of mind I attempt to be, to sympathize with the intentions of such gods. Mortals may not know the intentions of the divine, but how could a deity put one of its faithful through an experience guaranteed to warp its very mental being into something else? Surely such a god would know the unliving fruit of black knowledge is so perverse that a drift into evil is inevitable for its servant!

Evil Priests and Their Dieties

I have no doubt there are human fiends who strive to find proper candidates for lichdom, and I doubt not their success. Evil religions have their own dark goals to counter the forces of light. To tip the balance, some evil deities surely attempt to find priests among their followings to turn into liches, making them much more powerful tools in some evil design.

I have known some servants of these dark gods; they are a paranoid and elitist lot, certainly a mortal reflection of the vile

things they worship. To earn the "gift" of lichdom (as I am sure they regard it), there are surely many trials of which only the priests themselves are aware. These tests must be extremely difficult, or I fear the world would be quite overrun with priestly liches; such a station would be highly prized by all creatures of evil bent.

Having some understanding of the hearts and minds of evil, I speculate that the tests of lichdom are particularly strenuous because the transformation into lichdom represents an increase in power so significant that the deity may have difficulty maintaining control over the lich. This simple conclusion explains rather well why evil cleric liches fall into two types: those fanatically devoted to their deities, and those madmen attempting to become deities themselves.

The fanatics are extremely rare (I know of only one in existence), but they actually are most open about their condition as liches, at least with other followers of their gods. (My knowledge of this was gained through, shall we say, eavesdropping.) They are the high priests of deities of death or disease. They preside over unspeakably foul rites in huge temple complexes, protected and served by legions of fanatic followers. Their deities reward their devotion with ever larger insights into the mysteries of magic, faith, and possibly the energies of that plane of negative energy. They are valuable generals in the ongoing battle between evil and good for the hearts and souls of mortals, and their gods reward their loyalty with bounteous prosperity, ample knowledge, and miraculous powers beyond those of even the "common" lich.

An evil lich attempting to become a deity is superficially identical to a fanatic, but it gradually subverts the devotion of its god's followers, first portraying itself as a mouthpiece, then as an actual personification of the god's power and desires. The lich walks a thin and twisted line of duplicity, hoping to amass enough of a following (and enough magical items, artifacts of power, and abilities) to promote itself to the status of a deity without its own god divining the lich's ultimate intent too soon and squashing the lich like the two-raced insect it is.

A cleric lich is more likely to have salient abilities than is a wizard lich. These may be abilities granted by the lich's deity (and thus removable by the deity), or they may be manifestations of a difference or improvement in the nature of the ritual of transformation that invests the priest with lichdom. These special abilities could be the same ones discussed under "Salient Abilities" in Chapter Two, or they could be powers more in line with the specific deity to whom the cleric lich owes allegiance. These special abilities often show more of a subtle, interactive, charm- and illusion-oriented bent than those of the wizard lich; while the wizard lich tends to rely more on brute force, the cleric has a more social nature.

For instance, a cleric lich might have a whisper of suggestion ability rather than the voice of maleficence ability. The former can be used on anyone at any time, working like the suggestion spell but with a -2 bonus to the target's saving throw. The lich could use this ability up to six times a day. Suggestions could include encouragement to perform obviously harmful acts, but the target would then be entitled to a saving throw at a +2 bonus.

Psychological Impacts of the Change

A person has to possess a spirit at least tainted, if not twisted, by evil to want to become a lich. The realization of the goal is even more twisted.

Some of the ingredients in the potion of transformation are exotic and fatal poisons of mind-boggling strength. When drunk, these ingredients do more than alter the body - they alter the mind extensively as well.

Although I certainly have no direct evidence to support it, I believe that a cleric lich has a psychology all its own. The mind of the priest is swept away, shriveled by the potion and shattered by the rites. A cleric is a person of faith - faith in himself, faith in his deity, faith in the steadfast workings of the universe. The change into lichdom is a profound leap of faith in a direction that goes against the grain of the very constants of the universe.

The mind of the being that exists after the transformation is profoundly different from the mind of the being that existed before, because it has taken it upon itself to defy the natural ordering of the gods with respect to itself. The cleric lich has set itself above its own god in the matter of the avoidance of its death, and the fact that it finds itself still in existence after the transformation, after having the temerity to defy the universal order, subtly but absolutely shifts the underpinnings of its mind.

In the priest's place is a wholly different being composed of seething evil and pride. The personality of the once-living person grows fainter through the centuries, eventually fading from the lich's own memory. All of the knowledge and skills (and perhaps the goals) of its former self yet reside within the mind of the lich.

Yet driving the lich toward its goals is a lurking evil so awful that it defies mortal experience. The greatest loss in the transformation is the irrevocable erasure of the living person's personality. His very spirit is forever gone, remade in the image of the dominating power that is the lich. This loss is what makes deities of good abhor the transformation and deities of evil cautious about its use.

The cleric lich worships and receives spells from a deity, just as it did in life, but many deities will reject a cleric for seeking lichdom or destroy him out of hand. Cleric liches therefore serve deities devoted to raw knowledge, like Azuth or Mystra of the Forgotten Realms campaign; or they serve deities of death, decay, or evil, such as Cyric and Beshaba, also of the Forgotten Realms setting.

The cleric lich is created through the same process as is the wizard lich, except that the spells it casts are obviously clerical in nature. Common abilities of the cleric lich also match those of the mage lich, in that it has an icy, damaging touch, an aura of fear, certain spell immunities, and defenses such that it can be hit only by enchanted weapons of +1 or better. A cleric who becomes a lich loses the ability to turn undead, but it may command undead as described in the Player's Handbook under "Evil Priests and the Undead," as well as make use of other methods of dominating, controlling, and commanding undead described earlier in this section.

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*What is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange eons even death may die.*

- H.P. Lovecraft
"The Call of Cthulhu"

The Demilich

Throughout this guide, I have attempted to impart the sheer threat implicit in the existence of a lich. I do not believe any realm or plane of existence holds a more dangerous creature - except for one, and that is the subject of this chapter: *the demilich*. Here is a creature so evil and powerful that the lich by comparison would be little more than a quasimancer to it. The demilich is so nearly omnipotent that magic is more an old habit than a life's ambition!

I simply cannot fathom a mind so old, potent, and surely warped as that of a demilich. In fact, I have never seen one, nor met anyone else who has. All that I have to show that such a monster exists is a fragment of a legend recorded in the journal of Mirinalithiar. Its veracity is highly questionable and I feel disposed to ignore it-yet I cannot. If there is the remotest possibility that such an abomination exists, we must take steps to learn about it. We may never possess the power to destroy it, yet we may learn the best way to avoid its plans and its wrath.

Here are the pertinent passages from Mirinalithiar's diary.

It is told that there came to be trapped within this land a skull with precious stones for teeth, but nothing else to betoken significance. The realm from whence it came is lost in the dust of ageless time, and to whom it belonged no one can say. In its resting place did the skull lie for time out of mind. Never did it stir until its resting place was disturbed.

Then came Androlinatar, greatest of all explorers, who found the resting place of the skull with magic given to him by the gods themselves. With him came Elinver, greatest of all wizards, and Jazapan, greatest of all warriors, and Honik, holiest of all priests. With them came their legion of faithful and valiant followers. As a mighty army they took the lands before them, and so they came upon the resting place of the skull.

When they entered the resting place of the skull that had lain there for time out of mind, it immediately arose from the ground and spoke to them, saying, "I am Hero's Bane, the invincible."

Without warning the skull lashed out at Androlinatar and all his company of the mightiest men who ever lived, and it ripped their spirits from their breasts and changed their souls into priceless gems, which it wore as its teeth, and the mighty were powerless to stop it.

Their many servants were instantly burned to ashes where they stood, except one, who was sent hurtling from the mountain alive but broken, that he might take warning to the world, gnash his teeth in despair, and die.

With no evidence to support the existence of this creature, I have consulted and speculated with numerous sages, mages, and priests. To my surprise, they have recounted similar legends to me of monstrous powers within the confines of a disembodied skull, of gems that entrap living spirits, of creatures who sail unfettered among the countless planes, absolutely disinterested in the affairs of any single world, let alone any single person! With the help of these scholars, I have written this chapter. The knowledge contained herein may be of little or no use to the reader (an encounter with a demilich is as hopeless an exercise as a person may attempt!), but if knowledge is power, then the reader is always wise to gather as much knowledge as possible.

Origins

My best guess at the origins of a demilich is that it is an undead wizard who has lived so long, learned so much, and

gathered such power that it has literally achieved a new level of existence. The creature's definition of power itself has evolved entirely beyond the grasp of the mortal mind, so the demilich has abandoned all mortal exploits in order to survey realms in which only the gods tread. Having no interest in the world that gave it form, the demilich surrenders that form, and its body crumbles to useless dust. All that remains is its skull.

By the time its body falls into ruin, the lich has learned virtually all the arcane secrets of its world - all things that both should and should never have been discovered. It has had millennia to reflect upon its evil and the nature of power, and it has mused upon things that even the blackest hearts would call vile. Perhaps the new demilich abandons its grasp of the concepts of good and evil we know them. Perhaps good and evil do not even exist in its new understanding. The creature may now seek knowledge that, in the grand scope of things, is entirely neutral - mortal emotions and perspectives are trivial, petty, not worth consideration. Mayhap the demilich joins the deities themselves to dance through the ether, enjoying whatever inconceivable lives they have. Or the demilich may become the very heart and soul of evil, influencing others to follow in its path and spread destruction Throughout the realms of the living, everywhere.

Of any of these things, I can never be certain. All I can do is contemplate what they must be like, and, ironically, hope that I never learn the answers to my own questions!

The Transformation

In this mortal world, there is much opportunity for the lich to exist for quite a long time indeed. The world we know seems to be all too closely connected to darker energies upon which the lich feeds for its survival. Indeed, the lich is likely able to channel this dark energy through its body and spirit for centuries.

Whatever the duration of its life in the physical world, the unchecked lich is destined to undergo a gradual transformation. This change is a subtle one that requires little specific effort from the lich. Most of my consultants agree the conversion must occur naturally; in no way can any creature, living or dead, purposefully pursue such a course-the gods themselves would surely intercede. Rather, I suspect that the lich becomes more engrossed in its studies and meditations over time, until it has no care for matters in the physical world at all. In fact, it would not be surprising if a lich were to relocate to a place where it might never be disturbed by anyone from the physical realm.

In this case, it is reasonable to assume that the lich would begin to neglect the maintenance of its own body, working instead to greater efforts in absolutely pure research and meditation. As the undead wizard delves deeper into the theoretical, theory becomes more substantial while substance becomes increasingly theoretical.

After a time, our mundane perspective on the world and its secrets would likely become pointless to a lich, even a nuisance. The lich would have no more reason to consult its extensive collection of tomes that deal with the manipulation of this world. Perhaps all the information in the gigantic library shrinks in the budding demilich's vast consciousness, until the entire accumulation fits into a tiny, rarely visited corner of its incredible mind!

I have an image in my mind, of a lich upon a throne of bone - bone of enemies it crushed when it entertained concerns over the material realm of people and monsters. Without rest or sustenance, the lich thinks upon unknown subjects every moment of every day - days that do not exist as it sits upon that throne without an audience. It has long forgotten the undead servitors it once commanded, long forgotten the evil projects it initiated with the labor of their skeletal backs, long abandoned exploits that rocked the mortal world to its foundations.

Now it merely sits and contemplates who knows what, of ethereal regions beyond the physical realm, of spaces beyond even that. Its once powerful alchemical solutions have dried and fallen into powdery neglect. Even magical items that would conquer a world have lost their luster, and they sit in chests of which the lich cannot be bothered to remember the location. The wood of its benches, the paper of its tomes, all things consumed by age have disappeared in the face of eternity.

Ultimately, all physical remains of the lich slowly and inexorably decompose beyond recovery. All that is left of the dreaded lich is an object that will probably last forever: its skull. The former receptacle of that formidable mind finally comes to rest atop a mound of dust that was once its body. Perhaps it will sink into the seat of the throne upon which it once sat.

Again, I have an image in my mind, of a skull lying in a pillow of dust, its empty sockets devoid of even the dimmest hint of a reddish glow where once there was a blaze of unconquerable evil.

Final Analysis

By the time a lich allows its body to fall into dust, it has learned all it can of its physical world, or at least as much as it needs to; there simply is nothing else to concern it within the realm of mortals. Hence, it becomes an incorporeal entity, free to travel to places of which we can only imagine. Perhaps the lich perceives the very forces that comprise and drive the world and begins to drive them itself.

What fate awaits on the other side of physical reality? Does a demilich become a part of the evil that surrounds us? Is it absorbed by a greater evil that has throughout the millennia plotted for demiliches to come into being, so it may snatch their energies and satisfy its own grand master plan? Does evil even have a meaning to the once-mortal wizard anymore? I'm afraid that we will never know. Perhaps demilichdom is merely another step in an infinite line of lives. Mayhap becoming a lich is but the first of many steps toward some unknown state of transcendence.

Whatever the end result, whether pure immortality is truly achieved, the price is centuries of pain, torture, and an evil scourge upon a land of innocents. The ultimate price is the lich's personal spirit. Once transformed into a lich, a being can never experience the simple joys of living, nor can it enjoy the afterlife we achieve through our gods. In a real sense, the lich lives forever yet has nothing to live for.

Still, one happy conclusion may be gleaned from all this supposition: The demilich has no interest or use for the world as we know it. Wherever it has gone, it seems to have no reason to return unless to defend the place where its mortal remains sleep away the eons. So long as we mortals do not disturb its rest, I think it safe to say that the demilich will return the favor. If by some great accident the reader should come upon the remains of a demilich, nothing can help him anyway.

When a lich attains demilich status it abandons all attempts to reconstitute its body, choosing rather to explore the Outer Planes (except those demiliches within the Ravenloft setting on the Demiplane of Dread, who are limited to the border ethereal). Therefore, its body breaks down and eventually dissolves into a skull, a few bones, and a pile of dust.

Its has the ability to re-form its body at any time, but most demiliches clearly feel no inclination to do so. Indeed, a demilich in need of a physical body could conjure a healthy one out of thin air or, more likely, simply commandeer the body of any bystander.

Dr. Van Richten hopes that the demilich has no affect upon the Prime Material Plane, but when the lich has passed on to another stage of existence, its will might still be felt in the physical world. Perhaps it will embark on a large-scale conquest in an attempt to drain an entire realm or world of all life essence, and players' heroes might come into play as pawns in a cosmic chess game. Or the demilich may attempt to cross swords with the gods, themselves. Whatever the case, an adventure directly involving a demilich calls for extremely high-level heroes and maybe even an avatar or two.

Since the Ravenloft setting on the Demiplane of Dread is effectively sequestered from the rest of the multiverse, a demilich there cannot penetrate any plane beyond the border ethereal. On the other hand, it may be the only creature that can actually escape the Demiplane of Dread of its own volition. In any event, the Dungeon Master is strongly urged to exercise great care in the use of demiliches. They are rare to the verge of being unique, and they should not be portrayed as omnipresent villains who gallivant across the cosmos, playing havoc with the laws of the gods.

The final resting place of a demilich will be so obscure that the greatest of adventuring parties could and it only by the most incredible of coincidences. Even so, the demilich will not make a great effort to secure its remains because it simply has no reason to do so. When the time has come to enter demilich status, its undead body is an irrelevance. Genera! information regarding the demilich can be found in the Monstrous Manual tome, in the "Lich" entry. It will be especially necessary for the Dungeon Master to tailor the demilich's abilities to the needs of the campaign, more so than for any other monster. The demilich is as close to godlike in status as a monster can be, so its powers must be unique and specialized.

The following information provides some guidelines for additional powers that may be accorded to the demilich.

Possible Powers

The demilich can be afforded the ability to perform actions that affect the Prime Material Plane on a large scale. Even though it is a disembodied life form caught between the Negative Material, the Ethereal, and the Astral Planes, the demilich can affect the Prime Material Plane by directing energies from those planes it inhabits. This should be achieved only when conditions on the Prime Material are perfect - for example, during a special eclipse or the passing of a bizarre comet. At such a time, the gateways between the planes are weakest and the spirit of the demilich is strongest, as the demilich is then able to draw from many sources.

The physical manifestation of a demilich should not be within the scope of adventuring parties to combat. The only way to defeat a demilich is to stumble upon its remains and destroy them in the manner described in the Monstrous Manual tome. The demilich's powers should be used indirectly, perhaps to begin or end grand campaigns with an event of cosmic import or travesty. Here are some suggestions for demilich powers.

- ☼ The demilich can inhabit and control one hundred undead creatures of any type at once, maintaining both the creatures' innate abilities and endowing them with full sentience and lichlike powers. A legion of liches with a single consciousness can decimate entire armies!
- ☼ The lich is able to locate and communicate telepathically with any evil-aligned creature or person at will. The subject of the demilich's contact cannot ignore or resist the demilich, but must listen and obey every command. The range of this power and the maximum number of controlled individuals are up to the Dungeon Master.
- ☼ The lich is able to wreak havoc upon a 100-mile radius area with earthquakes, fire storms, and other catastrophic occurrences, killing almost all living things therein.

Conclusions

Of all the terrible monsters I have hunted, the lich has been the most elusive. Its only association with mortals lies in the acquisition of the arcane that all wizards crave. The lich is a gourmet who feasts upon the magic of the world. When it has what it wants, it abandons the company of civilization and withdraws to candlelit chambers in unknown recesses, to digest what it has taken in. Unfortunately, its appetite is insatiable.

Because of its secretive ways, I have had more difficulty unearthing solid information about the lich than any other creature of the night. Only Harmon Ruscheider has observed a lich at length and lived to tell the story, and only because the lich - whose name he never learned - accidentally destroyed itself in a power ritual. Alas, Dr. Ruscheider went mad and died with the knowledge he was given. Although I crave that knowledge, I realize in this case that ignorance is, indeed, bliss.

However, ignorance also is a hypnotic state that desensitizes one to impending doom, and I must never surrender to it. If the observations I made in my introduction to this subject are true, then my own beloved Darkon is ruled by a lich - one who cares all too little for privacy! In writing this treatise, I have put my life in more jeopardy than a warrior who goes to battle without arms or armor.

So be it. May this and all my dissertations upon the cursed monsters of this world far outlive me. If even one phylactery is smashed to a thousand shards because of the ink I have shed, the score will be more than even!

Of such great powers or beings there may be conceivably a survival... a survival of a hugely remote period when ... consciousness was manifested, perhaps, in shapes and forms long since withdrawn before the tide of advancing humanity forms of which poetry and legend alone have caught a flying memory and called them gods, monsters, mythical beings of all sorts and kinds.

- Algernon Blackwood

Dungeon Master Appendix

It would be a shame to use the lich in nothing more than a simple search-and-destroy scenario. A villain as intelligent and evil as the lich should not simply hang around its secret lair and wait for adventurers to flush it out and kill it.

Indeed, the lich is so complex in its abilities and what it has gone through to develop them that it nearly demands to be roleplayed. This is not to suggest that the outcome of the adventure could be handed over to the dice. (Most Dungeon Masters need no lectures about the role of dice in the game!) Rather, a nonplayer character that must accomplish its goals through the process of adventuring can lend an element of excitement to the game for both the Dungeon Master and the players. The Dungeon Master can develop open-ended scenarios where actually anything can happen, depending upon the interplay between heroes and nonplayer characters. The players, unable to step back from the gaming table and say, "The end of this adventure was written before we even began it", will be thrilled at the prospect of holding more of their heroes' destiny in their own hands.

It is strongly recommended that the Dungeon Master generate a lich with a specific personality and goals, but place it into an adventure in which it must overcome several obstacles other than the heroes. Of course the lich has its major objective, but it should have other concerns as well smart heroes will perceive and use in what should be a battle of wits as much as a battle of swords and spells.

This chapter can help the Dungeon Master manage the lich in adventures.

In the end, it should be possible to present a force of evil and deception so clever, challenging, engaging, and fun that the lich scenario will not be forgotten.

The Master Planner

This scenario is popular in spy thrillers, where the heroes must piece together the plans of the adversary before thwarting him. The master-planning villain hopes to achieve a specific and grand objective, but he does so by layering his intentions within a host of minor crimes designed to throw heroes off the scent. For example, a lich might launch a barrage of attacks upon a large library, only to steal an artifact on the other side of town. The heroes easily fend off the attacks (perhaps too easily), but they remain occupied with the defense of the library while the lich penetrates the superior defenses of the museum where the artifact lies.

Continuing with this example, the heroes should know about the artifact, including the fact that it is well protected, but they will be constantly accosted and cajoled by the librarian and other officials who insist that some volume of questionable value must be guarded like the crown jewels. Other clues might be sprinkled in liberally to subtly suggest that more goes on than meets the eye.

The Dungeon Master's objective is to keep the heroes off balance, divide their priorities, and keep them guessing at the lich's true objectives. A villain who successfully decoys the heroes away from his true objective will gain their respect and lasting enmity, and he will provide an extended adventure for all to enjoy.

The Mysterious Stranger

This scenario is common to murder mysteries, providing the classic whodunit plot. The lich's penchant for secrecy and its expertise in disguise provide excellent stuff for this kind of adventure. In this scenario, the heroes have no idea of what they are up against. There are multiple suspects, all up to something, and the lich is only one of them - the heroes don't know who the bad guy is.

The players should be initially completely unaware that a lich is behind the troubles they encounter. Once they discover that a lich is involved, they might be led to think (incorrectly) that some nasty person is the lich, perhaps with the lich's help.

In this scenario, the lich makes extensive use of living and undead servants. Given that undead in the Ravenloft campaign are able to completely mask their thoughts (Domains of Dread, page 182, "ESP"), the undead servants become especially effective in dealing with and deceiving players.

As the plan unfolds, the focus becomes the heroes' investigation of identities. Even at this point the players should still be unaware that a lich manipulates the plot. Just as the inhabitants of the Ravenloft environment can live out their entire lives not knowing the true nature of their own rulers, so can the players go through almost all of the adventure blind to the true force behind their encounters.

Recruiter of Evil

In this scenario, the lich attempts to raise an army of vassaliches (see Chapter Eight). At first this seems to be a good thing - evil wizards are disappearing left and right, and the countryside has not been so peaceful in years. Then, good-aligned wizards begin to disappear, too.

In a related scenario, a powerful, apparently good-aligned wizard seek to recruit a heroic wizard to join his ranks and purge the countryside of evil. In reality, the "good" wizard is a lich who is attempting to make a vassalich of the hero. The lich tempts the player's wizard with great power, perhaps even helping him or her - and the rest of the heroes - to overcome another evil being in the area. As that lich gains the trust and swells the ambition of the naive wizard, it begins to subtly turn the wizard against all close comrades. For example, the disguised lich may invite the heroic wizard to join in a short adventure the advances the cause of good, then reward the wizard with a powerful magical item. In game terms, the Dungeon Master would Find ways for the wizard to gain experience and even levels independently of the rest of the group, thus separating the hero from all close comrades in an attractive way.

If a hero embraces vassalichdom, even ignorantly, then the hero becomes a nonplayer-character villain. The trick is not to encourage evil behavior, but to tempt the hero with enormous power. This particular scenario will take time to play out effectively, to avoid undue suspicion the players' parts, but it also can be the most dramatic of adventures.

War of the Superpowers

If the heroes are too weak to deal with lich (as most should be), the Dungeon Master might create an adversary worthy of the lich, then use the heroes as pawns in an evil chess match between the two powerful combatants This scenario is not limited to a good vs. evil theme, either. Perhaps two liches vie for control of an item or artifact, or the lich and a vampire struggle for domination of one another The heroes might find themselves in a position to switch sides repeatedly, as one monster then the other gains the upper hand. Both evil creatures plan to kill the heroes once their ends have been served, but until then the heroes are valuable to both sides. If the heroes play their cards right, they may send both creatures to mutual destruction.

In each of these suggested scenarios, the outcome remains open to the influences of roleplaying. When a monster of genius intelligence like the lich comes into play, the most realistic adventures will contain plots within plots. A static lich in a trap-laden lair is just another monster, but a Dungeon Master-roleplayed lich is the worthiest of foes.

Techniques of Terror

In a lich-related adventure, mystery could be a cornerstone of the heroes' sense of fear. Just as knowledge is the heroes' strength, ignorance is their weakness and an excellent avenue in which to inspire terror.

For example, consider an exploit in which one of the heroes is kidnapped by the lich (a variant of the "recruiter of evil" scenario). When the other players' heroes question the locals, they discover that a nearby swamp is haunted," and that homes

around the swamp are cursed - many who have entered the area have disappeared. The swamp is avoided both day and night. This gives the players an obvious place to start.

The players will eventually realize that a lich is at work, but the Dungeon Master should maintain a sense of foreboding mystery as long as possible. Perhaps the kidnapped hero turns up with no memory of where she has been, only to disappear again without a trace; this can go on repeatedly until the heroes are beside themselves with apprehension. If subtle signs of bizarre experimentation show up on the kidnap victim's body, the alarm is again heightened. Keep throwing small details at the players that defy explanation. If the mysteries involve other heroes directly, so much the better. False clues are good, but frightening enigmas, such as a telltale surgical scar below the left ear, are even better.

Death of a Nonplayer Character

If players are made to feel that their heroes' lives are genuinely at risk, then the game is more interesting for everyone. The lich takes advantage of this basic aspect of human nature, which is why it has spells and abilities that are designed to make its lair appear as sinister and dangerous as it is. The Dungeon Master should use this part of lich behavior to the fullest.

For example, a cavern littered with the skeletons of fierce monsters suggests that the inhabitant of the cave is particularly dangerous, and the heroes could very easily end up on the floor as well, for someone else to discover. The players will expect a particularly nasty threat to overcome, and they will prepare themselves psychologically for its approach. They're ready to be thrilled.

Another excellent method of making heroes nervous is through the horrifying death of a nonplayer character. To use this device, the Dungeon Master should introduce a friendly individual to the adventuring group and allow him or her to gain their trust and goodwill. Allow the nonplayer character to save their lives once or twice, early in the adventure. Furthermore, allow the nonplayer character to be at least as powerful as the strongest member of the group. This will subtly tell the players that they are tangling with mighty enemies (because the Dungeon Master is giving them such a powerful "henchman"), thus raising the level of tension in the field, but it will also shock them when the nonplayer character is suddenly, horribly killed before their eyes.

Death of a Player Character

Every Dungeon Master has at one time or another wished to kill off a player's hero. There are a variety of reasons for such a desire, few of which are valid in light of more mature ways of keeping the hero or the player from the game. In the Ravenloft campaign, it is ironically even more inappropriate. Adventures in this campaign are more plot-driven than in other worlds, and the arbitrary death of any hero detracts from the mood and setting.

On the other hand, at times the Dungeon Master will want to put the imminent threat of a hero's death into the players' minds, and that cannot be achieved if the possibility of a hero dying is not genuine. Most players do not expect to be subjected to no-win situations, so an effective way to frighten them is to put their heroes into a hopeless predicament, then play it out very slowly. Let the players see that their heroes are going to die, and let them watch it happen little by little. For example, capture a hero, strap him to a table with a descending blade over his body (as per Edgar Allan Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum"), allow his comrades to search for him, and make it obvious that rescue will probably be a little too late.

The lich serves as a good vehicle for introducing this kind of terror. The undead wizard revels in death, and it has virtually no concern with the lives of mortals. In addition, the lich has a wide variety of methods with which to kill, from innate abilities to spells to an arsenal of magical devices.

General Mood and Surroundings

When the players first encounter a lich's lair, a deep sense of foreboding should be instilled in them. All things that are dark, sinister, depressing, black, and evil should be brought to the forefront of the senses. The key to evoking these feelings lies in the language of the Dungeon Master when describing the setting. For instance, if the lich is secluded within ruins in the middle of a swamp, the following description might be employed.

Despite the fact that it is close to midday, you must light your lamps and torches to see ahead. As you do, shadows reluctantly part to reveal the ruins you have been searching for.

The broken walls are almost entire hidden by all manner of twisted growths and choking vines. The once tall and gleaming stone pillars and beautiful gables are now dilapidated, mossy wrecks. The structure seems to have crumbled from within, collapsed from neglect and centuries of unchecked vegetation that snaked its way into the cracks of the walls and tore them into rubble.

Here, within the ruins, the smells of the swamp have dissipated slightly, and in their place is a most unusual, stifling odor, like that of a crypt freshly opened. It is a dank, rotten stench breathes forth from no apparent source.

Is it the chill of the swamp that your stomach like the hand of a dead man, or is it the dread within the very walls of this great castle, completely in the grasp of the swamp?

For all the heroes know, the ruins are completely empty and harmless. If the description is laced with nouns, verbs, and adjectives that imply the very surroundings are alive, the players might assume that the walls might reach out and grab their heroes. Every room can feel threatening, and every shadow can contain monsters made up purely of players' imaginations. The Dungeon Master can repeatedly point out strange noises in the background that are actually harmless, even unrelated to the matters at hand, but the heroes' ignorance of the source will drive them crazy.

Even common objects can strike fear into heroes' hearts if described correctly. It is not enough for the Dungeon Master to say "You see a chest against the west wall." In a horror adventure, the chest can be made threatening just by being there. Slight embellishments to common objects can make them eerie, adding to the atmosphere of the adventure. For instance, the Dungeon Master might say:

You see an oddly proportioned chest resting a few feet from the west wall. You haven't seen such a chest before. It has an almost cubic shape to it, with gold hinges and fittings. Multiple scratch marks appear all over its dark wooden surface - what made them is impossible to say. You can see the latch plainly, but there is no padlock attached to it. There is an odd chill in the room that might be coming from the chest - but you can't be sure.

This raises all sorts of questions about the chest that have to be answered by players' imaginations until their heroes actually open it. With their imaginations working, the players construct their own suspense. After a few narratives like this, the heroes will hesitate to pick up rocks from the ground, for fear of rousing the master evil villain from its lair.

Dungeon Masters who want to learn the "techniques of terror" should consult Chapter Thirteen, "Tenets of Terror" in *Domains of Dread*.

Fear and Horror Checks

Sometimes, no matter how hard he or she tries, the Dungeon Master simply can't evoke a sense of fear or horror in the players. While the Dungeon Master attempts to establish the mood with a juicy bit of narrative, the players make jokes and laugh at the description (which in fact, is a sign of fear - or so one hopes).

The function of the fear and horror check is to force upon a hero those feelings that the player does not experience. These checks can be enormously debilitating, and the Dungeon Master can impose penalties dice rolls to be sure that heroes fail them. If the players refuse to roleplay their heroes or make light of every hair-raising sight their heroes confront, the Dungeon Master can tell them their heroes will have to make these checks since the players obviously aren't reacting properly to the situation. After the heroes fail a few checks and suffer the consequences, the players may change their minds about laughing in the face of death.

The Lich in the Long Term

It is possible for a group of adventurers to build their entire careers around defeating the plans of a single lich, as well as the monster itself. It also is possible for lower-level heroes to defeat a lich without ever coming into direct contact with it. The plans that a lich puts into effect can be massive in scale, involving politics and diplomacy among nations, or they may be as modest as influencing the election of a village mayor. Heroes can defeat a lich simply by defeating the minions that carry out its orders. This way, lower-level heroes can tangle with a lich as can higher level ones, without facing certain death.

Of course, a lich defeated through its minions is still around to create more trouble for the heroes, who will have to build up their strength and experience before they confront the villain directly. The players should, however, be aware that while they are developing their personal abilities, so is the lich that they are hunting. If a far-reaching lich-based plot - one that takes

many long nights of play and perhaps several levels of adventuring to resolve - is desired, then the minions of the lich can change from adventure to adventure, always becoming more challenging, until the heroes are strong enough to face the lich itself. This assumes that the heroes don't know who the master planner is. They might go on for years of game time, fighting diverse adversaries and going on long quests, only to discover in the end that they have been fighting representatives of the same enemy the whole time.

Imagine the heroes' (players') astonishment when they realize that a wizard they defeated when they were at the first or second level of experience has been behind all of the campaign's troubles. When the heroes finally know the source of their woes and angrily vow to destroy him once and for all, they are again surprised to learn that he has since become a lich. Now they must fight their way through layer upon layer of defenses before they can finally settle the score. Such a campaign could last for years.

Lich Magic

In the realm of the Ravenloft setting, a lich is able (at the Dungeon Master's discretion) to cast necromantic spells with much greater efficiency than liches in other realms - sometimes even beyond the efficiency that necromantic spells already exhibit in the campaign. A general rule of thumb might be that all spells of the school of Necromancy have either double the effect or half the casting time when employed by a lich in this campaign. The Dungeon Master should determine the exact effects in each situation, as some effects cannot easily be doubled. The "doubling" of effects refers to all spells listed anywhere, including those in Chapter Nine, "The Way of the Wizard," in *Domains of Dread*. The Dungeon Master should always check the rules concerning spells cast in this campaign for specifics. Even if a demilich casts a spell, it is still subject to the unique effects of the campaign unless otherwise noted.

Lich-Altered Spells

The following are variants of existing necromantic spells. For each spell listed, a corresponding spell appears in the *Player's Handbook*. The statistics for each spell - casting time, components, duration, and so forth - remain the same unless otherwise noted. However, all spells should be considered a level higher than their common counterparts. Also, these spells were devised by liches, to be used by liches; they are inherently evil. Liches require particularly evil acts to attract the attention of the dark powers since they are already "part of the club," so to speak. Nonliches, on the other hand, are potential inductees. Therefore, any wizard who attempts to cast these spells will quite likely attract the attention of the evil lands of the *Domain of Dread*. Hence, nonliches that cast lich spells are subject to a powers check, perhaps with a 25% increase to the chance of being noticed.

Greater Detect Undead (2nd level)

With this spell, a lich is able to detect a! undead within range. Range is equal to the lich's Intelligence score in miles. Detection is omnidirectional, and the lich need not remain stationary. This spell is not hindered by obstacles of any kind. Furthermore, undead are not entitled to a saving throw enabling them to avoid detection.

Improved Chill Touch (2nd level)

This spell improves upon the damage and effects of *chill touch*. The target must save vs. spell or suffer 10 points of damage and become paralyzed from the extraordinary pain and cold. The paralysis lasts in hours equal to the amount of damage caused. Victims who fail to successfully save also lose 2 points of Strength and Constitution, and a full day is required to regain a lost point of each attribute. This spell will also destroy any undead creature that has less than 3 Hit Dice, but if the undead makes a successful saving throw vs. spell, there is no effect.

Sinister Cantrip (2nd level)

Cantrips normally are used to produce innocent parlor tricks. This spell is similarly harmless, in terms of physical effects, but it can be used to create a sinister trick or illusion that strikes fear or disturbs the psyche of those who see it. Sinister cantrip is a favorite prank among vassaliches, testing their new form. Some typical applications of this spell are an illusion of insects crawling out of prepared food, a nagging itch in an impossible-to-reach spot, an illusion of bleeding from the fingernails, and altering the pitch of a victim's voice to make it sound like growling.

Skeletal Hand (3rd level)

This spell is similar to the spectral hand spell, but the image of the hand is that of a skeletal one instead of a ghostly one. The lich can cast touch-based spells of 4th level or less through the hand. In addition, the skeletal hand can deliver physical

blows by making a normal attack. The lich receives a +4 bonus to its die roll, and a successful hit inflicts 1d10 points of damage. The hand may be attacked, but it can be damaged only by weapons with magical enchantments. Any damage to the hand ends the spell and inflicts 1d4 points of damage upon the caster. The hand can be kept at bay by a priest of good alignment by attempting to turn the hand as an undead creature with 2 Hit Dice. The lich may move about while it controls the hand, but it may not make other attacks.

Destroy Undead (4th level)

A powerful variation of hold undead, destroy undead disintegrates undead creatures with Hit Dice equal to or less than the casting lich. Undead with less than 3 Hit Dice are automatically destroyed. Undead with 4 or more Hit Dice are allowed a saving throw vs. spell. If successful, the targets suffer 5d10 points of damage. If unsuccessful, they are destroyed. At the Dungeon Master's discretion, vampires, mummies, and other high-level undead may be partially or completely unaffected by this spell.

Feign Destruction (4th level)

Similar to feign death, this powerful spell allows the lich to simulate its own destruction. When badly wounded, the lich may cast this spell. Once done, the lich's body crumbles to dust, and detection spells or abilities will indicate that its spirit has returned to its phylactery. In reality, the lich's body has used teleport without error to reach a secret location. At the same time, a pile of dust and bones has teleported from that same secret location, replacing the original. Iron replicas of the lich's noncloth possessions can be forged and placed on the dust-lich, to be teleported with it. The replicas bear only the shape of the items they replace, not the color. For example, a magical crown adorned with gems will be replaced with an iron one, the gems also made of iron. The range of the spell—that is, the furthest distance that the lich can be from its mock body—is equal to the lich's Intelligence score times 1,000 feet.

Lich Armor (4th level)

This spell works as the *spirit armor* spell, with the following exceptions: instead of a shimmering aura, the armor takes the form of a black shroud that mystically flows about the body of the lich. The armor offers the protection of plate mail (AC 3), and its protection is cumulative with the effects of other armor and magical devices. When it is dispelled, the lich suffers 2d6 points of damage instead of 2d3.

Lich Touch (4th level)

A step above *vampiric touch*, this spell inflicts 9d6 points of damage upon a successful attack. In addition, damage inflicted by this spell cannot be healed by spells or magical items, but only by rest or by magical potions. Any added points over the lich's normal total are treated as temporary hit points that dissipate after one day. In all other respects, this spell is the same as the *vampiric touch* spell.

Mass Contagion (5th level)

The effects are the same as for the contagion spell, except that it affects a mass of living persons within a 10-foot radius, instead of just one individual. The number of people who can be affected is equal to the lich's Hit Dice.

Persona of Death (5th level)

This spell is a variant of *mask of death*. This spell is generally cast in conjunction with *animate dead*. When cast, it not only makes a corpse appear to be a specific person, but if animated the corpse sounds and behaves like (has the mannerisms of) that person, making an almost perfect duplicate. Of course, the lich must have a good idea of what the duplicated person sounds and acts like. The persona is fairly superficial, but people who know the person being mimicked can be fooled if they don't examine the corpse closely. The corpse still has to be controlled, and it will not have any of the mimicked person's knowledge.

New Spells

Corruption

(Enchantment/Charm)

Level: Wizard 2

Range: 30 yards

Duration: 1 day

Area of Effect: One person

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1

Saving Throw: Negates

This spell inundates the target with an emotional flurry of corruption and greed. If the victim fails a saving throw vs. spell (+4 bonus for a priest or paladin victim), he or she temporarily succumbs to the temptations of dark power and becomes transfixed by delusions of grandeur for two rounds. After this effect expires, the victim must roll another saving throw vs. spell or be predisposed to the lich, as per a *charm person* spell, for one day. If the victim makes the second saving throw, he or she hesitates for one round before attempting any offensive move against the lich or any of its minions or property. Any priest or paladin who fails the first saving throw against this spell will lose the ability to cast spells above 2nd level until a period of one day has been spent in solitude and prayer, or an *atonement* spell is cast.

Death Sight

(Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: Wizard 3

Range: 30 yards

Duration: 5 rounds

Area of Effect: One person

Components: S

Casting Time: 1

Saving Throw: Negates

The victim of this spell sees every living being around as a walking, decayed corpse or zombie. The victim must make a fear check on the first round of effect, and must make a horror check at the beginning of each subsequent round of the spell's duration if the initial fear check is made successfully.

Sleep of Horror

(Enchantment/Charm)

Level: Wizard 3

Range: 30 yards

Duration: Special

Area of Effect: One person

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 7

Saving Throw: Negates

If a save vs. spell is failed, the victim is wracked with nightmares during his or her sleep, completely disrupting any restful effects such as recovering spells, hit points, or PSPs. The victim has 10 nightmares during the night, each lasting 1d10 rounds, and he or she must make a horror check upon awakening after each nightmare. A *sleep* spell negates these effects. The material component of this spell is a pinch of black sand.

Stench of Death

(Invocation/Evocation)

Level: Wizard 3

Range: 30 yards

Duration: 1 hour

Area of Effect: 50-foot radius

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Saving Throw: Negates

This spell fills the area of effect with a smell so foul as to cause complete disorientation among those caught within it. A successful save vs. paralyzation allows a victim to remain within the area of the stench, unaffected by the odor though still able to detect it. A victim who fails the roll is overcome by the smell, doubled over and unable to cast spells, fight, or defend. However, the victim may still flee the area of effect. Once outside of the stench, the victim requires a round of breathing fresh air before resuming normal activities. As this effect is strictly magical, no wind will blow it away. It is,

however, subject to the casting of *dispel magic*. The material component of this spell is a rotted body organ from an animal.

Bone Form

(Alteration, Necromancy)

Level: Wizard 4

Range: 3 yards

Duration: 1-20 hours

Area of Effect: Sufficient bones for the spell (see below)

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the lich is able to create any object less than 3 feet long, high, and deep out of bone matter. The lich must have a supply of bones on hand to create whatever object it desires. Weapons can be created with this spell; such weapons are considered evil, but they offer no bonuses to attack rolls. The material components of this spell are enough bones to construct the desired item and a drop of body fluid (spittle, blood, or the like).

Bone Seizure

(Enchantment/Charm, Necromancy)

Level: Wizard 4

Range: 60 yards

Duration: 1-10 rounds

Area of Effect: One person

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 3

Saving Throw: Negates

With this spell, the lich can take control of the victim's bones. It does not matter if the target is alive or dead. Control is awkward at best: The lich can make the target walk, lay down, or sit down only. It cannot make the target fight, cast spells, speak, jump, and so forth.

Knoslira's Crypt

(Alteration, Invocation/Evocation)

Level: Wizard 5

Range: 30 yards

Duration: 1-10 days

Area of Effect: 50-foot radius

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 8

Saving Throw: None

This spell causes any inhabited structure to become sealed as a crypt. In effect, all exits are *wizard locked*. Then the interior darkens over a period of five rounds. No light, even magical, can function in the darkness, nor can infra vision. When the structure is wholly dark, a horrible, musty smell of death permeates the area, prompting fear and horror checks. Optionally, the Dungeon Master may call for madness checks (see Chapter Six, Domains of Dread.).

Sinister Surroundings

(Enchantment/Charm)

Level: Wizard 5

Range: 0

Duration: 1 month/Hit Die of the lich

Area of Effect: 1-mile radius/Hit Die of the lich

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 2 rounds

Saving Throw: None

This spell does not change the look of the affected area as would a *hallucinatory terrain* spell. Rather, it is used to create a

grim and dismal feel around the lich's lair. Nonevil characters suffer a -1 penalty to fear and horror checks within the area of effect; evil beings gain a +2 bonus to all morale checks. *Dispel magic* has no effect on this spell.

Zone of Despair

(Enchantment/Charm)

Level: Wizard 5

Range: 0

Duration: 1-6 hours

Area of Effect: 100-foot radius

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 8

Saving Throw: Negates

Unless a saving throw vs. spell is successfully rolled, a hero entering the area of effect becomes depressed and suffers a penalty of -4 to initiative rolls. Any emotion-controlling spell, as well as *dispel magic*, negates this effect on a hero.

Bones of the Earth

(Alteration)

Level: Wizard 6

Range: 10 yards

Duration: 1d20+10 days

Area of Effect: Special

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 3 rounds

Saving Throw: None

With this spell, the lich is able to create minor structures out of stone. When cast, a structure, not more than 20 feet high and 10 feet wide at the base per Hit Die of the lich, rises from the ground. The structure is simple and solid, and it can appear in any form the lich desires. It takes two rounds to form, and its creation is always accompanied by extremely loud rumblings. The structure lasts for the duration of the spell, after which it recedes back into the ground. Multiple structures can be created, but they are divided among the lich's total available mass. For example, an 11-HD lich could create one 220-foot-tall structure or eleven 20-foot-tall structures. The material components for this spell are a stone and a weed.

Disrupt Dominion

(Necromancy)

Level: Wizard 8

Range: 20 yards

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: Special

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 round

Saving Throw: Negates

By casting this spell, a lich attempts to take control of undead creatures from another commanding entity. The creature in control of the undead rolls a saving throw vs. spell. If successful, control of the undead is uninterrupted. If unsuccessful, the lich has clouded the undead controller with assorted negative energy patterns that disrupt its control. The undead do not automatically become the lich's minions, being now free-willed, but the casting lich is free to exert its will upon them and assume control in subsequent rounds.

Ghoul Lattice

(Alteration)

Level: Wizard 8

Range: 0

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: 100 yards/Hit Die

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Saving Throw: None

Stealing corpses from graveyards for raw materials can be a time-consuming task without the use of this spell. Casting it creates a small tunnel that extends chaotically from the point where the spell was cast, then dividing into a series of shafts connecting with any number of graves or other subterranean pockets within the area of effect. The tunnels are 4 feet in diameter and circular, and they are situated an average of 6 feet below the surface. The tunnels intersect in a mazelike fashion, but the only place where they emerge at the surface is at the point where the lich stands. (If the lich casts the spell underground, then the tunnels never reach the surface.) The spell creates a random latticework of tunnels through which the lich can summon new minions or harvest necromantic spell components. The material components for this spell are a long fingernail and a pinch of dirt from a grave.

Graft Flesh

(Necromancy)

Level: Wizard 8

Range: 0

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: The caster (lich)

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 round

Saving Throw: Negates

Should a lich fall victim to a vorpal weapon or otherwise lose a limb, it can cast this spell and graft a body part from an dead body to its own; the grafted limb functions normally. At the Dungeon Master's discretion, a lich can even graft additional appendages to its body and use them - though, obviously, its abilities will have to be specifically adjudicated. Also, the sight of such an altered creature will certainly evoke a horror check!

Graft Item

(Alteration, Necromancy)

Level: Wizard 8

Range: 0

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: The caster (lich)

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 round

Saving Throw: Negates

This spell is similar to the *graft flesh* spell, allowing the lich to graft any item, magical or otherwise, to its flesh. The attachment is instantaneous and permanent. There is no way to remove the object short of cutting it off.

Simulate Skill

(Alteration)

Level: Wizard 8

Range: 0

Duration: 1d10+10 hours

Area of Effect: The caster (lich)

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Saving Throw: None

After casting this spell, the lich is able to use any weapon or nonweapon proficiency that a dead person possessed in life. The person cannot be more than 12 hours dead, and the lich must have witnessed that person using the proficiency in order to know that it exists. The dead hero is not deprived of the simulated ability, so a *resurrected* warrior whose skill with arms has been imitated still has that skill. The material components are a magnet and a piece of reflective glass.

Wave of Death

(Necromancy)

Level: Wizard 8
 Range: 0
 Duration: 2 rounds
 Area of Effect: 1-mile radius
 Components: V, S, M
 Casting Time: 5 rounds
 Saving Throw: None

When a lich casts this dreadful spell, all vegetable matter within the area of effect withers and dies over a 2-round period. The death is irreversible and cannot be prevented; the sight is a shocking event to behold, requiring a horror check for all who see it. Druids and rangers make their checks with a -4 penalty. The material components for this spell are a flower and a drop of poison.

Confer
 (Conjuration/Summoning, Invocation/Evocation, Necromancy)

Level: Wizard 9
 Range: Touch
 Duration: Special
 Area of Effect: One creature
 Components: V, S, M
 Casting Time: 1 round
 Saving Throw: None

This spell is cast in conjunction with *create minion* for the purpose of creating a quasimancer (see Chapter Seven). When the confer spell is cast upon the created minion, the undead creature's mind becomes attuned to spell memorization. The lich then plants the spell repertoire of a 9th-level wizard (including number of spells and levels) within the minion's mind. The quasimancer can afterward cast the implanted spells at its discretion, as if it were the wizard who memorized them. The lich must expend spell energy equal to the level of the spell placed in the quasimancer's head. In other words, to place a 5th-level spell in the quasimancer, the lich must expend the equivalent of a 5th-level spell from its daily allowance of carried magic. The quasimancer can receive spells from its master only once; when all of its spells are cast, it becomes a mindless undead.

Note that the quasimancer must have all spell components necessary to cast the spells implanted in its mind. This spell cannot be cast upon any undead creature other than one raised by a *create minion* spell. Casting this spell upon a living person instantly causes insanity that can be cured only by a psionic being using *psychic surgery* or someone using a *wish*. The material components of this spell are the minion and a bit of brain tissue from a sentient being of at least average intelligence.

Create Minion
 (Necromancy)
 Level: Wizard 9
 Range: 10 feet
 Duration 1-20 days
 Area of Effect: One creature
 Components: V, S, M
 Casting Time: 1 round
 Saving Throw: Special

This spell is used in conjunction with *confer* in order to create a quasimancer (see Chapter Seven). When the lich casts *create minion*, a corporeal undead minion is animated and reinstated with a portion its former life essence, giving it artificial intelligence and spellcasting potential.

In terms of physical traits, the minion becomes, in effect, a wight, having all the abilities and statistics of that creature (as per the *Monstrous Manual* tome). The newly created minion is entitled to a saving throw vs. spell (as a 5 HD creature) to avoid failing under control of the lich. If it succeeds, it will do its best to escape the lich, then go on a killing spree, resentful of the knowledge that its time of existence is limited. (Some created minions may attempt to find a wizard and force him to cast *permanency* upon them, thus negating the 1d20 day expiration of the spell.) A minion that fails its saving throw falls

under complete control of the lich and acts as its master's agent in the field. Its intelligence allows it to command other undead in its master's name, and it remains susceptible to the *confer* spell.

A created minion under a lich's control makes all saving throws at the level of its master. It is immune to *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, electricity, insanity, *charm*, *sleep*, cold, and death spells. It exudes a *fear* aura, 5-foot radius, requiring a successful save vs. spell of an onlooker who must flee for 2d4 rounds if the save is failed.

Casting this spell upon a living person requires the victim to make a successful save vs. death magic or the person immediately dies, becoming a created minion entitled to the saving throw against control detailed above.

The material components of this spell are the body to be raised and a bit of brain matter from a being with at least average intelligence.

New Magical Items

The following magical items were created in the Ravenloft campaign by liches. They are neither artifacts nor relics, as they can be created by any lich - in fact, any mage - who has the knowledge to do so. However, any mage who attempts to create one should make a powers check. None have any XP value.

Torc of Craftsmanship

This cursed neck ring cannot be removed by any means short of a wish, except by a lich. While the wearer lives, he or she receives a +2 bonus to all saving throws vs. spell of the school of Necromancy. When the wearer dies, the torc automatically absorbs all nonweapon proficiencies the person possessed in life. If the torc is later worn by another person or by a lich, the proficiencies it absorbed become available to the wearer. Only nonweapon proficiencies are available for absorption; spellcasting and weapon proficiencies are excluded. However, the skills to read, write, and speak foreign languages are absorbed and can be used by the wearer. (Conversation generally constitutes such use, as does reading a scroll or sign.) The torc cannot enhance a skill already possessed.

Central to the functioning of this neck ring is a ruby set in its center. Should the gem be taken from the torc, all skills are lost and the torc becomes nonfunctional.

The torc may be used only thirty times to absorb skills. After the thirtieth time it does so, it becomes jewelry of 500 gp value. This neck ring cannot be recharged, but it can be put on a different victim, whose skills will be absorbed into the torc upon death. The wearer has no method of knowing how many proficiency-absorbing uses the torc has accomplished unless a careful record is kept.

This torc is employed by a lich when it has the opportunity to capture live people. Note that the torc does not deprive a living person of skills, but merely copies what is within the person's mind.

Crown of Summation

This ruby-studded circlet is similar in function to the torc of craftsmanship. Instead of capturing skills, however, the crown absorbs the wearer's memories. If the item is placed upon the head of a person within one hour after his death, all of the person's thoughts from the previous 1d6 days are transferred into the gems. The crown may then be placed upon another person's head (usually a lich), and all recorded events are played out in detail for the wearer.

Should a living person put on the crown, 1d4 levels of experience are drained into the rubies. They may be regained by removing the crown and putting it on again, but if this is not done the levels are lost and cannot be regained by any means short of a wish. If another person puts on the crown after levels have been drained into it, that person merely experiences the memories of the previous wearer as described above; the new wearer does not gain the lost levels of experience, nor does the new wearer lose any levels. The drained victim cannot regain any lost levels if another person puts on the crown before the victim does so a second time.

The second wearer experiences the memories of the first as if actually living them. The crown transfers senses and emotions to the wearer, and physical occurrences are experienced, though their effects are not translated into actual effects on the wearer (such as damage). However, psychological experiences are lasting. For example, if the memory contains a failed horror check, the wearer will experience the effects of it even after removing the crown. All actions are displayed at the rate of one day's memories per round. The crown functions only once, then becomes a piece of common jewelry worth 1,000 gp. It cannot be recharged.

A lich might typically use such a device to determine how an infiltrator came to find its lair, who his comrades are, and by what means he arrived. The crown also may be used to become familiar enough with a person to effect a successful impersonation.

Ring of Izmur

This magical item combines the effects of a ring of free action and a *time stop* spell. It also provides a +3 bonus to the Armor Class of the wearer. The *time stop* spell may be used up to three times per day, but not for more than ten uses altogether, after which the ring of Izmur loses this power. The Armor Class benefit remains in effect until the wearer is successfully struck by an enchanted melee weapon, whereupon the bonus is lost for one day. The free action aspect of the ring is continuous and permanent.

Those within the 15-foot radius of effect of the time stop spell are entitled to a saving throw vs. wand. Successful rolls negate the effects of the time stop.

Eye of Donoagi

Donoagi is a fabled evil monstrosity made of stone. Legend reports that she has been long asleep, awaiting a time when her faithful stone priests will construct an elaborate temple and cast a succession of powerful spells to reawaken her, allowing her return to the world.

The eye of Donoagi is a 3-inch-diameter amulet that resembles a large tiger's eye. It has three functions. First, the eye allows the wearer to meld directly into stone and reemerge at another point up to 100 feet distant, 1-3 rounds after the melding. While the wearer remains within the stone, he is invulnerable to all forms of psionic and physical attack. However, a stone shape spell cast within 1 round upon the surface where the wearer of the eye disappeared will inflict 3d6 points of damage upon him. Second, the eye also allows the wearer to phase through stone up to 2 feet thick at will. Finally, upon command, the eye transforms any appropriately sized stone statue into a stone golem under the control of the owner (usable once per day; the golem becomes inanimate after one day of use).

A lich who forges the amulet is automatically able to manipulate it. A live person of any sort must swallow a small stone before the amulet will work. The amulet can be used up to five times a day.

Nails of Rending

These are prosthetic, 3-inch-long fingernails found in sets of 5-10 (1d6+4). The nails are concealed within 1/2-inch-wide tubes into which the tips of the fingers are put, whereupon the nails bind themselves to the wearer forever. For undead beings, putting on nails of rending is completely painless. For a living person, however, a horror check is required: failure results in unconsciousness for 1d20 minutes, in addition to the effects described in *Domains of Dread*, Chapter Six. Also, the pain experienced is extreme, requiring the wearer to roll his Constitution score or less on 1d20 or permanently lose 1 point of that attribute. (A restoration spell returns the affected hero's Constitution score to normal.) The pain lasts for only one minute, during which time the victim can perform no useful actions whatsoever, but bonding is constantaneous. Regardless of the outcome of the horror and "pain" checks, the nails replace the person's natural fingernails. The pointed ends of the nails are made of metal, but they are as sensitive as the fingers to which they are attached.

These nails afford the wearer an additional 1d6 points of damage in barehanded melee attacks. When the nails strike a foe's armor, they have a chance to rend it (use the wearer's Bend Bars/Lift Gates chance), reducing the Armor Class benefit of that armor by 1. Magical armor is entitled to a saving throw vs. lightning to avoid the effects (see Table 29 in the *Dungeon Master Guide*). After the nails are worn for a few days, the wearer's hands become shiveled and grotesque, appearing withered and dead. Even the application of but one nail evokes this effect.

No method exists, short of employing a wish spell or cutting off the wearer's hands, of removing the nails once they are applied. If a wish is used to remove the nails, the wearer's hands remain shriveled unless a restoration spell is cast upon them to restore them to their proper appearance.

Potion of Spirit Flight

This potion causes the imbiber's spirit to depart its body. The physical body constantly dies and can only be resuscitated by a *resurrection* spell. Psychically, the effects are similar to *astral spell* in that the drinker is now a disembodied, spiritlike creature floating about the Prime Material Plane, invisible to normal sight and unable to communicate.

While in this form, the drinker is effectively removed from reality, unable to affect the physical world, and unable to be

affected by it. The spirit is invulnerable to all forms of attack and is invisible to all forms of detection except through spells or devices designed to detect the presence of the alignment of the drinker. (Note that such spells are largely ineffective in a Ravenloft setting.)

The spirit of the imbiber is unable to return to his body unless a *resurrection*. spell is cast upon him. While in this state, he is able only to observe the physical world and travel to the Astral Plane at will. (Again, on the Demiplane of Dread, astral travel is impossible.) If the Astral Plane is entered, the spirit is vulnerable to any hazards endemic to that environment. Otherwise, the spirit continues to move about for as long as its body is intact.

There is one circumstance in which the disembodied spirit is able to affect the physical world: The spirit is able to appear as a ghostly, visible form within mirrored surfaces. The spirit may not appear in any magically enchanted mirror, however. While visible, the spirit is able to move and make any gestures it desires within the confines of the mirror. Likewise, the spirit may appear at any size or scale within the mirror desired. The ghostly image can be maintained for 1d20 seconds each hour, after which the spirit must rest from the exertion of crossing planar boundaries, if only superficially.

Verbal communication is impossible, and the spirit and people in the physical world are unable to hear each other. Not even a *speak with dead* spell will aid in this endeavor.

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Psionic Lich

Climate/Terrain:	Any land
Frequency:	Very Rare
Organization:	Solitary
Activity Cycle:	Night
Diet:	Psionic energy
Intelligence:	Supra-genius (19-29)
Treasure:	A
Alignment:	Any evil
No. Appearing:	1
Armor Class:	0
Movement:	6
Hit Dice:	9+18
THAC0:	1
No. of Attacks:	1
Damage/Attack:	1d8+2
Special Attacks:	Psionics, mind struck power, psionics-draining touch
Special Defenses:	Psionics, spell immunities, struck only by +1 or better weapons, phylactery
Special Weaknesses:	Phylactery
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	M (6' tall)
Morale:	Fanatic (17-18)
XP Value:	16,000

PSIONICS SUMMARY:

Level	DIS/SCI/DEV	ATT/DEF	SCORE	PSPs
20	6/10/25	all/all	18	82

Clairsentience: Sciences: *aura sight, object reading*; Devotions: *spirit sense*.

Psychokinesis: Devotions: *animate shadow*.

Psychometabolism: Sciences: *death field, life draining, shadow-form*; Devotions: *aging, cause decay, displacement, ectoplasmic form*.

Psychoportation: Sciences: *teleport*; Devotions: *astral projection* (if not in a Ravenloft campaign), *dimensional door, dream travel*.

Telepathy: Sciences: *domination, mindwipe, psychic crush, tower of iron will*; Devotions: *contact, ego whip ESP, id insinuation, inflict pain, intellect fortress, mental barrier, mind bar, mind blank, mind thrust, psionic blast, thought shield*.

Metapsionics: Sciences: *empower*, Devotions: *psionic sense, psychic drain, receptacle, wrench*.

The above powers are common to psionic liches, but it is not unusual for some to have different powers. Few argue that the power of master psionicists is any less than that of archmages. Proof of this can be found in the fact that the most powerful psionicists are actually able to extend their lives beyond the spans granted them by nature, just as powerful wizards are known to do.

A psionic lich looks much like its magical counterpart. Its flesh is mummified, pulled tight over its bones to give the lich a gaunt, skeletal appearance. Its eye sockets are empty but burn with crimson pinpoints of light. Often, a psionic lich is found in the clothes it favored in life. Because its garb can be anything from the grand robes of nobility to the plate armor of a mighty knight, it is impossible to identify these creatures by appearance alone. (Metallic armor, if worn, lowers the lich's psionic power score, as per PHBR5 *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, page 16; small shields will not do so.)

A psionic lich retains the abilities that it learned in life: languages, proficiencies, thieving skills, and so forth. Further, a psionic lich who was human might have been a dual-class being in life, thus be able to employ psionic powers plus magical or clerical spells. A creature with these abilities is rare, thankfully, but it is a truly terrible opponent.

Combat: A psionic lich seldom engages its foes personally, as it surrounds itself with a legion of minions. Many adventurers thus never learn the true nature of their enemy, always fighting underlings. When forced to engage in direct combat, however, a psionic lich is among the most deadly opponent that any heroes will ever likely face.

The emanations of power that shroud a psionic lich are detectable even by those without psychic powers. A hero who comes within 50 yards of such a creature is affected by this aura, requiring a save vs. spell to avoid becoming mind struck. A mindstruck individual makes all attack and damage rolls at a -2 penalty and must double the casting time of all spells (which allows saving throws for victims at a +2 bonus). The effects of this aura can be countered by any spell or psionic power that would diminish or remove fear, or else inspire bravery.

If the lich is able to deliver a touch attack in combat, the malignant aura of psionic power that encircles it rips at the opponent's life force, causing 1d8+2 points of damage. In addition, a psionic hero will find PSPs are drawn away. Each physical blow strips the victim of a number of PSPs equal to twice the number of points of damage the blow inflicted. This loss is not permanent, and the PSPs can be regained through normal means.

Just as a normal lich has spent decades or even centuries in the research of new and unique magical powers, so too does the undead master of the mind have powers undreamed of by mortal men. It is not all uncommon for adventurers who come across such a dreaded creature to be confronted with psionic powers that have never been documented elsewhere. These new powers should conform to the general standards established in PHBR5 *The Complete Psionics Handbook* for function, damage, area of effect, range, and so on, but they may produce unique effects. Guidelines for the creation of new psionic powers can be gleaned from the section on spell research in the *Dungeon Master Guide*.

Further, a psionic lich is able to employ magical items just as it did in life and may have quite a formidable collection of enchanted trinkets to use against adventurers.

A psionic lich differs from the traditional ranks of the undead. Because the force sustaining it is mental and not mystical, it is far more resistant to spells, spell-like powers, or psionic sciences and devotions involving *charm*, *fear*, and the like (including all enchantment/charm spells). Treat the psionic lich as having the equivalent of a 25 Wisdom for purposes of determining which spells it can resist (see the *Player's Handbook*, Table 5). Spells like *sleep* or *finger of death*, which base their effects upon a biological function in the spell recipient, also do not affect a psionic lich; again, psionic powers similar to these spells are also ineffective (such as *life detection*).

A psionic lich can be turned by priests, paladins, and similar heroes, but since it is not magical in nature, it is more resistant to this power than are other undead. Thus, it is turned on the "special" row of Table 47 in the *Dungeon Master Guide*. A psionic lich is immune to harm from normal weapons but can be struck by weapons of +1 or better power. Spells or other powers based upon cold have no effect upon it. Other spells inflict normal damage on the psionic lich. It can be attacked in normal psionic combat, except as noted here.

In order to protect itself from destruction, a psionic lich employs a special form of phylactery (see "Ecology") that houses its life force. Although a lich may be defeated in combat, it cannot be truly destroyed unless its phylactery can be found and obliterated. As a lich will take great care to protect this vital object from the prying hands of heroes, destroying the phylactery can be quite a challenge.

Habitat/Society: Psionic lichs were once living psionicists who left behind the physical demands of life in pursuit of ultimate mental powers. They have little interest in the affairs of the living, except as such things relate to the search for psychic mastery and knowledge. Those who encounter psionic lichs usually do so when the lichs feels that they must leave their self-imposed isolation for a time.

Psionic lichs often hide themselves away in places that feel safe to them. Since most of them can sense the auras and emanations of the world around them quite keenly, their judgment is usually sound. For the most part, these creatures reside in places associated with death or learning. If the two can be combined in some way, all the better. For example, the ideal lair for one psionic lich might be the library of a great castle that was buried in a volcanic eruption long ago. Not only does the location bear the mark of death about it, as everyone in the castle was slain by the disaster, it also has a solid foundation

of knowledge for the lich to use in pursuit of the secrets of the mind.

When it comes out into the world, a psionic lich usually assembles a great network of minions. Curiously, these followers are seldom undead themselves. More often than not, they are young psionists who seek to learn from an obvious master. What these followers often fail to understand is that their leader has little interest in them apart from their role in any immediate plans the lich has. Once the master's goal has been accomplished, be it the retrieval of some ancient tome on psionic powers or the testing of a new psionic defense mode, the followers might be cast aside without another thought. Those who do not leave when the lich demands it are then mercilessly slain.

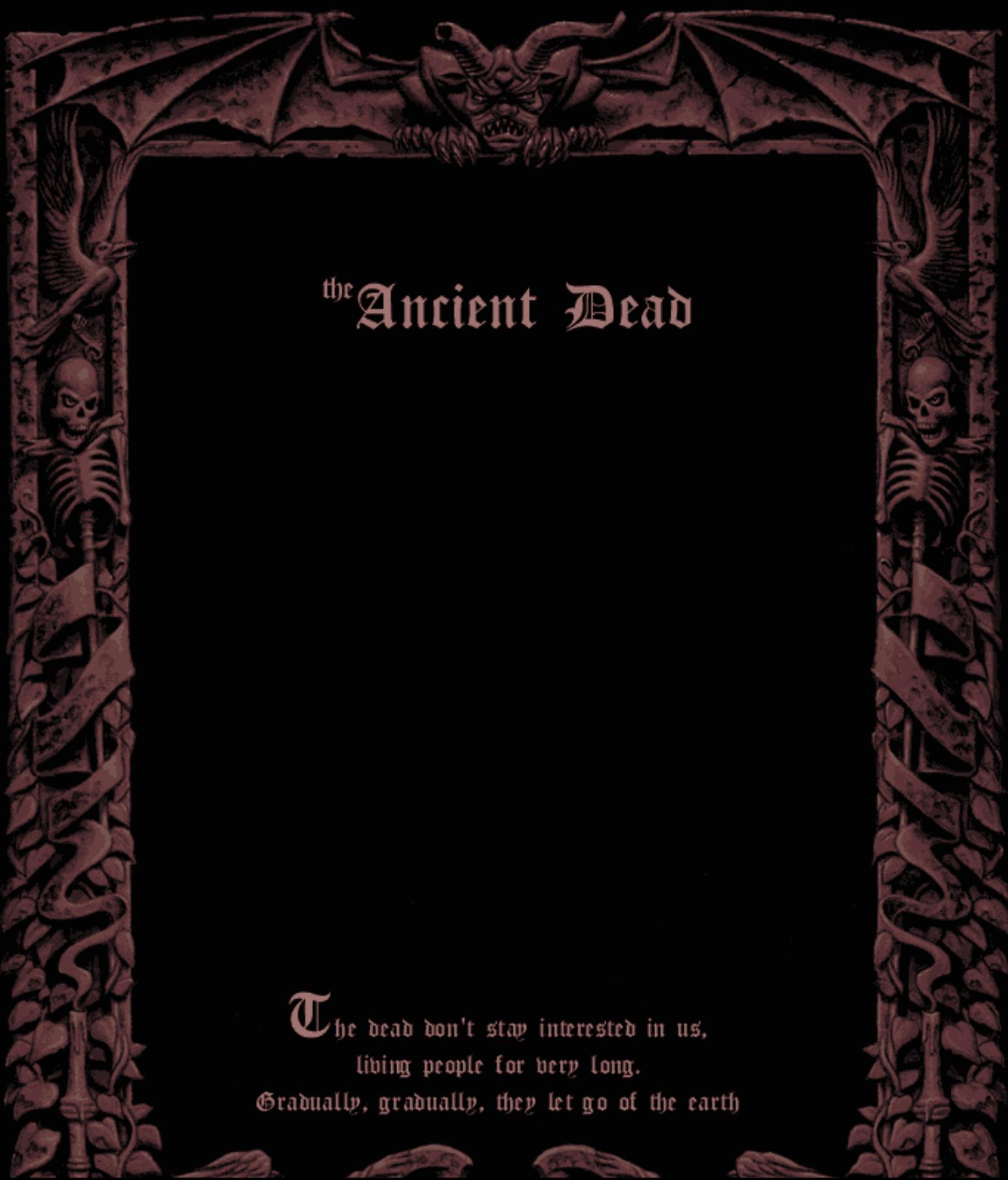
Ecology: Being undead, psionic lichs have no place in the natural world. Although the power that transformed them is natural (not supernatural, like magic), the extent to which psionic lichs have pursued their goals is not natural. By twisting the powers of their minds to extend their existence beyond the bounds of mortal life, psionic lichs become exiles. Cast out from the land of the living, these creatures sometimes lament the foolishness that led them down the dark path into the world of the undead.

By far the most important aspect of the existence of any psionic lich is the creation of its phylactery. To understand this mystical device, it is important to understand the process by which a psionist becomes a lich. Before a psionist can cross over into the darkness that is undeath, he or she must attain at least 18th level. In addition, the psionist must be possessed of a great array of powers that can be bent and focused in new ways.

The first step in the creation of a phylactery is the crafting of the physical object that will become the creature's spiritual resting place. A phylactery can come in any shape, from a ring to a crown, from a sword to an idol. The item is made from the finest materials and must be fashioned by master craftsmen. Generally, a phylactery is fashioned in a shape that reflects the personality or interests of the psionist. The cost of creating a phylactery is 5,000 gp per level of the psionist. Thus, a 20th-level psionist must spend 100,000 gp on his device.

Once the phylactery is fashioned, it must be readied to receive the psionist's life force. This is generally done by means of the metapsionic empower ability, with some subtle changes in the way the psionist uses the power that alters its outcome. In order to complete a phylactery, the psionist must empower it with each and every psionic ability that he or she possesses. Although an object cannot normally be empowered with psychic abilities in more than one discipline, the unusual nature of the phylactery allows this rule to be broken. However, before "opening" a new discipline within the object, the would-be lich must transfer all powers from the first discipline into it. For example, if a person has telepathic and metapsionic abilities, he or she must complete the empowering of all telepathic powers before beginning to infuse the object with any metapsionic ones. Once a discipline is "closed," it cannot ever be reopened.

During the creation of the phylactery, the psionist is very vulnerable to attack. Each time that he or she gives the phylactery a new power, the psionist loses it forever. Thus, the process strips away the powers of the psionist as it continues. Obviously, the last power that is transferred into the phylactery is the empower ability. The effort of placing this ability within the phylactery drains the last essences of the psionist's life and completes the transformation into a psionic lich. At the moment that the transformation takes place, the psionist must make System Shock survival roll. Failure indicates that his or her willpower was not strong enough to survive the trauma of becoming undead; the psionist's spirit breaks up and dissipates, making him or her forever dead. Only the powers of a deity are strong enough to revive a psionist who has died in this way; even a wish will not suffice.



the Ancient Dead

The dead don't stay interested in us,
living people for very long.
Gradually, gradually, they let go of the earth



- Thornton Wilder
Our Town

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The long habit of living indisposeth us for dying- Sir Thomas Browne
Urn-Burial

Introduction

Poets and philosophers of every age and nation have bemoaned that life is an insignificant moment when compared to the enormity of death. It is undeniable that death lasts longer than life. For some, this is not distressing; one life span seems to be sufficient. Many others see death not as the end of life, but as the beginning of an entirely new state of being, often superior to mortal existence. Still, some bemoan their short lives, fearing what lies beyond the grave.

There is no question that a spirit can endure beyond death, and that an incomplete or tragic life can bind a spirit to the mortal realm after its body has perished. Vampires, liches, and ghosts stalk this land of ours. They are twisted creatures, pathetic in their torment, but dangerous nonetheless. I know these creatures well, having made it my business to oppose the undead wherever they lurk.

Not entirely by choice have I taken up this unending quest. Unending it truly is, for the wickedness that permits some dead to mock and torment the living is eternal. Just as the procession of day and night will continue long after I am dust, so will the dead continue to rise from their graves after I am gone.

Allow me to introduce myself. I am Dr. Rudolph Van Richten, sometime purveyor of herbs and medicines, full-time hunter of the undead. Once, I lived a mundane life as a physician, husband, and father. Had tragedy not struck, I should have spent all my days in these happy pursuits. But a vampire, abetted by human agents, took from me my son, then my wife. It is ironic that, like the creatures I hunt, I too was transformed - reborn, you might say - through violence and tragedy.

This book, in a sense, reflects what separates me from my undead enemies, for I have embraced what is holy. A corner of my spirit will always grieve for my wife and child, but that recess is bright. It is filled with warm memories, recollections of shared triumphs, and all the joys of enduring love.

I do not brood on what I have lost, nor do I begrudge others their happiness. Rather, I strive to preserve those who cannot otherwise prevail in the face of evil. My own grief is less important than the struggle to spare others the pain I have felt. That one lifetime is too short to accomplish the lofty goals I have set for myself troubles me not at all. Others will take up my work when I am gone. Even now, folk I have never met share my quest and carry on the fight. After all, I cannot be everywhere at once.

I have written this book and others like it to share my knowledge, for knowledge is the most potent weapon in any struggle. I have no desire to linger in the world after death. Instead, I leave this volume so that others might benefit from my experience after I am gone. It is all the immortality I require.

A Different Kind of Menace

Legends of the living dead abound. This book concerns those corporeal creatures I call the ancient dead, more commonly known as mummies. But let me backtrack a moment.

By and large, undead creatures can be neatly divided into two categories: corporeal and incorporeal. The first encompasses dread liches and vampires, creatures whose corrupted spirits dwell within their own dead flesh, as well as their weaker cousins, mindless automatons such as zombies and skeletons. The second includes ghosts, creatures whose force of will grants them an existence independent of the body, and a few lesser kin such as spectres. This dual classification is incomplete, but for years the shortcoming escaped my notice.

I was long aware of the lore of mummies before I became an undead hunter. Even after I took up my work, however, I regarded mummies as merely a lesser form of corporeal undead. I easily dismissed legends of bandage-wrapped corpses

rising from their tombs on many grounds. Ignorance of the world's more elaborate burial customs, I reasoned, was the mainspring of mummy legends. Funeral customs in many places include ceremonies that symbolically bestow senses and motion upon the dead, that they may enjoy the afterlife. A misunderstanding of these rituals, and an occasional incident involving genuine necromantic magic, would be enough (I thought) to start many tales circulating among superstitious folk. The truth was not so simple.

The Priest of the Tor

Some years ago, my comrade Shauten the wizard and I heard rumors of undead marauders in eastern Darken, and we decided to consult a former companion of ours in Nevuchar Springs about the veracity of the reports. Along the way, we visited several uncharted villages and questioned the locals about the tale. I We discovered very little in the way of hard evidence until we entered a picturesque little hamlet not far from [the banks of the Vuchar. Tidy cottages lined a dusty main street, which gave way to a track that wound through fields bursting with ripening crops. However, there were no people. I Our search of the deserted village revealed signs of violence everywhere, but neither survivors nor bodies. The lack of corpses seemed ominous, and soon our fears were realized. As we studied the tangle of footprints left by the hapless villagers and their attackers, a quartet of ragged zombies emerged from the fields and attacked. Two monsters were foul and decrepit, and must have been in a state of undeath for months. The remaining two, however, were fresh and clad in the tattered remains of farmer's garb. We no longer had any doubts about the villagers' fate.

Shauten quickly dispatched the zombies with a spell, and we had little difficulty tracking them through the trampled grain. We knew we took a risk, as the village was large enough to produce a veritable army of zombies. Nevertheless, I desired to rescue the living captives - if any - and Shauten too was eager to continue our investigation.

The trail through the grain led us to a huge cemetery, ancient beyond belief. A sprawling expanse of headstones skirted mausoleums carved into a rocky hillside. Gaunt figures skulked among the monuments, keeping furtive watch on us. Our attention was immediately drawn to a particularly large hillside tomb with a classical facade and a massive iron gate. When we approached this edifice, the figures, which turned out to be ghouls, attacked. Shauten's spells prevailed once again, and we set about examining the gate.

The portal was shut fast, and I immediately applied myself to opening the lock, in perfect working order despite the tomb's great age. A cry from Shauten cut my efforts short. Several more tombs had opened, and a horde of zombies had shuffled out. Further, I began to discern motion within the inky blackness that filled the crypt beyond the gate. Shauten and I chose to make a hasty retreat.

Our flight took us directly to Nevuchar Springs, where we quickly organized a proper expedition to locate and eradicate whatever creature held sway over the undead in the cemetery. Upon our return, we set about a systematic exploration of the hillside and soon came face to face with our adversary.

What some might have taken for luck, but I recognized as adroit maneuvering on our foes' part, brought wave after wave of zombies, sometimes accompanied by ghouls, to attack us at inconvenient times during our exploration. Clearly, a keen tactical mind had been observing our movements and chose to advance when we were most vulnerable.

Through our own shrewd observations, my companions and I deduced where our unseen opponent must be standing, and we pressed forward to a final confrontation. Our foe proved to be a spellcaster whose skeletal body was adorned with several amulets, and clothed in a flowing robe embroidered with priestly symbols of an unholy nature. We concluded that we faced a cleric lich.

Through sheer force, and Shauten's spells, we won through. We lost no time in entering the tomb, where we found a wealth of treasures and artifacts of great antiquity. We promptly assembled every object we thought could be a lich's phylactery and destroyed them all. Afterward, we kept a strict vigil over the tomb, as we could not be sure we had prevailed.

To our dismay, the "lich" reappeared within a week. Its fury knew no bounds. Only after much fighting and travail did I discern our foe was no lich, but a wholly different creature!

The most valuable clue that led to my discovery was the simple fact that the monster had returned from destruction in exactly the same physical form as we had originally seen it. Clearly, the creature's spirit had not issued from some still-hidden vessel to usurp another body. Yet our foe reappeared to menace us again and again.

If not a lich, what was our foe? It was the creature I had dismissed from my classification system: an ancient dead. Not until we had specially crafted a mace, based on the symbols I deciphered from the creature's robe, were we able to inflict a final death upon the monster.

In the years since, I have fought the ancient dead in many guises. I use the term "ancient dead" throughout this work; for all practical purposes, it is interchangeable with "mummy," and I use it to remind the reader that these creatures come in many forms.

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Ghosts? No! You don't call anything a ghost that you can take in your hands and look at in broad daylight, and that rattles when you shake it Do you now?

- F. Marion Crawford
"The Screaming Skull"

*By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes*

- William Shakespeare
Macbeth

Necrology

Most of the ancient dead were once living, breathing people, but they defied death to walk again among the living - as mummies. Their tortured spirits remain bound to now lifeless bodies. I have infrequently discovered doomed spirits who were compelled to become ancient dead through no fault of their own. Most ancient dead, however, were not innocent victims of powers beyond their control.

After years of research and interviews with eyewitnesses who have encountered the unquiet dead (including two interviews conducted magically with the dead themselves), I have concluded that some spirits pass into death with a predilection for returning as mummies. The common factor among these cases seems to be a fascination with and desire for the trappings of the mortal world. This emphasis makes the ancient dead most closely akin to ghosts, at least in psychological terms.

There is, of course, one explicit difference between ghosts and the ancient dead: The latter are fully corporeal, and the former are not. In my work on ghosts, I described one class of spirits that possessed solid form. Are these spirits ancient dead? No. A corporeal ghost creates a body for itself through force of will or supernatural power. Such is not the case with the ancient dead; the spirit of such a being actually reoccupies the body it possessed in life. If one searches diligently enough, one often can locate a corporeal ghost's mortal remains, which might prove advantageous in combating the spirit. A search is not necessary in the case of an ancient dead - the creature's mortal shell is immediately present.

Indeed, because the ancient dead are fully corporeal, any discussion of them invites comparisons with the other corporeal undead, namely vampires and liches. Outwardly, most mummies strongly resemble liches. Both creatures tend to have withered or skeletal bodies, and both share an intense desire to destroy or manipulate the living. If one is unfortunate enough, as my companions and I were, to encounter a mummy that retains spellcasting abilities it had in life, it might be next to impossible to know what manner of creature one is facing until it is too late.

The five important distinctions between a lich and a spellcasting sort of ancient dead are these:

1. Transformation: A lich initiates and completes the process that transforms it from living being to undead. While the prospective lich still lives, it begins an elaborate, dangerous, and expensive ritual in which it is the principal, if not the only, player. A mummy is created through a process in which the subject is only a passive participant. Though an individual can



arrange to return from the dead as a mummy, it must depend upon others to carry out its wishes. Planned or otherwise, the process can truly begin only after the subject dies. The first step is embalming the corpse. True, a mummy can be created spontaneously through natural preservation of a body and the spirit's own force of will. Even then, some external event triggers the mummy's return.

2. Phylactery: Every lich possesses a phylactery that houses its spirit. The location and destruction of this vessel must be the focus of any effort to destroy a lich. A mummy might possess an item similar to a phylactery, but this item does not house the creature's spirit, which resides in the creature's body. However, the item can be the keystone of that creature's existence.

Not all ancient dead have key items, however. Some mummies can be physically destroyed by a direct assault on their bodies, though this is never a simple undertaking. Other mummies cannot be destroyed, but they can be laid to rest under the right circumstances.

3. Maintenance: A lich requires periodic rituals of maintenance to sustain its unliving state. A mummy can exist indefinitely with no special effort. It might require small amounts of herbs or other rare substances to maintain its powers, or it might require veneration from mortals. No mummy, however, risks destruction if this dependence isn't satisfied; it merely suffers a temporary ability loss.

4. Increasing power: A lich continues to accumulate more power and knowledge throughout its existence. The full extent of a mummy's powers is set when it is created, although it might receive its powers slowly over time. While the latter mummy, like a lich, becomes more powerful, it does not gain new abilities; instead, it overcomes limitations that keep it from using its full powers.

5. Departure: A lich eventually discards its physical form and departs the mortal realm to explore other modes of existence. Barring outright destruction, a mummy is inexorably bound to the mortal world. Surely no creature can exist forever; at some point, a mummy's body must be forced to succumb to the ravages of time and simply fall apart. I confess that I have no idea how long this process takes. It would seem that human empires can rise, fall, and crumble to windblown dust before a mummy finally disintegrates from age.

A mummy is similar to a vampire in that both sorts of creatures are destined either to remain in the physical world or perish. In addition, a mummy might exhibit powers similar to those of vampires: flight, the ability to charm victims, changing shapes, and animal summoning. This is, however, where the similarities end.

Unlike the vampire, the mummy has no need to feed upon the living. Often less fearsome in battle than a vampire, a mummy also has few or none of the typical vampire's weaknesses. A mummy is generally unaffected by garlic or mirrors, for example. As with the ghost, however, a mummy might have an aversion to objects or substances. These articles are linked to the mummy's origins.

A mummy shares a few notable characteristics with other undead. It has no need for food, air, or sleep, since its body is lifeless. Thus, it is also immune to all forms of poison and paralyzation, and immune to enchantments that produce sleep, charm, or hold effects.

The Planar Connection

The ancient dead as a group are unique among undead in that they appear to have a positive-energy component. This does not mean the ancient dead are good - far from it. Rather, they have at their disposal an alien power that is disruptive and inimical to life. It is through this positive connection that the ancient dead animate and maintain their corporeal bodies.

Positive energy might also be the source of the ancient dead's most dreaded attack, mummy rot. This appalling disease is always fatal, and it defies all mundane efforts to cure it. Only magical intervention can alter its course. Perhaps a mummy, when it strikes, transfers a portion of its positive energy to a victim. It might be a caustic effect of such energy that makes the victim's flesh rot away. The energy's disruptive effects on the body might also explain why a mummy's victims do not heal properly, and why they cannot benefit from healing magic while afflicted with rot.

The theory of positive energy is also helpful in explaining three other powers every ancient dead creature possesses to some degree: *rejuvenation*, *invulnerability*, and *fear*. As I explained in my work on ghosts, rejuvenation is the power to regrow

portions of the body that have been destroyed; its effect is similar to a vampire's *regeneration* power. *Regeneration*, however, involves the accelerated healing of wounds, whereas *rejuvenation* reconstructs the creature's whole body. Clearly, a mummy must draw on a supernatural source of matter and energy to accomplish such a feat.

All mummies are resistant to weapons, to one degree or another. Their strangely preserved tissues are nearly impervious to physical harm, and only enchanted or specially created weapons can affect them. Even then, physical blows are never as effective against mummies as one might expect.

Ancient dead are similarly impervious to some energy attacks. Most often they are unaffected by cold, but some can shrug off other forms of energy as well. Worse, a few can resist several kinds of energy. I suspect this resistance stems from a supernatural reinforcement of the body.

All mummies inspire some form of fear or dread in the mortals who encounter them. This fear can go beyond simply inducing opponents to flee. Victims can be so overcome with dread that they are unable to act. My studies suggest that mummies project a magical aura that overcomes and disables a living person's psyche. This aura is constant and it seems to stem from an inexhaustible source of energy.

Readers should not hastily conclude that any creature that does not project an aura of palpable fear is not a member of the ancient dead. Many high-ranked mummies have the ability to halt or even delay the effects of their powers, and some mummies inspire fear by their gaze, voice, or gesture. I once encountered a mummy that could inspire fear in an area of its own choosing.

Belinderissa and I descended the grand stair and entered a narrow vault. Behind us, I heard soft footfalls as the rest of the group followed. I was anxious to decipher a lengthy runic inscription on the walls of the vault, and asked Belinderissa to hold her torch higher as we moved into the chamber.

Before I could study the runes, a section of the wall slid open with a stony whisper. A handsome youth clad only in a white linen loincloth and conical headdress stood before us. He smiled and made an elaborate bow, his hand describing circles in the air with a double flourish.

"Holy water, Claudia," I called to my assistant as I raised my silver cross to ward off the creature. As I spoke, Belinderissa aimed a vicious swipe at the youth's neck and struck a blow that should have separated the creature's head from his shoulders. Instead, there was a dull thud, as the sword failed to bite. The impact left behind only a dry gash.

"Quickly, Claudia," I commanded, but still the holy water was not forthcoming. Turning away from the beast, I beheld the remainder of my party rooted in place on the stairs, motionless except for a communal nervous quiver. My companions looked for all the world like a stand of leafless trees trembling in an autumn wind. "I fear you must distract our young foe a while longer, Belinderissa," I said as I fumbled with Claudia's haversack. Since that incident I always have carried my own holy water.

- From the private journal of
Dr. Van Richten

The First Ancient Dead

How did the ancient dead first come to haunt our world? I have uncovered very little scholarly debate on this subject. It seems that ancient dead are so elusive that they have escaped the notice of scholars who are not as dedicated to cataloguing and defeating undead menaces as I. Indisputably, the fact that most ancient dead easily can be misidentified as other sorts of creatures has contributed to this ignorance.

When confronted with the question of the origins of the ancient dead, most sages and mediums are unable to give any credible answer at all. A few priests, adventurers, and seekers of forbidden lore speculate that those rituals and processes used to create the ancient dead were developed after some long-ago theorist witnessed a spontaneous occurrence. One of my colleagues, Deved de Weise of Il Aluk, in Darken, has offered a succinct explanation of the reasoning behind this theory.

As to the probable origins of the creatures you call "ancient dead," you [Van Richten] must concede that history is full of incidents involving the return of the dead to the world of the living. Here in Darken, the rising of the dead is ingrained in local legend.

If, as you seem to have documented, departed spirits can return to their preserved bodies through force of will, then it must have been inevitable that some priest, obsessed with death and hungering for an extended life (or desperate to grant such a "gift" to a demanding liege) must have come upon an account of such an incident (just as you have) or actually witnessed the event.

Armed with this knowledge, the priest would need only the proper research materials and sufficient time to recreate the event.

- From the private letters of
Dr. Van Richten

Because I have uncovered conclusive proof that the ancient dead can rise unassisted, I find it hard to contradict de Weise's reasoning and conclusion. There is a more sinister theory about the origins of the ancient dead, however, to which I must attach greater verisimilitude because it is derived from firsthand knowledge. It comes from the journal of De'rah, a wandering priestess and a gifted medium. This fair lady claims to have been only a visitor to these lands of ours, and in any event she has disappeared utterly. Before departing on her final journey, she entrusted a copy of her journal to a wandering Vistana, who delivered it to me. The fact that lady De'rah could induce any Vistana to serve as a reliable messenger only increases my admiration for her abilities.

Once the mummy lay quietly in its coffin again, we sought to discover some method of putting it to rest permanently. While my companions set about trying to decipher the numerous cartouches and hieroglyphs on the tomb's walls, I fingered my enchanted prayer beads and chanted a divination spell. Soon, I was conversing with the creature.

Q: Huseh Kah, why do you walk among the living?

A: Because of the curse of Anhktepot.

Q: Who is Anhktepot?

A: The first of my kind.

- From the journal of De'rah

De'rah was able to pose no less than half a dozen questions to Huseh Kah, but I have included only the two most pertinent here. De'rah concludes that the ancient dead did not walk the land until a being called Anhktepot returned from death. Unfortunately, De'rah and I parted ways before her encounter with Huseh Kah's mummy, and I could not share what I knew of Anhktepot with her.

I first heard the legend of Anhktepot during a visit to the land of Har'Akir, many years ago. According to Har'Akir! folktales, Anhktepot was an ancient king or pharaoh. He became so fond of ruling that he could not bear to think of his reign ending, even in death. He bent all his will toward cheating death and returning to his throne. When he finally died (murdered, some say), his burial was accompanied by a lavish ceremony and the ritual deaths of all his most valuable advisors. If Anhktepot does still walk the dunes of his arid country, he has truly gotten his wish.

If Huseh Kah was correct in his belief that Anhktepot is the progenitor for all the ancient dead, then it appears that, in seeking his own immortality, Anhktepot loosed an entirely new evil into the land.

As a game term, "ancient dead" refers to a class of corporeal undead creatures, of which the bandage-wrapped mummy is a familiar example. To qualify as an ancient dead, a creature must meet the following criteria.

-  The creature must have died.

- ☼ The creature's body must have been preserved in some way.
- ☼ The creature's spirit must now occupy the body that housed it in life.
- ☼ The creature must derive its powers from a connection with the Positive Material Plane.

True ancient dead creatures possess the following powers to some degree: *rejuvenation*, *cause fear*, *invulnerability*, and *cause disease*. These powers are derived from the creature's connection with the Positive Material Plane and are fully described in Chapters Three and Four. Corporeal undead such as ghouls and ghosts lack a connection with the Positive Material Plane and do not qualify as ancient dead.

*Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell
 Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death,
 Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre,
 Wherein we saw thee quietly inturn'd,
 Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws,
 To cast thee up again. What may this mean,
 That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel,
 Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
 Making night hideous;' and we fools of nature
 So horridly to shake our disposition
 With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?*

- William Shakespeare
 Hamlet
 (Hamlet, to the ghost of his father)

Types Of Mummies

The ancient dead are enigmatic creatures that often are hard to identify and thus are hard to combat. In many cases, their powers are similar to those of other undead menaces, though their vulnerabilities are vastly different. The hunt for a mummy is often fraught with unexpected perils, seemingly inexplicable mysteries, and a thousand other frustrations - some trivial, some deadly.

In this book I have compiled all I have learned about the ancient dead. Alas, this work is far from complete. My own knowledge is extensive; I have tread where no desk-bound scholar has ventured, and I have devoted myself to studying the walking dead with a devotion no priest or wizard, with a head cluttered with rituals and spells, could match. Nevertheless, the supernatural holds more secrets than one person could ever assimilate, even if given a dozen lifetimes dedicated to the endeavor. Nor had I the luxury of steadily accumulating immutable truths; all too often new evidence has caused me to revise my findings, and occasionally to abandon even my most deeply held convictions. Fortunately, I am not prone to despair.

In this chapter, I hope to acquaint the reader with certain terms and concepts that are vital to understanding the ancient dead. The material presented here provides a framework for all that follows, and the reader is advised not to treat it lightly.

I have identified five broad categories that I find useful when discussing and classifying the ancient dead. These are *power rank, physical origin, psychological origin, form, and state of preservation*.

Power Rank

The first and most important category by which I classify the ancient dead is their level of power, which I call their rank. Every mummy has a rank, regardless of the other attributes it may display. Readers familiar with my previous works know that I have developed similar systems for describing vampires and ghosts. A mummy's rank is similar to a vampire's age or a ghost's magnitude - the higher the rank, the more powerful the mummy.

I must warn the reader that the values of each rank category are neither absolute nor universal. A mummy of the first rank, for example, might exhibit some abilities of a higher rank, even though its general level of power is relatively weak. Use the guidelines below to your best advantage, but never take anything for granted.

As noted in the previous chapter, a mummy's powers are set, but not necessarily fixed, at the moment of its creation. The chief factors that determine the mummy's rank are the strength of its attachment to the mortal world, the deceased's emotional state at the time of death, the intricacy of the ritual used to create the mummy, and the opulence of the mummy's tomb. In some cases, other factors can increase a mummy's rank. These include the power of the creature or creatures

creating the mummy, and the amount of respect, fear, or veneration a mummy receives from the living. The legend of the aforementioned Anhktepof of Har'Akir is a case in point.

If the tales are true, a desire to cheat death dominated Anhktepof's thoughts during life. Furthermore, as a pharaoh, Anhktepof could indulge in his obsession to a degree unimaginable for a common man. He had the resources of a nation at his disposal, and he used them. Anhktepof commanded for himself embalming and funeral rites on a grand scale, with an elaborate tomb to match.

Long after his death, this ruler still inspires fear among the people of Har'Akir. Anhktepof is an eternal bogeyman that haunts their dreams. If Anhktepof still haunts the sandy deserts of Har'Akir, he must be formidable, indeed. Likewise, any mummy created by the hand of Anhktepof would be a more fearsome creature than it might have been if it had been created under more typical circumstances.

First Rank

Ancient dead of the first rank are created spontaneously, with little or no pomp and circumstance. Although they possess potentially dangerous powers, they are not particularly formidable. First-rank mummies usually can be annulled simply by destroying their physical forms, seldom a daunting task for an experienced undead-hunting group.

I never have knowingly faced an ancient dead creature of this inferior rank. I make this claim not out of arrogance, but to illustrate just how difficult identification of the ancient dead can be; in retrospect, I am certain I must have battled these creatures at least once. During our quest to defeat the lich known as Phantom's Bane [*described in part in the section on liches, earlier in this volume - GWF*], my companions and I suffered numerous assaults by livid, shambling creatures which we took to be some form of greater zombie, for they possessed a modicum of intelligence and proved to be disturbingly agile in combat. We never did grow accustomed to their gruesome visages, and fear clutched at our hearts whenever they appeared. Geddar Ironheart, our dwarf fighter, remarked after one battle that the bloodless creatures absorbed more punishment than he expected. Later, we discovered that several wounds the creatures had inflicted on us had begun to fester, and this sepsis proved to be resistant to my herbal remedies. Only a miraculous salve imported from a foreign city proved at all efficacious.

With the benefit of hindsight, I conclude that these creatures must have been first-rank mummies created by Phantom's Bane, probably from victims who had succumbed to his paralyzing touch. Fortunately for my party, these creatures were not so strong as to render our ignorance fatal. Unfortunately for everyone, mummies of the first rank are fairly rare. The majority of the ancient dead are not so weak.

Second Rank

Ancient dead of the second rank are generally not much more dangerous than their lesser kindred. In many cases, second-rank mummies rise spontaneously if the circumstances surrounding their deaths are sufficiently charged with emotion. In most other cases, mummies of this rank are created by evil spellcasters or by other undead. Consequently, they usually function as servants for more powerful beings, and defeating them is often but a single step toward ultimate victory. My first experience with mummies of this rank provides an illustration.

I undertook an extended expedition to gather herbs and found myself wandering among the bleached, dead trunks of trees that litter the foothills of the Balinok Mountains in eastern Falkovnia. I have often wondered what blight afflicts these trees, which are otherwise so hardy. I had no time, however, to ponder this particular botanical mystery because a more urgent matter drew my attention.

I came upon a mining camp where some thirty souls labored to wrest treasures from the very bosom of the earth. The camp overseer was a brutish woman of acerbic demeanor with a shovellike jaw. As with most organizations in Falkovnia, the camp was patterned along military lines. The overseer, Captain Twyla Kahl, also commanded ten haughty soldiers who protected the camp from animals and unfriendly local folk.

I had intended to pay only a brief courtesy visit to the camp and continue with my herb collecting. However, when the captain learned I was a physician she called upon me to attend a miner who had survived a tunnel collapse.

My patient was dazed and appeared to be suffering from septic wounds that seemed completely impervious to my

treatments. Although the patient was in no immediate danger, my instincts told me I was dealing with a terminal case if I could not locate a cure. My suspicions were aroused, and I continued to treat the fellow while the collapsed tunnel was cleared and reinforced.

As the last bit of rubble was removed, the miners discovered an ancient chamber that must have been hewn from the living rock at a time when the mightiest tree in Falkovnia was a mere sapling. Three curving orifices opened near the floor on one side of the chamber. The trapezoidal blocks that framed the openings unpleasantly reminded me of snarling mouths filled with decaying teeth. I thought I detected a charnel stench coming from them as the captain and I surveyed the place.

My worst fears were realized when three hideous creatures emerged from these openings. They were fleshy, but with entirely skeletal heads. The captain and her soldiers had little difficulty hacking them down, but dismemberment seemed merely to inconvenience the creatures, and their sundered bodies kept on attacking. At my suggestion, the captain bade her troops fall back into the tunnel; the moment the living had quitted the chamber, I hurled three oil-filled lanterns, all lit, into the cavern. The creatures twisted and wailed as the flames consumed them, and soon all was blessedly quiet. My examination of the remains of these undead confirmed that they were mummies, which I would now rate as of the second rank.

When the smoke and heat from the funeral pyre had dissipated, we made a cautious inspection of the chamber, where we discovered nothing but a few trinkets - and the disturbing fact that the openings in the wall extended back into the mountain for an indeterminate distance. With this discovery, the captain ordered the chamber filled with rubble, then directed the miners to seek ore in other shafts. At the time, I felt this was a prudent decision.

For my part, I found myself faced with three more victims of the inexorable rotting disease that the mummies carried. With the captain's reluctant permission, I accompanied the victims to Silbervas in hopes of finding a cure for them. For the soldiers it was an easy task - the military folk in Falkovnia enjoy enough wealth and status to secure for themselves almost any service they need. The hapless miner who had been originally infected was not so fortunate, however, and I was forced to accompany him to Mordentshire before finally discovering a sympathetic priest who removed his vile disease.

Three months later, I was back in the vicinity of the camp, still seeking my herbs. I was dismayed to find the mine tunnel sealed and the camp deserted. I did not learn anything more about this case until some time later, when I sited a tavern in Lekar and encountered one of the soldiers I had assisted. The tale the soldier related was, of course, secondhand, and many vital details were absent, but it seems the new tunnel dug on Captain Kahl's orders breached a second ancient chamber. This new area was huge, and it contained a colossal bas-relief of a face. The figure's eyes, I was told, were rubies the size of a man's fist. The captain immediately posted guards while a gang of miners went to work extracting the gems.

Just as the first chisel bit into the rock, however, the carved mouth sprang open to reveal a fanged maw! A legion of skeletal horrors marched out, directed by a dimly seen creature wielding a staff. The miners fled screaming, hampering the soldiers, who soon fell under the relentless onslaught. The captain was overcome along with her troops.

The remaining officer, being quick of mind, fired the mine as he fled. The conflagration undoubtedly consumed the advancing undead, but also collapsed the shaft. Rallying the terrified miners, this officer ordered the mine entrance to be completely buried, then quit the site.

I have no doubt that the mysterious figure wielding the staff was a mummy of great power. In my subsequent campaigns against ancient dead, I have often found that what first meets one's eye is seldom the whole truth. The ancient dead do not show all their strength at once, and an early victory often is an indication that the true battle is still to come.

Third Rank

Ancient dead of the third rank are powerful enough to pose a threat to even the best-equipped adventurers. Unless one is fortunate enough to discover a weakness quickly, destroying these creatures requires great force or meticulous detective work - or both. It is at this rank that the ancient dead first exhibit salient abilities, such as spellcasting and the creation of other undead. Some third-rank mummies are indeed vulnerable to physical destruction, but it is unwise to depend on such a weakness, as some ancient dead exhibit superior *rejuvenation* powers at this level.

My own experience leads me to believe that third-rank mummies make up the vast majority of ancient dead. One can expect to encounter weaker mummies only when unusual circumstances prevail; even then, the lesser creatures are often tools of

more powerful ones.

Mummies of the third rank do not normally rise spontaneously, though I have no evidence to suggest that they cannot do so. More typically, these types of mummies are created as the result of a powerful ritual or by the hand of a more powerful sort of ancient dead.

I place the mummy found in desert tombs in this rank. Many of these creatures are vulnerable to mundane fire, but they have a potent array of powers, including paralyzing fear, a virulent form of *mummy rot*, and immunity to nonmagical weapons. The so-called "greater" mummies (such as ancient dead priests of Har'Akir) are also third rank. Although they are formidable, they usually cease to be a threat once defeated in combat.

Fourth Rank

Ancient dead of the fourth rank are truly formidable. Most conventional methods serve only to delay or drive off these creatures; mummies of this rank frequently seem to have been defeated, only to reappear and menace their opponents once again.

Ancient dead creatures of fourth rank rise only after a powerful ritual has been completed and their bodies have been interred in elaborate tombs. Usually the deceased took active roles in planning their funeral rites and burial, fully intending to return to the physical world as mummies. Many of these individuals believe themselves to be so powerful that death has no sway over them; others actively embrace death in an attempt to seize greater power or to gain control over the afterlife.

There can be no doubt that to become an undead mummy is to wield power, but such power comes only at the price of the aspirant's own mortality. Power lies within a mummy's grasp, but the crucial fact (perhaps the fact most often ignored by aspirants to such unholy power) is that the flesh that encases an ancient dead's spirit is truly dead and capable of feeling no joy. A mummy can never be truly happy; the best it can hope for is to reduce its misery.

Likewise, an unclean spirit might escape whatever immediate torments await it beyond the mortal realm, but its heart, burdened with misdeeds, does not grow lighter. Instead, the spirit is shackled to the memory of its iniquities. In seeking to avoid one torment, the spirit merely dooms itself to another.

Consider the example of the Lamenting Rake of Paridon. Most accounts identify this creature as a ghost, a spirit so consumed by excess and debauchery in a famine-plagued land that it was condemned to walk the city streets where it once lived and witness revelries it could no longer share.

The journal of the doomed man, however, reveals a different tale:

Timothy Strand squandered a bright future and a family fortune by making his life a continuous frolic. When he felt an early death approaching, he poured all his remaining wealth into an ornate tomb, which also was to serve as a temple to an evil deity. As part of this dark pact, Timothy was guaranteed a continuing life, surrounded by comfort and luxury. To seal the pact, Timothy had himself slain and embalmed. He expected to return from death and did, as a mummy able to appreciate - but never to enjoy - the pleasures of the flesh.

The raw emotional and supernatural power required to create a mummy of the fourth rank invariably leaves its mark on the individual. The lingering spirit develops a single-minded dedication to some purpose or possession; this makes it a relentless foe. Folk who thwart such a creature face the daunting task of preserving themselves long enough to find the mummy's weakness or to locate some indirect method to restrain or neutralize the mummy. The nature of the rituals used to create these creatures generally provides at least one avenue to defeating a mummy; see Chapter Four for a more complete discussion. Brave hearts and sturdy sword arms are useful in a quest to discover such an avenue, but they alone cannot bring the quest to a successful conclusion.

Fifth Rank

A mummy of this rank is all but unstoppable. Its powers are vast, its mind diabolical, and its weaknesses few. Fortunately, the wealth and labor of an entire nation is required to invest a mummy with this level of power. Few lands that I know possess the necessary means to complete this kind of endeavor, even if the will to do so is present. (Har'Akir comes to mind, largely because of the legends of Anhktepot.)

After many discussions with priests about the collective power of worship, however, I have come to a chilling conclusion: The living can grant power to the dead. Indeed, in some mist-shrouded corners of our land, devoted cadres of supplicants grant the power of their combined will to the ancient dead. In these cases the dead welcome the living, not to feed upon them in the manner of a vampire, but to draw sustenance from them in a subtler manner.

Background

The means by which a living being is transformed into an ancient dead creature is often the pivotal factor in determining the creature's appearance, powers, and actions. When dealing with a very powerful mummy, learning the creature's history is a vital task, because that past often holds the only key to laying the mummy to rest.

Each ancient dead creature has a dual origin. First, a creature's mortal shell must be preserved so that it may house the spirit even after death. Second, the spirit itself must be compelled or induced to return to its body.

The first statement might lead some readers to conclude that destroying all corpses would check the propagation of ancient dead. This is true to some extent. The ancient dead can exist only within those physical bodies that were their own in mortal life. However, burial customs in most communities require that the deceased be interred intact. I have visited lands such as Har'Akir where it is believed that the deceased is denied an afterlife if the body is not properly embalmed, preserved, and interred. Adventurers who meddle with funerals and graves risk not only the wrath of the local community, but the displeasure of the gods themselves.

Furthermore, the deliberate destruction of a body, no matter how well meaning, can set in motion a karmic resonance that creates a ghost. As I explained in some detail in an earlier work, the more charged with emotion a spirit is, the more powerful a ghost it becomes. Imagine the anger of a spirit that believes it has been denied a blissful afterlife because its body has been desecrated! Enraged ghosts are likely more powerful than whatever sort of ancient dead being they might otherwise have become.

Further, as I will explain in Chapter Three, the destruction of an ancient dead's body is not necessarily sufficient to permanently destroy it. I know this seems incredible, since the ancient dead are, after all, corporeal. Nevertheless, many of the ancient dead can reconstruct their bodies when the need arises. Assaulting a mummy with physical weapons and damaging spells is often sufficient to reduce the creature to dust. The immediate result can be satisfying, but do not be lulled into complacency. One can never be sure the creature has been permanently defeated without careful research.

Physical Origins

Every ancient dead creature I know about falls into one of three subcategories: accidental, created, and invoked. The terms refer only to the processes that preserve the creature's body, and not to its motives or psychic traumas, which I will discuss in a separate section. Be warned that ancient dead whose origins bear no semblance to what I describe here might stalk the land. Undeath is a phenomenon that often confounds mortal understanding.

Accidental

It seems that an ancient dead can form when a corpse is naturally preserved after its living form is suddenly overcome by death. The creature also suffers, usually dying in great pain or turbulent emotion. In many cases, the medium that preserves a body was instrumental in bringing about death - perhaps even directly causing it. The Bog Monster of Hroth was one of several armed raiders who were lured into a bog, entrapped, and slain by the defenders of a town the raiders meant to pillage. The raider who later returned as the bog monster must have felt a strange and awful mixture of fear, humiliation, and frustration as death overcame him.

Any environmental condition that prevents a body from decaying can create a natural mummy. The most common conditions include burial in dry sand, freezing, and immersion in swamps or bogs. Other conditions might naturally embalm a corpse. My colleague George Weathermay, a ranger of some renown, speculates that quicksand, the cool waters of subterranean pools, and tar pits might also preserve the dead.

Ancient dead creatures created unintentionally are extremely rare. They also tend to be among the weakest of mummies, since no outside agent exists to invest them with power. Nevertheless, even the most moderate ancient dead can be

dangerous, and a natural mummy can attain substantial levels of power if its motivation is strong enough. The Bog Monster of Hroth was fairly weak as mummies go, but it was an unstoppable menace to the poorly equipped woodcutters who first encountered it.

Created

The vast majority of ancient dead rise when preserved corpses are deliberately turned into undead creatures. The typical mummy found in many lands is created from the corpse of a priest, carefully embalmed and wrapped for the ritual that binds its spirit with its body once again. My observations and research lead me to believe that there are two types of created ancient dead: subservient and usurped.

When the entity that creates a mummy had control over the creature's mortal form, the resulting monster becomes its creator's servant. The greater mummies of Har'Akir, who were priests under Anhktepote while he was still alive, are examples of this. The nature of this bond varies greatly, but often it provides the key to defeat.

When the entity that creates a mummy did not hold sway over the creature's mortal form, the result is a usurped mummy. Many powerful mummies (and a few of their lesser brethren) have the ability to create other ancient dead, usually by transforming their slain victims through some ritual or arcane process. These usurped mummies then become the mindless tools of their undead masters.

Sometimes a usurped mummy has a more insidious origin. Even the most reverent and well-intentioned funeral rites can lead to undeath for the deceased if an enemy subverts those rites and lays a curse on the corpse. A person thus victimized often lies helpless for centuries, trapped in a state between life and death, denied the afterlife that funeral rites were meant to assure. Ancient dead of this kind are driven by inhuman rage born of endless disappointment and despair. Even if the victim was good and virtuous in life, its involuntary undead state transforms it into a corrupt monster. Careful research often reveals a method for putting the being back into slumber. Sometimes it can be permanently laid to rest, freeing the creature's tortured spirit and ending the mummy's threat forever.

Invoked

This subcategory includes the most terrible and powerful of all ancient dead. An Invoked mummy embraces undeath willingly, laying plans for a corrupted form of immortality while still alive.

Such a being often lies undisturbed in its tomb for decades - even centuries - before stirring and walking the land. What passes through its unliving mind during its slumber, I do not know. All my experience and research leads me to believe that years of unnatural life weigh heavily on the once mortal mind. If a slumbering mummy dreams, its visions can hardly be pleasant. Certain archaic scrolls I acquired during an otherwise ill-fated voyage on the Sea of Sorrows indicate that such a creature's spirit might actually depart the mortal realm to dwell in a true afterlife for a time. This is not genuine immortality, as the spirit can be drawn back to this world to fulfill certain duties and maintain certain conditions.

The chief condition to be kept is that the deceased must be remembered and venerated by the living. Without such support, the spirit is forced to return to its mortal body and exist in a state of undeath. The spirit is preoccupied with assurances that it will receive this support, and it must be willing to return from death whenever necessary. In many cases, the deceased was interred with the understanding that it must return from death to attend to some business so important as to beckon even beyond the grave, or to assist the living.

An invoked mummy is not only very powerful, it is often revered by a cult (see Chapter Seven). Timothy Strand, the Lamenting Rake of Paridon, almost certainly was an invoked fourth-rank mummy. The priests and worshipers who used his tomb as a temple doubtless served as his supporting cult.

Psychological Origins

Once a physical body is transformed into a vessel capable of holding the being's spirit, some other factor must secure the spirit within that body. Remains that were merely animated, and thus lack an intrinsic sense of self, become a mindless automaton such as a skeleton or zombie. Ancient dead, by contrast, possess at least a modicum of intelligence, and often a mummy has a formidable intellect. Even a first-rank servitor mummy follows orders with a sense of purpose and the ability

to adjust its tactics. If a hapless party has misidentified such a foe as a common zombie or skeleton, even the weakest mummy can be deadly.

The motivations of the ancient dead defy easy classification. Often the circumstances of a person's death, or events that occurred afterward, determine what motivates the mummy in its actions. I have discovered four broad categories that describe a mummy's psychological origins: *servitude*, *restlessness*, *recall*, and *dark pacts*. That I identify only four categories should not lead the reader to believe that ancient dead are simple or predictable creatures - far from it. Rather, the reader should understand that the ancient dead rise only under specific circumstances, and these factors often leave their mark on the resulting creature.

I list psychological factors separately from the processes of preservation to underscore the fact that preservation and motivations can occur in myriad combinations. A mummy's dual origins usually are tightly intertwined. What exists separately in theory is often inseparable in reality. Further, many ancient dead I have documented could fit in more than one category of motivation. Even in such cases, however, one factor is dominant and has the greatest influence over each mummy's exact nature.

Servitude

These creatures exist under the control of others. The extent of this control ranges from independent service to complete mental domination, in which the servants must act against their own self-interest without resistance if so ordered.

Servitor mummies are most often created by other mummies or by a mummy cult. Such servants are never the only ancient dead associated with the cult. They usually serve as guards and soldiers, front-line troops that delay and wear down an enemy until the main strength arrives.

Most servitor mummies are fairly weak, but exceptions have been noted, especially if the controlling creature is a powerful one. The lich-priest Pythian had at his command a force of third-rank mummies that obeyed it even unto their own destruction. Their final assault also ended the lives of three of my companions.

Not every ancient-dead guardian is a servitor. Many restless and invoked mummies stalk the mortal world, seeking of their own volition to protect something.

When facing an undead menace, it is important to keep in mind that a servitor creature might be pursuing its master's goals, which usually are not immediately apparent to an observer. A servitor mummy may have access to vast resources or be backed up by a horde of other creatures. Fortunate hunters can discover the link between servant and master and sever it. Even if one cannot break the link, one might discover that the terms of a mummy's service restrict its actions in some manner. This knowledge could help in the development of plans of attack that exploit a mummy's limitations.

Servitor mummies are almost always deliberately created, usually by the creature that later controls them. The tomb guardians of Har'Akir, for example, were created for the express purpose of watching over a pharaoh's tomb. Invoked mummies may be servants, especially if they have returned from the dead in order to render service. Such creatures are rare, but I have no less than three independent accounts that document them. Natural mummies seldom become servants unless they fall under the sway of more powerful undead creatures or evil priests.

If a mummy is not created specifically to serve, then its servitude is a condition of its continued existence, rather than a part of its origin. If the control over such a mummy is broken, the creature immediately begins acting in a manner consistent with its own motivations. One of my own experiences illustrates this point.

My companions and I had been long in pursuit of a vampire into the snowy peaks surrounding Lake Kronov in Tepest, and we were finally within a few feet of our goal. As we approached the creature's final stronghold, a tiny cave atop an icy slope, a horribly emaciated figure clad in rotting furs rose from behind a boulder and attacked us. The cold and the slippery footing didn't hamper it in the least. For a moment we stood dumbfounded and overcome by pure dread, yet we soon recovered and battled the creature.

The monster seemed to ignore blows from our weapons. Corwin, our priest, finally raised his holy symbol with a triumphant shout and thrust it toward our assailant. The monster froze in its tracks. Success? No - it merely turned and scurried up the slope. When the creature reached the summit, it dove into the cave.

To our amazement, an inhuman screech immediately split the air. A scant few seconds later, the creature reappeared, dragging a plain pine coffin with a vampire still sitting upright in it, into the open air. We watched motionless, dumbfounded at the spectacle. As the vampire squirmed powerless in the sunlight, the mummy snatched an object from the coffin and held it aloft. It was a small hand ax with a weathered haft and a corroded copper head. Hooting with delight, the creature scrambled out of view once again, escaping with its prize while we advanced on our original target.

I shudder at might have been if we had held that ancient copper ax. It was doubtless a relic of evil held by the vampire, and it would have brought about our doom. Corwin's attempt at turning the mummy instead broke the vampire's control over it in some manner, freeing it to turn on its former master and deliver the vampire to us - almost as a gift. Of the mummy and its precious ax, nothing more has been heard; perhaps it now rests in peace, the ax at its side. Thus did fate intervene on our side and grant us a swift, if somewhat anticlimactic, victory.

Restlessness

Readers familiar with my earlier work on ghosts will understand some of the emotional forces that bind the dead to our world. Some ancient dead arise from the same circumstances that create ghosts. This is particularly true of accidental and invoked mummies; something in each creature's psyche maintains a link between spirit and body that outlasts death. This link can arise without a conscious desire on the dying person's part, perhaps providing a path through which an outside agent can create a mummy. This type of mummy strongly resembles a ghost, but the creature is fully corporeal.

Restless ancient dead are often quiet unless their tombs are disturbed or allowed to decay, or until some task they could not complete in life suddenly becomes possible. Mummies with unfinished tasks might rise periodically to set about trying to complete them.

I have recorded many stories involving a dedicated collector of fine armor. This wealthy man, Quinn Roche, ordered that the choicest items from his collection be placed in his tomb along with him. It is said that when one of the items was later stolen, Roche rose to regain it. A second account alleges that Roche rose when groundwater seeping into his tomb caused valuable armor to rust. The collector came forth not only to see that this armor was restored, but also to insure that his precious collection would not be so endangered again. Yet another tale maintains that Roche awoke to tirelessly pursue a victim who owned a rare suit of *plate mail of etherealness*, which Roche (spelled Rotch in this particular manuscript) sought to add to his collection. After studying these materials carefully, I concluded that these stories, which cover a span of 260 years, all refer to the same being, which rose several times for different but obviously related reasons.

My own experience with restless ancient dead involved a pitiful, though romantic, tale. During my visit to the parched land of Kalidnay, I struck up a friendship with several priests.

One morning, we woke to find the whole community in an uproar, for a young woman was missing. A quick examination of her home led us to believe that she had simply wandered off into the desert, yet the natives remained convinced of foul play. Suspicion immediately fell upon one

Iurudef Hamid, a visiting stranger who had shown an uncanny familiarity with the people and customs.

In due course, the priests and I were able to determine that Iurudef Hamid was actually Ahmose Tanit, a warrior priest who had died some 300 years before. Ahmose Tanit was a successful adventurer whose life was marred by a great tragedy. His greatest love was a young woman named Simbel, who died during a terrible pestilence while Ahmose Tanit pursued his career as an adventurer in a distant land.

Tank's powers as a priest might have saved his sweetheart, had he been present. Remorse and guilt seem to have mingled with the passion this adventurer felt, building instead of easing over time. Ahmose Tanit lived for many years thereafter, but died an unhappy man.

The missing woman, we discovered, was an indirect descendant of Simbel's, and was very much like her in every way. Apparently her mere presence was enough to attract the ancient dead. With the "reappearance" of Simbel in the area, Tanit was compelled to seek her out and claim her as his bride.

This tale does not have a happy ending. My friends and I located Ahmose Tank's tomb, but we were unable to save the woman. In the end, we were obliged to acknowledge the union that Tanit had consummated with his victim, and we laid the pair to rest together. Should the two bodies ever be separated, I have no doubt that Ahmose Tanit will walk the land again.

Perhaps his unliving lover will rise as well.

Recalled

Sometimes the ancient dead rise in response to events that occur long after their deaths. After many hours of study and countless interviews with priests and mediums who have had some experience with these matters, I have come to believe that beings can pass fully from the mortal world, only to be drawn back then certain conditions prevail. Some force or summons compels the spirits to reenter their mortal bodies.

Ancient dead of this type are usually invoked, but not always. In one case I documented, the creature returned in response to an ancient curse it had successfully avoided throughout its life. Strangely enough, when one of her descendants triggered the curse, the blight fell upon the dead ancestor. The curse was worded in such a way that the victim's repose in death was interrupted so that she would waken and feel the curse's effects.

One might be tempted to place the aforementioned Ahmose Tanit into this subcategory. However, it was clear to me that this being had stalked the land for centuries, waiting for his sweetheart to be reincarnated. Had Ahmose Tanit risen only when his reincarnated Simbel had reached marriageable age, I would have placed him in the recalled category. It is lamentable that Tanit walked the land for so many years, learning as he went. If he had slumbered for three centuries, his mannerisms would have been several generations out of date. That, in turn, would have marked him as an unusual being and made him a more obvious danger, one that might have been defeated or thwarted before he could claim a victim.

Quinn Roche the armor collector might also fall into the recalled category. Instead, I labeled him "restless" because of his continuing fascination with his vast collection of armor.

I have acquired several accounts of guardian mummies rising to protect ancestral estates, temples, and other areas that were important to them in life. One case involved a dedicated priestess who was interred beneath a temple, returning when the building fell into disrepair. In each of the cases I labeled "recalled," the individuals appear to have died and departed from the world in the normal way, only to return in response to events that occurred long after their deaths.

The material I have on the priestess who returned to save her temple from ruin is fragmentary, but she might have been interred with the stipulation that she protect or maintain the temple when necessary. If this is true, as I suspect it is, she is an example of an invoked mummy, recalled by a specific trigger. (See Chapter Six for more information.)

Dark Pacts

To many shortsighted individuals, the thought of physical immortality beckons like a sweet, radiant dream. It is true that our world offers many pleasures, but fate has decreed that only mortals may enjoy them. There is no shortage, however, of dark powers all too willing to indulge the misconceptions of the foolish.

I do not know, nor do I care to know, how or through what agency undeath is granted. I can attest only to the results. The victim always superficially gains what is desired. In the case of the ancient dead, this is most often continued ownership of material things. I am sure that agents of darkness always take more than they give, however, and the victims never gain any joy from their possessions. Instead, possessions become obsessions.

Often, one or more of the objects associated with a mummy is a key to destroying it. (A mummy that can be destroyed in this fashion is said to be dependent upon the object; see Chapter Four.) I must warn the reader that a mummy is the most single-mindedly possessive creature that exists. Tampering with the goods in a mummy's tomb is almost certain to bring about a curse or deadly assault.

Ancient dead that gained unlife through dark pacts are most often housed in elaborate tombs filled with guardians, traps, and curses, frequently maintained and guarded by cults. Cults often regard "their" mummies as direct representatives of their deities, and sometimes cults venerate mummies as their deities.

A mummy might depend on its cult for its powers, even for its continued existence. The mummy could become powerless unless its name is remembered and celebrated by the living. I do not mean to suggest that my readers slay every mummy cultist they find. Such extreme - indeed, vengeful - acts can bring terrible retribution upon the perpetrators. More importantly, some cults actually serve to keep mummies at rest. If such a cult ceases to venerate a particular mummy, the monster rises in a rage, seeking to reestablish the interrupted rituals.

Forms

Since the ancient dead are fully corporeal, each creature's form is fairly obvious. Further, one can deduce quite a bit about a mummy's origins and powers just by observing its physical form. Unfortunately, the physical form one sees is not always the creature's *true* form. Also, forms can be deceptive, and one can never be certain if one is dealing with the ancient dead or some other, often lesser, undead menace. Disaster awaits those who classify their foes without careful research and observation.

When one thinks of the ancient dead, the most common images that spring to mind are of the classic mummies found in the desert lands of Har'Akir and Kalidnay. These horrifying creatures have desiccated human bodies swathed in yards and yards of musty linen bandages. They move with a shuffling gait that seems ponderous, but their movements can be deceptively quick.

As the following subcategories reveal, the ancient dead vary greatly in corporeal form and physical appearance. I am convinced that familiarity with the full range of aspects a mummy might assume can prevent fatal mistakes. The four forms I have identified are *humanoid*, *animal*, *monster*, and *composite*.

Beware: Misidentification is all too easy. To further complicate matters, I have compiled no less than twenty-one authenticated accounts of various ancient dead that had command over their own forms, changing shape at will. Readers who value their lives and the lives of their companions should not discard clues that their senses reveal, but neither should they depend on pieces of information that are not backed up by careful research. The undead are complex and deadly foes, and deception is one of their most potent weapons.

Humanoid

Most of the ancient dead have humanoid form. These creatures were once living, breathing people, and they retain recognizably human shapes. Without careful study, it is not easy to tell what a humanoid mummy's origins were. Details of dress, ornamentation, hairstyle, and even facial features may provide clues to the culture or era from which an ancient dead first issued. Sometimes an observant hunter can deduce the pertinent facts by observing a mummy's actions for a short time, but I must reemphasize that haste and fatal errors go hand in hand.

Animal

In some cases, the preserved body of a common animal can be reanimated as one of the ancient dead. Nearly every animal mummy is created deliberately, as an animal has neither the intelligence nor the force of will to return to the mortal world on its own. The animal mummy serves either another mummy or a mummy cult.

Nevertheless, an extraordinary animal can return on its own, especially if it was carefully interred upon its death. The fabled Hissing Cat of Kantora was such a creature. In life, this creature was a mage's familiar that wasted away and died after its mistress, Caron de Annemi, met an untimely death. The slain wizardess's companions carefully laid the animal to rest to commemorate their fallen comrade, whose body could not be recovered. The cat returned a generation later when a foolish young wizard claimed de Annemi's research into illusions as his own.

Monster

Monsters tend to die violent deaths that do not leave behind intact bodies. This makes ancient dead monsters mercifully rare. Likewise, only fully mortal and corporeal creatures can become ancient dead. Though many other types of creatures have physical bodies, not every body remains a suitable vessel for a spirit once death overtakes it. Evil spirits such as the rakshasas of Sri Raji, extraplanar creatures such as aerial servants, and created creatures that never were truly alive, such as golems, cannot return as ancient dead. This is a blessing for which we all should be grateful.

Like ancient dead animals, ancient dead monsters are most often created on purpose. My collection of documents includes one harrowing account of a visit to a huge, royal tomb in an unspecified land (probably Har'Akir). The intruders found a catacomb infested with creatures collected from widely scattered lands and pressed into service as guardian mummies. The final portion of the narrative is in a different hand, which suggests the original author perished before the venture was

complete. This second writer describes many weird creatures, all dead, which attacked out of the darkness. The account is disjointed, and the creatures described are so bizarre that I suspect the author is guilty of embellishment. The most improbable example is a trio of tall but wiry creatures with warty green hides, gangly arms ending in wickedly clawed hands, vacant white eyes, and absurdly long noses. I suspect that this final narrator sought solace in the bottle after the adventure, then was plagued by armies of improbable brutes for the remainder of his life.

Composite

One of the most horrifying and physically imposing groups of ancient dead are composite creatures. These mummies are almost certainly created. (My years of undead hunting have bred in me a sense of caution that prevents me from saying "always.") They are constructed from bits and pieces of several different creatures, sewn or otherwise joined together in the same manner as flesh or bone golems are fashioned. Some humanoid parts invariably decorate the mix, and a humanoid spirit animates the mummy. Rarely are such creatures independent, and their presence is a sure sign the area containing them is a vast complex teeming with vileness. (My years as an undead hunter have also taught me that bad news is unfortunately far more reliable than good news.)

State of Preservation

No discussion of the ancient dead would be complete without considering each body's state of preservation. I grant that the four subcategories I have identified - *skeletal*, *withered*, *intact*, and *pristine* - are somewhat arbitrary, but remembering them is important. How well the corpse that houses an ancient dead's spirit has withstood the ravages of time often determines how easily the creature can be identified. Unfortunately, the creature's state of preservation is not a reliable guide to its rank. Further, ancient dead in advanced decay are easily confused with lesser forms of mindless undead. Mistaking an inferior mummy for a common zombie can have (forgive me) grave consequences.

A mummy is most likely clad in funerary garments or wrappings. The exact type and appearance of the mummy's raiment depends on the type of funereal rites that were performed over the corpse, and these in turn vary with local culture, religion, and fashion. A lack of garments or wrappings often indicates a relatively weak mummy, but this is not always so. A colleague of mine once recounted a tale of a vengeful mummy who had returned because grave robbers had unwrapped the corpse to strip it of its burial goods.

Skeletal

A skeletal mummy's physical body has been reduced to bare bones or bones clad in shards of dried flesh. Such a creature is easily confused with a common skeleton or other undead. As I related in the introduction to this treatise, I myself once briefly feared I had come face to face with a dreaded lich when in fact I faced a skeletal mummy.

I once reluctantly employed a Vistani medium to uncover a particularly difficult mummy's secrets and learned a previous group of invaders had succumbed to a skeletal composite mummy that they had misidentified as a bone golem.

Withered

This is the typical state of preservation for a mummy, though few onlookers realize this as a mummy is often fully wrapped in bandages or clothed, its desiccated body concealed under its raiment. The emaciated body may look skeletal, but the bones are fully covered by leathery skin and dry but flexible tissue. Almost all naturally mummified ancient dead survive in this state of preservation.

Intact

An ancient dead in this state of preservation has a body that shows little or no decay. Often it appears to have been dead for only a short time, or even alive but very old or seriously ill. This kind of ancient dead can be confused with a (solid) ghost or vampire. When facing this type of being, one can often quickly determine that the foe is not a ghost because it is fully corporeal and always remains so.

One fairly reliable method for distinguishing this ancient dead from a vampire is through the use of a mirror - the ancient dead will cast a reflection, and it will not recoil from a mirror as a vampire does. Be warned, however, for herein lies a trap

for the overeager. If one approaches an ancient dead creature intending to expose a vampire, seeing the mummy's reflection in a mirror could lead the hunter to overlook his true foe, who is perhaps the mummy's master or ally and is somewhere nearby, waiting to strike. Or, have you been fighting a mummy all along? Be wary of all things. Self-inflicted misdirections frequently lead to tragedy.

Pristine

This is the most insidious type of ancient dead, for the mummy's body, though long dead, appears to be healthy and alive. It is nearly impossible to identify such a being as undead until it reveals itself, usually through its deadly powers. By then, of course, it usually is too late.

Conclusion

The ancient dead are complex creatures, as any reader who has come to this point in my text has no doubt surmised. The path to an accurate classification and assessment of a mummy is often tortuous and filled with false leads and blind alleys. Do not be tempted to neglect the tools presented here just because the task is difficult - the work carries great rewards. Once one understands something of a mummy's origins, physical characteristics, and motivations, one has the keys to unlocking the monster's entire trove of secrets.

Fear and Horror checks

All mummies have a special *fear* power. This is not a normal fear check, but is a special ability that usually causes paralyzation; see Chapter Three: Typical Powers for more details. Note that a mummy's fear power takes precedence over horror checks (roll the fear saving throw first, then roll any horror checks), and it cannot be avoided through roleplaying.

Many ancient dead are awful to behold. Composite mummies can cause horror checks when sighted. Skeletal and withered mummies might also induce horror checks on sight. Most mummies can also induce horror checks through their *rejuvenation*, *invulnerability*, and *disease* powers (see Chapter Three).

Horror checks are not always necessary, even when the PCs encounter something loathsome or alarming. If the heroes respond in character to the dangers they face, there is no need to roll dice. Do the heroes act suitably horrified when a mummy they thought was slain rejuvenates and appears to menace them again? Do the heroes show consternation and despair when mummy rot causes their wounds to fester? If the answers are yes, there is no need to roll any dice.

Natural Mummification

Natural mummies occur only under conditions that prevent or retard decomposition. Generally, a body must be completely sealed off from environmental changes and protected from scavengers. The medium that covers the body must possess some preservative qualities and must not contain oxygen or plants, animals, or microorganisms that cause decay. All of the examples cited by Van Richten and Weathermay are suitable for creating natural mummies, *except subterranean pools*. A body immersed in plain water would tend to decay unless the water was very cold, or oxygen depleted, or both. Further, the water would have to be free of living organisms. A submerged body covered with sand or mud is much more likely to be preserved. Note, however, that any body allowed to lie undisturbed might become mummified, including one concealed in a cool, dry attic or cave, or hidden in a barrel of wine.

One factor Van Richten fails to note is the preserved body's age. Mummies cannot be created from fresh corpses; the body must be embalmed before it can house an ancient dead spirit. Natural embalming requires 10 to 100 years or more, depending on how quickly the preserving medium acts on the body. Immersion in a tar pit would transform a body fairly quickly. Preservation through freezing in ice or immersion in a bog takes much longer. Ultimately, the Dungeon Master must decide.

Monster Mummies

Monster mummies can be created only from living creatures native to the Prime Material Plane. Extraplanar creatures such as elementals and tanar'ri, or creatures that never were truly alive (such as golems), cannot become mummies. Parts of any creature with a corporeal body, however, can be used to construct a composite mummy.

Table 1: Culture Types of Mummies

Mummy's Origin*	Raiment**
Aboriginal	Skins, furs, leather, feathers, beads
Central/South American	Dyed cotton, wrappings, feathers
Chinese	White cotton or silk robes
Egyptian/Mediterranean	White or red linen wrappings
European	Formal black clothing

* **Mummy's Origin:** These are suggestions for the mummy's original cultural type, offered as examples to the Dungeon Master. Aboriginal includes Native North American and all prehistoric cultures. Central/South American includes the Aztec, Mayan, Inca, and similar cultures. Chinese includes all ancient Asian cultures. Egyptian/Mediterranean includes ancient Egypt, North Africa, and Southern Europe. European includes Medieval Western Europe and most other feudal cultures.

** **Raiment:** This is the type of clothing typically worn by a mummy from the given culture. A naturally mummified corpse is clad in whatever the victim was wearing when he or she died. Usually this is everyday clothing, which is less elaborate than funerary garb. An intact and pristine mummy might shun funerary garments altogether, wearing the same kinds of clothes as the living. A mummy's garments, however, also reflect its mortal station and lifestyle. Further, clothing may also indicate, by style and embellishment, the fashions that were current the last time the mummy walked among the living.

*As I shivered and brooded on line casting of that brain-blasting shadow,
I knew that I had at last pried out one of Earth's supreme horrors...*

- H.P. Lovecraft
"The Lurking Fear"

Typical Powers

Anyone with even a casual knowledge of folklore is well aware of the powers traditionally attributed to various sorts of undead. This body of knowledge poses its own difficulties for the mummy hunter. The homespun chatter of the fireside, however vivid and compelling, is notoriously undependable in its details. Still, as I have mentioned in my other works, folk wisdom frequently contains hidden truths about the supernatural. For more than three decades I have made it my task to separate these grains of truth from the chaff of speculation, distortion, and ignorance.

Nowhere in the whole spectrum of the lore of undeath is the truth so heavily veiled as it is in the case of the ancient dead. Many self-described "experts" are wholly unaware that the ancient dead exist at all. Such unenlightened individuals either dismiss the ancient dead as minor creatures, akin to mindless skeletons and zombies, or they mistake them for corporeal ghosts. Still others confidently state that mummies are desert dwellers and cannot abide wetter climes.

Do not be fooled. The ancient dead are slightly less rare in arid places than they are elsewhere, but they can rise wherever mortals are foolish enough to scorn the inevitability of death.

Other common suppositions about mummies contain potentially lethal snares for those who would hunt them. Of these, perhaps two are the most dangerous.

Fire destroys mummies: Mummies of the first or second rank that are found in deserts can be burned, as can some mummies found in other places. I have long considered fire to be a most useful tool, and I have indeed trusted it to stop several otherwise inexorable assaults by ancient dead creatures. Still, I must give this emphatic warning: Never depend on fire as protection against a mummy. Fire is dangerous to wield - burns from even one fumbled flask of flaming oil sap a party's strength. Further, I have encountered tombs and crypts whose air is polluted with explosive gases or dust that cause torches to burst into balls of crimson destruction. Finally, there is no guarantee that fire will affect a mummy in the least.



We entered a chamber fragrant with cedar and jasmine. I wondered how many centuries these scents had lingered.

A cry from Alanthir cut short my ruminations; a trio of skeletal horrors clad in the faded plumage of jungle birds were advancing from the chamber's dusty comers. We gave way and retreated up the stairs as the three mummies converged at our front. Claudia quickly lit and passed along flasks of oil to Alanthir and Geddar, who lost no time in hurling fiery destruction at our assailants. The charnel smell of burning feathers as flame engulfed the mummies quickly displaced the suddenly cloying scent of jasmine and cedar, but to our horror the creatures were not discomfrted in the least. The nearest mummy merely reached out to enfold Alanthir in its flaming embrace.

A mummy's treasure is cursed: Frequently this is true. In many accounts I have collected, what is identified as "the mummy's curse" is actually *mummy rot* rather than a mysterious malady. Anyone who engages a mummy in hand-to-hand combat is subject to this scourge, and the only sure way to defeat it is to have an experienced priest at hand.

Grave robbing is not an activity I condone. Simply entering a mummy's tomb, however, or failing to perform specific actions while inside a tomb, can unleash a curse (more about this in Chapter Seven: Houses of the Dead). And one cannot avoid the baneful aftereffects of a mummy encounter merely by ignoring its treasure. The ancient dead, as I have said before, are possessive in the extreme. It is not uncommon for one to take offense at the hunters' mere presence in its lair. Finally, in many cases one must handle, remove, or even destroy tomb objects to have any hope of returning the mummy's spirit to rest. Only careful investigation and research can reveal if these actions are required; if they are, suffering a curse might be unavoidable.

As I noted in Chapter Two: Types of Mummies, all mummies share certain powers, even if the tales told by common folk don't take those powers into account. This does not mean that all mummies are alike, or even that all mummies are similar. The reader would do well to dismiss such a notion without delay. Though one might expect to encounter whole legions of lesser mummies that are more or less alike, the high-rank individuals are unique. Many lesser mummies, too, can possess quirks that one might expect to find only in more powerful creatures. These might take the form of more potent versions of the four typical abilities: invulnerability, rejuvenation, disease, and fear, or they might be salient abilities that usually are reserved for mummies of higher rank.

But I am getting ahead of myself. First, let me discuss the four typical abilities in more detail.

Invulnerability

The ancient dead are resistant to normal weapons; ordinary steel is simply not up to the task of cleaving or battering through a mummy's embalmed and enchanted flesh. In my own direct experience, the most reliable weapons are made from enchanted steel. I have accounts, however, of mummies that have been laid low by silver weapons or by weaponry crafted from other unusual materials such as cold-forged iron, flint, copper, or bronze. In any case, the weapon must be fashioned completely from the metal in question, though weapons such as hammers or axes can have wooden hafts in the normal manner. A mere coating of silver over an iron weapon, for example, is not sufficient to affect the ancient dead, as it is in the case of lycanthropes.

I can only speculate about why these materials, which are softer and weaker than steel, can damage a mummy's impenetrable flesh when steel cannot. I suspect that some form of supernatural symbolism might be a factor, as is the case with other creatures of the night. The elemental purity of these materials, along with their rarity and extra cost, apparently help them overcome a mummy's defenses.

For example, silver is widely considered a magical metal. Folklore associates silver with the moon. One particularly intriguing theory I have encountered holds that, just as the moon's light illuminates the night and banishes darkness, silver - the lunar metal - proves baneful to the wicked spirits of evil creatures. As I have said, folk wisdom often sprouts from a grain of truth.

Some element of symbolism may play upon the monster's personal history as well. For example, a mummy that was a goldsmith in life might well be vulnerable to clubbing weapons forged from this soft and valuable substance. (Gold will not hold a point or edge, so gold arrows, swords, and spears are of little help.)

The unnatural hardness of mummy flesh not only foils weapons, but also resists certain elemental powers. I have encountered or documented mummies that were impervious to fire, electricity, cold, or even earth and rock.

Finally, the ancient dead share with other undead creatures an immunity to enchantments that produce *sleep*, *charm*, or *hold* effects. As mummies are unliving, death magic, poisons, and paralysis of all kinds do not affect the ancient dead in the least.

Rejuvenation

Mummies are constantly supplied with a flow of positive energy, which accounts for most (or all) of their typical powers. The most obvious manifestation of this energy is a mummy's uncanny ability to maintain and rebuild its lifeless body. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, this ability should not be confused with the very similar regeneration ability possessed by the vampire. To rejuvenate itself, a mummy generally must be at rest for an hour or so while it draws in energy and rebuilds its strength. While rejuvenating, the mummy is powerless. Be warned, however, that a mummy may be able to end the process whenever it wishes, leave its resting state, and attack. My documents contain several accounts of overeager hunters who have come to grief when a mummy they thought was helpless suddenly lashed out at them.

Attacking a rejuvenating mummy can give satisfactory results because destroying its body can break the power link and free the mummy's spirit. A mummy of the first, second, or third rank is often laid permanently to rest if its body is destroyed; the weaker the mummy, the more likely this is to be true.

At other times, however, attacking the mummy's body merely delays the inevitable counterassault, because the mummy can rejuvenate even after it has been reduced to dust. However, such a pause is useful for investigating and discovering the true key to laying the creature to rest, or even for making a hasty retreat from the creature's lair.

Though I never have seen the phenomenon myself, I have several accounts that a "destroyed" mummy's spirit actually took visible form. The exact form varied, but the spirit usually assumed the shape of an animal or a semblance of the mummy's once-living self. In each case, the ghastly image was insubstantial and impervious to harm by spells or weapons, but it could be seen clearly.

My companions and I recovered quickly from the mummy's surprise assault. Grey and I swung energetically at the shrunken corpse. We were heartened when we saw how deeply our weapons bit into the dried flesh. Undaunted by wounds that would have crippled a lesser creature, the mummy continued to lash out. The creature's limbs did not fall still until we had reduced it to a dirty heap.

Our first hint of the horrors that lay ahead came when we detected a flutter within the crumbling torso. The leathery chest quivered and burst into a thousand moldy shards as a winged creature no larger than a sparrow leapt skyward, feathery wings beating the air.

Grey dealt it a blow, but the sword passed through the apparition, biting only empty air. As for myself, I recoiled, for I looked directly into the creature's eyes and saw not an avian head, but a human face - a face with features twisted in a sneer of rage. It was a face thirsty for revenge.

- From the private journal of Thaddius Salis

Disease

Mummy rot, the curse of the pharaohs, the lingering death - this dreadful weapon of the ancient dead goes by many names. I shall use the rather crude vernacular mummy rot in this section, though I have more medically apt terms at my disposal. The exact meaning of mummy rot is clear to the layman and produces a not undesirably vivid image in the mind of the prospective mummy hunter.

The symptoms of classic mummy rot are fairly easy to recognize: The victim generally feels no particular discomfort; in fact, the infected area often seems to be immune to minor aches, pains, and injuries. This might seem to be beneficial, but it is highly dangerous. Speaking as a physician, I can assure the reader that the body's sensitivity to heat, cold, and even pain provides a vital link to the outside world. A victim numbed by mummy rot is deprived of this link and is prone to ignore minor injuries that would best be attended. This untreated damage frequently leads to serious infection. The lack of feeling in the skin, combined with the insidious power of the mummy's touch, greatly slows the body's natural healing powers. A scratch that might disappear in a day or two instead lingers for 10 days or more.

Even worse, the victim's capacity for self-healing is so disrupted that curative magic from priests and paladins, a great boon to adventurers, is no longer effective. The victim's tissues simply lose their ability to benefit from such restorative magic. In many victims, this inability to heal is the first sign that the dreadful disease has set in. A sensible reader might ask how this

could be, as surely anyone struck by a mummy would immediately realize the consequences? Alas, things seldom are so simple.

A few mummies of the first rank possess a weak disease-causing power that a healthy victim can resist; this has fooled more than one mummy hunter into thinking he is immune to the touch. In other cases, it might not be clear at all that one's opponent is a mummy, Especially if one has the misfortune to encounter a well-preserved specimen, or a specimen that can alter its appearance. Furthermore, a few mummies (usually those of the third, fourth and fifth ranks) can cause the effects of their disease to be delayed, so so the disease seems to erupt spontaneously and its source is difficult to identify.

An advanced case of mummy rot is not at all difficult to identify. The victim breaks out in scabrous sores. In very advanced cases, the victim's ears, nose, and digits shrivel or even fall off. Once the malady reaches this stage, the victim will be scarred for life even if cured.

Locating a cure can be problematic. Even after more than 30 years of experience as a physician, surgeon, and herbalist, I have yet to discover a strictly medical cure for this scourge. It is so insidious that outright amputation of an afflicted limb fails to halt the disease. I am forced to conclude that because the malady has a supernatural origin, only magic halts its effects.

The rate at which the malady progresses varies greatly from mummy to mummy. I have seen cases that took months to fully develop—this was the situation at the Falkovnian mining camp, which I recounted earlier. I have witnessed other cases where the disease reached a fatal stage in a single day. The rate at which the disease spreads appears to be a function of the mummy's power. Presumably, the weaker the mummy, the longer the disease takes to scar or kill the victim. I do not, however recommend that anyone use this assumption as a measure of an opposing mummy's potency. Once the affliction is discovered, you must see that it is cured without delay.

No company of mummy hunters is complete without a priest or paladin with healing powers. A warning: I have encountered mentalists and psychics in my travels who could heal wounds and normal maladies as well as any priest. The supernatural diseases inflicted by the ancient dead, however, have always defeated these mental powers.

To further complicate the mummy hunter's task, and especially the task of correctly identifying the quarry, not every mummy's touch causes a rotting disease. I personally have encountered three variations: intense pain and internal bleeding, blindness, or convulsions and insanity. I have documented further cases where a mummy's touch has caused immediate death due to heart failure, the conversion of tissue into acidic green slime, instantaneous dehydration, or even caustic burns.

In most cases, a magical cure disease spell can halt the malevolent affects of the touch, but sometimes other spells such as neutralize poison are necessary. The exact spell depends on the mummy's power and the type of malady. In each case, the effect resists all nonmagical cures.

Fear

The final power that all mummies share in one form or another is the ability to inspire supernatural fear. Our world contains many creatures that cause the stoutest heart to skip a beat; such fear is a natural reaction every mortal has when confronting a powerful and potentially deadly foe. However, a party can overcome this natural dread if its members are confident that they match or exceed their foe's strength. Such is not the case when a party faces the ancient dead.

The fear a mummy inspires is not a simple manifestation of the victim's own instinct for self-preservation, but a supernatural assault on the victim's will. If the victim cannot summon sufficient force of will to resist the attack, he flees in terror. Even the most hardened adventurers are vulnerable to this attack. We all have our moments of weakness - even I. As mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, very powerful mummies can cause a victim to become literally paralyzed with fright, and thus helpless for a time.

This interval of paralysis tends to be short - usually no longer than three or four minutes - but it is often sufficient for the mummy to infect the victim with its disease power, if not slay the victim altogether. I am not sure which fate is worse. I have been forced into humiliating retreat more than once when abandoned by fear-struck comrades. As strength and safety often lie in numbers, a party split by fear faces a fate worse than a hasty retreat.

Paralytic fear by its very nature cannot scatter a party, but it can deal a devastating blow to the party's unity by disabling its

members. Also, a comrade fleeing in fear is at least temporarily secure from the immediate danger an approaching mummy may pose. If one is fortunate, one's fleeing companion might halt in a fairly safe location. A victim rooted in place has no such hope of safety. On more than one occasion, I have spent breathless minutes (which seemed like whole eternities) attempting to shield a stricken companion from a mummy's lethal grasp. I have not always been successful in these endeavors.

The fear power of the ancient dead comes in many forms. Most often it is a continuous aura that takes effect at the mere sight of a mummy. In the previous chapter, I related a case where a mummy could direct its fear power according to its own will. I have documentation of another mummy whose gaze inspired terror. Victims who met this powerful creature's gaze were extremely susceptible to the mummy's magical fear, and even those who avoided looking in its eyes were not immune.

Other Typical Powers

Of the several other powers that most of the ancient dead possess, I have reason to believe two of them, night vision and enhanced strength, are common to all ancient dead in one form or another. As yet, I have no truly credible proof, either through my own experience or collected tales, that these two powers are universal.

Night vision: It seems that ancient dead can function in complete darkness with as much ease as a man can in daylight. They appear to have the same sort of "heat vision" that elves, dwarves, and other demihumans have. Not being blessed with such vision myself, I have been loath to test my theory while actually face to face with a mummy.

Enhanced strength: Not being a fighting man, I cannot attest that every mummy I have faced was imbued with supernatural vigor. Nevertheless, I urge the reader to beware of a mummy's physical prowess. My collection of notes includes many accounts of mummies tossing burly warriors about as though the latter were rag dolls. Some of these tales I can dismiss as exaggerations born of fear and awe; others are more credible. I myself have witnessed mummies performing stupendous feats of strength.

Our investigations led us to an immense cavern, sealed at one end by a cyclopean wall. We studied the massive stone blocks carefully, as we suspected the wall might hold a secret portal that gave access to the space beyond. That there was a space beyond I was certain; all my research pointed to this cavern as the mouth of the mummy's lair.

After some minutes of searching, Geddar Ironheart announced that one of the smaller blocks (a mere eight feet wide and six feet high) was in fact loose. I gave silent thanks for the dwarf's knowledge of stonework as we set about trying to shift the block. Geddar, Belinderissa, and two burly lads from the local constabulary pushed hard against the massive block. Though they made no visible progress, the quartet believed the task could be done. Shauten, our wizard, assisted by casting a lengthy spell (to enhance strength) upon one of the lads, and all fell to pushing once again.

We heard a raspy hiss as the block nudged back. The stone had retreated no more than a foot, however, when our progress not only stopped, but reversed! Looks of consternation spread across the lads' faces as the block slid inexorably toward us; Geddar and Belinderissa lost no time in stepping aside, weapons at the ready. The lads vainly kept pushing, but the stone burst from the wall like a cork from a bottle, nearly crushing the constables.

From behind the block stepped a pale figure clad in a bronze cuirass, scaly with verdigris, and a flowing white robe. The mummy wore a sword at its hip, but left it there, attacking with its shriveled, clawlike hands instead. One hand shot forth as quickly as any asp might and grasped Belinderissa by the throat, lifting her from her feet. Stepping forward, the mummy aimed a blow at me that I could not avoid in spite of my knowledge that it was coming, striking me with a force equal to a kick from an angry mule.

—From the private journal of Dr. Van Richten

Table 2: Mummy Power Ranks

Rank	Hit Dice*	Movement**
First	1-3	6-9
Second	4-6	6-9

Third	7-9	9-12
Fourth	10-12	9-12
Fifth	13+	12-15

* **Hit Dice:** The range of Hit Dice a mummy of the listed rank usually has. Exceptions to these ranges are not uncommon.

** **Movement:** The range of movement rates a humanoid mummy of the listed rank usually has. An animal mummy's movement rate varies with its rank and species.

Table 3: Mummy Invulnerability

Rank	Armor Class	Bonus To Hit*
First	7 to 5	Special**
Second	5 to 3	+1 or special**
Third	3 to 0	+1
Fourth	0 to -2	+2
Fifth	-2 to -4	+3

* **Bonus To Hit:** The typical minimum magical bonus a weapon must have to harm a mummy that has an invulnerability power of the listed rank. The creature's invulnerability rank usually, but not always, equals the mummy's power rank.

** **Special:** Special weapons are not enchanted, but made from solid silver or some other unusual material.

Mummies with first-rank invulnerability suffer full damage from enchanted and special (including silver) weapons.

Mummies with second-rank invulnerability suffer half damage from special (including silver) weapons and full damage from enchanted weapons.

Mummies with third-rank invulnerability sustain no damage from nonmagical weapons, even special ones. Magical weapons inflict one-half their base damage (round down), plus their full magical bonus. For this purpose, "base damage" includes damage from the weapon and all nonmagical bonuses from Strength and specialization.

Mummies with fourth-rank invulnerability suffer half damage from any weapon that can harm them. Roll damage, add all bonuses, then divide by two; round fractions up.

Mummies with fifth-rank invulnerability suffer damage equal to only half the weapon's magical bonus, rounded up. For example, a *dagger* +3 and a *two-handed sword* +4 inflict a mere 2 points of damage on a fifth-rank mummy. Bonus damage for Strength and specialization is completely negated.

Energy and Elemental Attacks

A mummy is *immune* to at least one form of energy attack, usually to cold. Any mummy immune to an element or energy form sustains no damage from any attack based on that form, including nonmagical attacks, spells, magic from devices, and attacks by elementals. The Dungeon Master is free to select an immunity in keeping with a mummy's physical origins. For example, the waterlogged tissues of a mummy preserved in a salt marsh might be impervious to fire.

If a mummy is *resistant* to an element or energy form, nonmagical attacks inflict no damage and magic attacks have normal affect. A mummy of at least third-rank immunity is resistant to one form of energy other than the type of energy to which it is immune. A mummy of at least fourth-rank immunity is immune to two forms of energy. A mummy with fifth-rank immunity could be immune to two forms of energy and resistant to third form of energy.

All forgoing resistances and immunities are in addition to any immunity the mummy has as a result of its elemental command power (see Chapter Four).

Table 4: Spells Useless Against Mummies**Wizard Spells**

<i>Abi-Dalzim's horrid wilting*</i>	<i>Blindness</i>
<i>Charm monster</i>	<i>Charm person</i>
<i>Cloudkill</i>	<i>Contagion</i>
<i>Death spell</i>	<i>Emotion</i>
<i>Enervation</i>	<i>Energy drain</i>
<i>Eyebite</i>	<i>Fear</i>
<i>Finger of death</i>	<i>Fire charm</i>
<i>Haste</i>	<i>Hold animal</i>
<i>Hold monster</i>	<i>Hold person</i>
<i>Hypnotic pattern</i>	<i>Hypnotism</i>
<i>Insatiable thirst*</i>	<i>Irritation</i>
<i>Magic jar</i>	<i>Mass charm</i>
<i>Mass suggestion</i>	<i>Otto's irresistable dance</i>
<i>Phantasmal killer</i>	<i>Power word, blind</i>
<i>Power word, kill</i>	<i>Power word, stun</i>
<i>Scare</i>	<i>Sepia snake sigil</i>
<i>Sleep</i>	<i>Slow</i>
<i>Suggestion</i>	<i>Suffocate*</i>
<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Vampiric touch*</i>
	<i>Wail of the banshee*</i>

* Spell described in *Tome of Magic*.

Priest Spells

<i>Accelerate healing*</i>	<i>Age creature* **</i>
<i>Animal growth</i>	<i>Antianimal shell</i>
<i>Breath of life* **</i>	<i>Chaotic sleep*</i>
<i>Cloak of bravery**</i>	<i>Command</i>
<i>Creeping doom</i>	<i>Cure blindness**</i>
<i>Cure deafness**</i>	<i>Cure disease**</i>
<i>Cure critical wounds**</i>	<i>Cure light wounds**</i>
<i>Cure serious wounds**</i>	<i>Charm person or mammal</i>
<i>Heal**</i>	<i>Hold animal</i>
<i>Hold person</i>	<i>Legal thoughts*</i>
<i>Mindshatter*</i>	<i>Modify memory*</i>
<i>Nap*</i>	<i>Raise dead**</i>
<i>Regenerate**</i>	<i>Restoration**</i>
<i>Ressurrection**</i>	<i>Rigid thinking*</i>

* Spell described in *Tome of Magic*.

** Both the standard form of the spell and its reversed form are ineffective.

Table 5: Psionic Powers Useless Against Mummies

<i>Aging</i>	<i>Attraction</i>
<i>Aversion</i>	<i>Awe</i>
<i>Control body</i>	<i>Daydream</i>
<i>Death field</i>	<i>Detonate</i>
<i>Domination</i>	<i>Double pain</i>
<i>False sensory input</i>	<i>Id insinuation</i>
<i>Inflict pain</i>	<i>Invincible foes</i>
<i>Life draining domination</i>	<i>Mass</i>

<i>Mind thrust</i>	<i>Mind wipe</i>
<i>Phobia amplification</i>	<i>Posthypnotic suggestion</i>
<i>Phychic crush</i>	<i>Phychic drain</i>
<i>Phychic surgery</i>	<i>Repugnance</i>
<i>Switch personality</i>	<i>Telempathic projection</i>

All undead are immune to *aura* sight.

These powers are described in PHBR5 *The Complete Psionics Handbook*.

Table 6: Special Weapons Used Against Mummies

Origin*	Weapon**
Aboriginal	Flint, copper
Central/South American	Obsidian, flint, gold
Chinese	Bronze, iron
Egyptian/Mediterranean	Copper, bronze
European	Iron

* **Origin:** The mummy's original cultural type. See Chapter Two for detailed descriptions regarding a mummy's origins and the various types of clothing one might expect it to wear.

** **Weapon:** The mummy is potentially vulnerable to silver weapons, and also to weapons made from one of the listed materials.

Table 7: Mummy Rejuvenation

Rank*	Rate**	Rest***
First	5/day	1 week/1 day
Second	6/hour	1 day/1 day
Third	12/hour	1 day/1 hour
Fourth	1/minute	1 hour/1 hour
Fifth	2 minute	1 hour/none

* **Rank:** A mummy with first- or second-rank *rejuvenation* usually cannot recover if its hit points have been reduced to zero or less; this mummy is destroyed if defeated in combat. A mummy with third-rank *rejuvenation*, usually cannot recover if its hit points are reduced to -10 or less. A mummy with fourth- or fifth-rank *rejuvenation* usually can recover even if its body is completely destroyed.

** **Rate:** The number before the slash shows the hit points a mummy of the listed rank usually regains during each time period. The entry after the slash shows the minimum interval a mummy of the listed rank usually requires to regain any hit points through rejuvenation. Both numbers vary at the Dungeon Master's discretion.

*** **Rest:** This shows the interval a mummy of the listed rank must spend completely at rest when *rejuvenating*. The number before the slash shows the interval of rest required before the mummy begins to regain hit points. The number after the slash shows the interval of time the mummy must rest after it stops *rejuvenating*. During this restive stage, the mummy is effectively helpless, unable to move, attack, or defend. Rest times are added to any time actually spent regaining hit points. These numbers vary according to the Dungeon Master's designs.

Disease

Diseases inflicted by the ancient dead come in a variety of unpleasant forms. The most common of these is *mummy rot*, the effects of which are summarized below.

Table 8: Ranks of Mummy Rot

Rank	Fatality*
First	1d6 months
Second	1d12 weeks
Third	1d8 days

Fourth 1d6 days

Fifth 1d3 days

* **Fatality:** The usual interval that passes before the victim dies from the disease. This number varies at the Dungeon Master's option. Nonmagical and psionic cures are ineffective against *mummy rot*. Only a *cure disease* spell or similar magic is effective.

Other effects: As Van Richten has noted, untreated mummy rot has several catastrophic effects on the victim.

First-rank *mummy rot* permanently reduces the victim's Charisma score by 2 points for each month the disease goes untreated. While afflicted, the victim gains no benefits from the various *cure wounds* spells, although a *regenerate* spell can restore lost hit points (it has no effect on the disease). The victim can recover hit points through rest, but at 10% of the normal rate: 1 hit point per 10 days of light activity or 3 hit points per 10 days of complete rest. Nonmagical interventions, such as care from a person with the healing and herbalism proficiencies, are ineffective.

Mummy rot of the second rank permanently reduces the victim's Charisma score by 2 points for each week the disease goes untreated; magical healing and natural hit-point recovery are affected as above.

Third-rank or higher *mummy rot* permanently reduces the victim's Strength and Constitution scores by 1 point each day and permanently reduces Charisma by 2 points each day. While afflicted, the victim cannot recover lost hit points by any means except a *wish*. After 1d6 hours, the victim is racked by convulsions, which impose a -2 penalty upon all ability checks and make spellcasting or spell memorization impossible. This type of *mummy rot* can be cured only by a combination of *cure disease* and *regeneration* spells; a *cure disease* spell cast on its own relieves all symptoms, but the victim suffers a relapse 24 hours later if a *regeneration* spell is not also administered.

A victim who dies while afflicted with *mummy rot* decays rapidly unless quickly embalmed; the victim cannot be raised from death unless both a *cure disease* spell and a *raise dead* or *resurrection* spell are cast within one hour of death. If either of the latter two spells are unsuccessful (the character fails the resurrection survival roll), the victim becomes an undead creature.

Alternate Forms of Disease: As Van Richten points out, the ancient dead's disease-causing powers encompass several types of effects, though *mummy rot* is the most common. When a disease-causing power takes a different form, it should reflect the mummy's origins and motivations. A mummy that was once a notorious thief or spy, for example, might blind its victims (as it once depended on avoiding sight). A mummy that once kept a guilty secret might affect its opponent's heartbeat (as it was once false-hearted). The Dungeon Master should feel free to assign an appropriate game effect.

Blindness: A victim might suffer blurred or limited vision, lose the sense of sight altogether, or develop sensitivity to bright light. Game penalties for blindness or reduced vision can include attack roll penalties, the inability to read, and similar impediments. Advanced cases can lead to a reduction of the victim's Dexterity, Intelligence, or Wisdom score (due to the infection spreading to the brain). Mummy-induced blindness might be removed by *cure blindness*, *cure disease*, or *heal* spells.

Cardiac arrest: A victim might suffer shortness of breath, the inability to fight or run, the loss of hit points, or death. Game penalties can include penalties to attack and damage rolls, penalties to ability checks, and reductions of a hero's Strength or Constitution score. The cardiac arrest might be cured by a *slow* spell (to quiet the wildly beating heart) or by *cure disease*, *heal*, or *restoration* spells.

Poison: The mummy's touch might be toxic, and the effects deadly, paralytic, or debilitating. Untreated poisons can reduce the victim's ability scores, cause blindness or deafness, or cause portions of the victim's body to wither. The victim might be cured by *neutralize poison*, *cure disease*, *remove curse*, or *heal* spells.

Spasms: The portion of the victim's body touched by a mummy becomes shaky. There is a noncumulative 10% chance each hour that the afflicted area suffers random jerks and fits, affecting the victim as follows (generally, 1d4 plus the value of the power rank in rounds).

Head: No spellcasting or attacks are possible during the round when the spasm occurs. Movement is reduced by one third.

Arm: No spellcasting is possible during the round the spasm occurs. If the shield arm is afflicted, any shield bonus is lost. If the weapon arm is afflicted, no attacks are possible.

Leg: Dexterity bonuses to Armor Class and saving throws are lost during the round in which the spasm occurs. Movement rate is reduced by half, and any movement or fighting requires the victim to make a successful Dexterity check or stumble and fall.

Torso: No movement, spellcasting, or combat is possible during the round in which the spasm occurs. If the victim is on horseback or in an unstable position (such as climbing a wall), the fit prompts an appropriate ability check with a -5 (or a -25%) penalty to determine if the victim falls.

A mummy might evoke a spasm in a victim each round, if it has an unobstructed view of that victim. The victim can attempt a saving throw vs. spell to avoid the evoked spasm.

Multiple effects: A very powerful mummy might have disease powers that create multiple effects: for example, rot and spasms, or blindness and poisoning.

Fear

A mummy's *fear* aura usually takes effect on sight; it applies only at the beginning of each encounter with the mummy. Unlike normal fear checks, mummy-inspired fear is a direct assault on the victim's will. Each victim viewing the mummy must successfully save vs. spell (Wisdom bonuses are applicable) or become paralyzed with fright for a variable number of rounds, as shown in the following table. If a hero views a mummy under circumstances that normally would cause a fear check, there is a -1 penalty to the saving throw vs. spell. Mummies with powerful *fear* auras impose additional penalties upon the save. Numbers, however, bolster a victim's courage; for every six people in a group, the saving throw vs. spell for each improves by +1. All humans enjoy an additional +2 to the saving throw. As always, the Dungeon Master may apply bonuses and penalties as befit the situation.

Table 9: Ranks of Mummy Fear

Rank	Modifier*	Duration**
First	0	1d4 rounds
Second	-1	1d6 rounds
Third	-2	1d8 rounds
Fourth	-3	1d10 rounds
Fifth	-4	1d12 rounds

* Modifier: This is the penalty to the saving throw vs. spell. This number can vary by one or two points in either direction.

** Duration: This is the interval during which victims who fail their saving throws remain paralyzed with fright.

Alternate Forms of Fear: A mummy's *fear* aura need not take effect on sight. The mummy might have the ability to create *fear* in a cone-shaped area before it, like a *fear* spell, or to create *fear by gaze*, affecting one creature each round. Targets need not meet the mummy's gaze to be affected, but victims who meet the gaze suffer an additional -2 saving throw penalty.

If a mummy's aura of paralyzing *fear* does not take effect on sight, its opponents might be subject to normal fear checks when they see the mummy. All the rules governing fear checks apply (*Domains of Dread*, Chapter Six).

Other effects of a failed fear check can also be used for those confronting the ancient dead. For example, a mummy's *fear* aura might induce panic, or flight. See *Domains of Dread*, pages 142-143, for a variety of effects; the Dungeon Master can invent additional effects. An example would be an aura of *dread*: The

mummy's aura causes opponents to lose all hope, as they believe the mummy is invincible. All attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks suffer a negative modifier equal to the *fear* power's rank. This magical dread persists for as long as the victims can see the creature.

Infravision

All mummies can see in the dark, usually having infravision with a 30-foot range. Those that retain demihuman abilities have even better infravision (former range plus 30 feet).

Enhanced Strength

Mummies are supernaturally strong. Those that have retained warrior abilities or high racial Strength scores might be even stronger.

Table 10: Mummy Strengths and Attacks

Rank	Score*	Damage**
First	18/76	1d8
Second	18/91	1d12
Third	18/00	2d8
Fourth	19	3d6
Fifth	20	3d8

* Score: The mummy's effective Strength ability score is given here.

** Damage: This is the amount of damage a humanoid mummy can inflict with one unarmed physical (melee) attack.

Animal Mummies

An animal mummy's Armor Class and Hit Dice are determined by its power rank, as in the following table.

Table 11: Types of Animal Mummies

Type*	Number of Attacks	Base Damage**	Base Move***
Baboon	1	1d6	12
Bull	1	3d6	12
Cat, Domestic	2	1d4/1d2	9
Cat, Great	3	1d6/1d6/3d4	15
Crocodile	2	2d6/4d4	6, Sw 12
Dog	1	3d4	12
Eagle/Hawk	2	1d4/1d4	1, Fl 30 (C)
Elephant	5	2d10/2d10/2d8/2d8/2d8	15
Horse/Camel	2	1d8/1d8	18
Snake, Constrictor	2	1d4/1d8	9
Snake, Venomous	1	1d3	12

* **Type:** The general type of animal that has been mummified. The sampling here is intended only as an example, and the Dungeon Master should feel free to create more types as needed.

** **Base Damage:** The amount of damage an animal mummy of the first rank inflicts. Add +1 damage per attack for each rank beyond the first. For example, an animal mummy of the fifth rank has a +4 damage bonus.

*** **Base Move:** An animal mummy of the first or second rank moves at two-thirds its base rate. An animal mummy of the third or fourth rank moves at its base rate. An animal mummy of the fifth rank moves at four-thirds its base rate. Thus, a baboon (MV 12) mummy of the first rank has MV 8, and a baboon mummy of the fifth rank has MV 16.

Additional attacks, attributed to the natural animals' abilities, should be added to the mummies' skills as well, as

shown in the following examples.

Bull: A bull mummy charging at least 40 feet inflicts an extra 1d6 damage from its horns, plus an extra 1d8 trampling damage.

Cat, domestic: This mummy imposes a -3 penalty upon opponents' surprise rolls. If a cat mummy is successful with both melee attacks, it can rake its opponent with its rear claws for an additional 1d4 damage.

Cat, great: This mummy can leap up to 30 feet. If both forepaw attacks are successful, it can rake with its rear claws for an additional 2d6 damage.

Crocodile: This mummy imposes a -2 penalty upon opponents' surprise rolls.

Elephant: This mummy cannot direct more than two attacks at a single opponent.

Snake, venomous: Living creatures bitten by this mummy must successfully save vs. poison with a -1 penalty per power rank of the mummy or die immediately. The recommended strength of the poison is B-F (see the *Dungeon Master Guide*), determined by the creature's power rank and the relative strength of the adventuring party.

Monster and Composite Mummies

A monster mummy uses its normal Hit Dice, plus 1 or 2 additional Hit Dice per power rank. The monster mummy gains a +2 bonus to all damage rolls per power rank, and it uses its normal Armor Class or one commensurate with its power rank, whichever is better. A monster mummy's movement rate is determined in the same manner as that of an animal mummy, as noted earlier.

A composite mummy almost always has a human head or torso, with various monster or animal parts attached. Generally, the Hit Dice and Armor Class are determined by power rank. Movement rate, number of attacks, and damage are figured by the body parts. A specimen of the third rank with a great cat's head, a human torso, a griffin's claws, and a great cat's legs would have 7-9 Hit Dice, three attacks per round (3d4+4/1d4+6/1d4+6), and a movement rate of 15.

I am old, and the night of sepulcher was long, and I have forgotten much. Yet, groping backward across the void of death, it may be that I shall retrieve something of my former wisdom...

- Clark Ashton Smith
"The Empire of Necromancers"

Salient Powers

Fear and tremble, you. interlopers, unbelievers, and despoilers, for the king will come. . . . The eyes of the gods light his face, the might of the gods sustains his limbs. He shall eat your magic for his morning meal, his breath shall wither your flesh, his voice shall stop your hearts, he shall gulp down your spirits.

— Translation from a Har'Akiri tomb

Having dealt with the paranormal abilities common to most ancient dead, I turn now to powers I have encountered only in specific mummies. On the pages that follow, I present my notes regarding sixteen paranormal abilities that mark those mummies possessing them as extraordinary. Mummy hunters who encounter mummies with these powers should take them as a warning that their foes are beyond the typical mold.

The reader can take some heart in the knowledge that even the most powerful mummies seldom have more than two or three such abilities, but be wary. Among mummies of the third and higher ranks, individuals that wield three or four of these abilities are not unheard of. The most terrible ancient dead foe I have confronted displayed seven salient abilities, and it might very well have possessed one or two additional powers that I did not observe!

Alter Form

A mummy with this ability has command over its own shape. In the example with which I am most familiar, the mummy could affect a true and lasting change over its body. Its preference for the guises of a wolf and a bat led my companions and me to mistake it for a vampire. In the end, only the extreme sense of caution I had developed in my years of undead hunting saved me, then only because I was prepared to deal with an unusual vampire.

Other mummies are not limited to the forms of animals, and they can assume the forms of living people; sometimes this is the form that was theirs in life, other times it is any form the mummy finds convenient or necessary in a fight.

Animate Objects

A mummy with this power can imbue inanimate objects with mobility. Unlike a ghost's ability to *inhabit objects*, the mummy's spirit does not enter an animated object. Instead, the mummy transfers some of its own positive energy into the objects, temporarily giving them the semblance of life.

Mummies with this power can be extremely formidable. Not only can they be misidentified as ghosts or poltergeists, but their tombs are often filled with a wide variety of statuary and other items that can pose a deadly threat when they gain the semblance of life and move to the attack.

Charm

Being creatures with worldly minds, the ancient dead can exert great power over animals, beasts, and sometimes humans. Feeble willpower (low Wisdom) is an unlatched gate through which foes can enter and usurp control of their victims.

Curse

Among all the denizens of our many realms, only the Vistani are more greatly feared for their power to *curse* than are the ancient dead. Fortunately for mummy hunters, the ancient dead are much more likely to dwell in places that are protected by *curses* than the mummies are to lay their own curses on intruders and foes. Nevertheless, mummies are strong-willed and covetous beings, and their potential for vengeance is high.

My collection of documents contains several accounts of adventurers who have succumbed to mysterious ailments, strange bouts of ill luck, and similar misfortunes soon after encounters with mummies. I have no doubt that several of these incidents can be attributed to the ability some of the ancient dead have to delay the worst effects of their powers. Still, I have several accounts where the victims actually witnessed a mummy speak a curse against its attackers. I also have an account of a mummy who committed a *curse* in writing.

Our foray into the ancient tomb was not without reward or penalty. Of the former, we had recovered many baubles and the collection of clay tablets that Piking had deemed so vital to the final conclusion of our quest; we also had sent nearly a score of our foe's undead servants irrevocably into the hereafter. Of the latter, we were burdened with many festering wounds, which we soon put right.

When at last we gathered our supplies, we found a notice written on modern parchment, but recorded in ancient script. It was addressed to "the foes of Ananka-Siphir" (which we knew to mean ourselves), and it read thus:

"Those who have raised their hands against me, who have dispatched my slaves, and taken what is mine; let them restore what has been stolen and trouble me no more. Woe to thee if thou heed not this warning, for the snake shall be against thee on land, the crocodile shall be against thee in the water, the hawk shall be against thee in the air, and flame shall be against thee wherever thou goest."

After reading the notice, we resolved to show Piking the tablets without delay and set out for his home, which was some twenty miles distant. When we made camp that night, the broth we set to warm on the fire boiled over in a scalding spray. The fire, we noted, had not seemed particularly large or hot.

By the time we entered the next town, the incident with the broth was all but forgotten. Forgotten that is, until we spotted the second notice, worded just like the first. The people on the streets seemed to sense our connection with the notice, and they shied away from us.

Later that evening, as we sat poring over the tablets in Piking's parlor, an eagle of monstrous size boldly flew through the open window and attacked us with all the ferocity of a mother defending its nest.

When we had slain the bird, and barred the window, Piking surveyed the wreckage of his parlor and warned us to disguise our true mission and to remove any more notices we might find. The curse, he surmised, drew power from every spirit who learned of it.

—From the memoirs of Edmond Penn

Among the undead, there will always be a few individuals that have the power to bind other members of the walking dead to their service. The ancient dead are no exception, and mummy hunters should be prepared to face a cadre of lesser horrors before facing their true adversaries.

This ability is not widespread among the ancient dead, and it seems to be limited to those mummies, such as rulers, that possessed power over others in life. However, I would not stake my reputation on this idea, and the reader should not stake his life on it, either.

Create Undead

Many of the ancient dead possess the ability to create their own undead minions. Unlike vampires, ghosts, and lesser undead such as ghouls and wights, all of which create undead automatically, a mummy must take deliberate steps to create undead minions.

It seems likely that mummies are empowered to create only other mummies. (Like begets like, even among the ancient

dead.) Spellcasting mummies, however, might easily have acquired enough dark knowledge to create many different types of undead, and they probably have access to necromantic spells that can create minor undead such as skeletons and zombies for use as guards, minor laborers, and so forth.

Delay

Some mummies can withhold -for a time -the worst effects of whatever destructive powers they have. Mummies with this power might choose to delay the onset of their scabrous touch, for example; when victims suddenly develop the symptoms of *mummy rot* hours or even days later, it might be impossible to determine whence the infection came. This is particularly true if mummies can alter their shape into innocuous forms. (A mummy in one written account assumed the form of a brightly colored songbird.) Intact or pristine mummies could also use this power to great effect.

Elemental Command

The ancient dead have an all but unbreakable tie to the mortal world that can give them power over the earth itself, or the air above it. It might be possible for mummies to have control over water or fire as well, but I do not know of such beings.

Grapple

Some mummies grapple their victims rather than strike with their fists. It is nearly impossible for mortals to extract themselves from the grasp of mummies, as these creatures are frequently as strong as any golem or vampire. I have heard tales of mummies whose wrappings were covered with sticky resin, literally gluing opponents to their bodies, but these reports do not come from what I consider a credible source. Still

Illusion

Deception is a common weapon in the arsenal of the ancient dead. During my forays against mummies, I have encountered many false magical images. Some are harmless, simple recreations of the life the mummy once knew. Others distract or misdirect foes. Whatever their intention, illusions conceal the truth about mummies, their plans, and their tombs. Astute hunters can sometimes tell a great deal about ancient undead creatures by the illusions they create and maintain.

Some mummy illusions are mere tricks, shallow images that any careful adventurer can sweep aside. Very powerful mummies, however, can produce intense visions that seem to have mass, texture, and even scent. Only careful research or a spellcaster with an ample stock of divination spells can keep a party safe from these counterfeit sensations.

Passage

Many parties of undead hunters have been dumbfounded by certain mummies' abilities to seemingly pass through solid objects as though the obstacles were composed of thin air. Most horrors that possess this ability are non- or semicorporeal ghosts. It is possible, however, for the ancient dead to exercise a similar power. In one case, a mummy was able to create openings in the solid rock walls of its tomb. In another, the mummy could literally vanish in one place and almost instantaneously reappear in another. A successful expedition into a tomb containing a mummy with this power requires careful planning and strong defensive tactics, as well as pure luck.

Resist Magic

As I explained earlier in this chapter, a mummy's peculiar state of existence makes it immune to certain types of spells. The mummy might, however, have an even broader resistance to magic.

This resistance is not absolute. There is a fair chance that any spell cast upon a low-rank mummy will take effect, though the group opposing the mummy would do well to have a contingency plan in mind should its spells fail. Nevertheless, a powerful mummy might be as impervious to most spells as it is to mundane weapons. If a spellcaster is fortunate, one or two spells might take effect, but most will not. In situations like these, it is best not to rely on one's spellcasters in combat. Of course, spells that have no direct effect upon the mummy are generally as efficient as ever, so wizards and priests remain valuable to their parties regardless of a given creature's magic resistance. Many spells can enhance or revivify the caster's companions, and these are generally more reliable than spells that are directed against one's undead foes.

Retained Abilities

Because most ancient dead rise only after an elaborate burial rite, it should not be surprising that a significant portion of mummies are imbued with or have retained the abilities of priests. In some cases, I believe that mummified priests actually become more powerful than they were in life. It appears that deities whose portfolios include death, disease, or decay regard the act of mummification as a supreme act of devotion, and they "reward" their priests accordingly.

A mummy that was formally interred and granted unlife usually retains some or all of its skills. Priest skills, as I mentioned above, are fully retained or even enhanced. If the mummy's power rank is high enough, its memories and mundane professional skills often remain undiminished. Racial abilities are likely to be fully retained unless the mummy's power rank is very low. Nonpriest adventurer's skills are rare. A mummy acting as a fighter or thief is not common. I have only rarely encountered a mummy wizard. A wizard who seeks to live beyond death shuns mummification and pursues lichdom instead.

Summon Horde

This power is similar to the ability to *charm animals*, except the mummy can compel large numbers of smaller creatures such as bats, insects, or spiders, to swarm and assail intruders. One of my earliest forays into a mummy's tomb ended ignominiously when my companions and I were engulfed in a rustling wave of tiny scorpions. Coherent thought was impossible while submerged in that glittering mass, and the thousands of pinpricks from grasping claws and needle-sharp stings nearly drove us mad.

Symbiosis

Whether by design or by inscrutable fate, a mummy's preserved body sometimes is home to more than one creature. Usually the mummy's skin or wrapping is infested with a species of deadly mold, which makes physical combat with the creature even more hazardous than it would otherwise be. In one bizarre case, my companions and I encountered a trio of skeletal mummies whose bones were crawling with strange, spectral worms. These loathsome creatures were hungry for living flesh, and did their best to leap from their hosts onto our exposed faces.

Finally, when our strength was all but exhausted, our fiery assault broke the mummies! Never had I seen undead creatures flee from a battle unless banished by a priest. As the bandaged-wrapped horrors writhed in the flames, we gave chase to the fugitives. Tracking proved to be effortless, as one of the fleeing mummies obliged us by leaving a trail of emerald green splotches that appeared to eat away the turf.

We made good time in our pursuit, and soon overtook our quarry, but our exultation was to be short-lived. Sensing our nearness, the mummies disappeared into a ravine, where they regrouped and turned on us, forming a wedge. Once again we hurled our pots of flaming oil to great effect, and the wedge broke apart.

A mummy swathed in smoking green wrappings sallied forth from the flickering mass. Before we could launch another volley of flaming oil, the creature was among us, roaring like an autumn wind and swatting everyone it could reach. I saw Ashlocke crumple under a blow, screaming, yet it wasn't the force of the blow that made him cry, though that must have been considerable. An ominous green stain spread over the woodsman's breast. His leather jerkin disappeared in an instant, converted to the same emerald slime we had seen on the trail. As the woodsman clawed at his chest, his gloved hand collapsed into slime as well. With a shudder and a scream of my own, I struck the monster with my sword, and the weapon too collapsed into slime.

—From the personal letters of Caulay the One-Armed

Weightlessness

My studies have revealed an account of a mummy with a unique and baffling power. This creature had command over its own body weight and could render itself literally as light as a feather. This supernatural weightlessness allowed it to tread on water, run straight up vertical walls, and perform other astounding feats of mobility. I have heard additional accounts of mummies that could levitate, and another of a mummy that could fly through the air while locked in a stiff, upright posture.

If these accounts are accurate, I suspect that the mummies they describe had this power.

Alter Form

Table 12: Alter Form

Rank	Uses*	Duration**
First	1	30 minutes
Second	2	60 minutes
Third	3	90 minutes
Fourth	4	Unlimited
Fifth	N/A	Variable

* Uses: The typical number of times each day a mummy with the listed rank can use the power. In most cases, a mummy can make only one alteration to its form during each power use.

** Duration: The maximum interval each power use lasts.

At the first rank, this power allows a mummy to make an illusory change to its form. Except for duration, this is similar to the 1st-level wizard spell *change self*.

Second-rank *alter form* allows a mummy to make a real, though limited, change to its form. Except for duration, this power is similar to the 2nd-level wizard spell *alter self*.

At the third rank, this power allows a mummy to make a real and extensive change to its form. Except for duration, this power is similar to the 4th-level wizard spell *polymorph self*.

At the fourth rank, this power functions as it does at the third rank, except that a mummy actually gains all the assumed form's powers. Except for duration, this power is similar to the 9th-level wizard spell *shape change*.

At the Fifth rank, a mummy can freely make extensive changes to its form during each power use. Except for duration, this power is exactly like the 9th-level wizard spell *shape change*. Typically, a mummy can use this power one, two, or three times per day; the typical duration for each use is one hour plus 10 minutes for each Hit Die the mummy has.

A mummy might have a fixed inventory of forms it can use. For example, a mummy with the *alter form* power of the third rank might be able to assume the form of a monkey, a cat, or an eagle, each once per day. Typically, a mummy with such a limit to its *alter form* power gains the duration and extent of change appropriate to the next higher rank; thus, the mummy in the previous example would gain the full abilities of each form and could maintain its assumed form for an unlimited time. A mummy with a limited repertoire of forms usually has limited power over the normal animals whose forms it can assume. This is similar to the 1st-level priest spell *animal friendship* and lasts as long as the mummy retains that shape.

Animate Objects

Table 13: Animate Objects

Rank	Size*	Damage**
First	Tiny	1d8
Second	Small	2d8
Third	Man	3d10
Fourth	Large	4d8
Fifth	Huge	5d10

* Size: This indicates how large an object a mummy with the listed rank of the *animate object* power can animate, using the size categories in the *Monstrous Manual* tome and its annual volumes. A mummy can animate a single object of the size listed, two objects of the next smaller size, four of the next size smaller than that, and so on. For example, a fifth-rank mummy could animate one huge object, two large ones, four

man-sized objects, eight small ones or sixteen tiny objects.

A mummy generally can animate objects for 2 hours per day per power rank. If multiple objects are put in motion, their time is cumulative. For example, a third-rank mummy with this power can animate one object for a total of 6 hours or two objects for 3 hours each. A minimum duration of 1 minute is used each time an object is animated.

Charm

A mummy with this ability can exert control over animals, persons, monsters, or any combination of the three.

A mummy can *charm* a number of Hit Dice or levels of persons equal to three times its own Hit Dice.

A mummy can *charm* as many Hit Dice of animals or monsters as it itself has Hit Dice.

Command Undead

A mummy with this ability can lead undead creatures as if it were an evil cleric of a level equal to its Hit Dice. If a mummy has retained any priest abilities, it *commands undead* at its priest level plus two, or at a level equal to its Hit Dice, whichever is greater.

The number of undead that can be commanded at any one time is usually three times the mummy's Hit Dice, but it can be higher or lower. If the mummy also has the *create undead* power, any undead it creates do not count toward this limit.

Create Undead

In addition to spells such as *animate dead*, some mummies understand the process of embalming and the funerary rituals required to create new mummies. Usually the victim must have died while afflicted with *mummy rot*, but death from *mummy rot* isn't a requirement. Creating a mummy of the third rank or less requires 12-18 hours of effort to prepare the body, and a further 12-24 hours before the spirit becomes permanently fixed into the preserved body. A mummy of the fourth or fifth rank requires very careful embalming and funerary rituals on a massive scale; see Chapter Six for more details. It is also possible for a spellcasting mummy to know some of the necromantic spells described in Van Richten's Guide to the Lich (Section Two of this volume).

Curse

Most mummies of at least average (8-10) Intelligence are capable of speaking a *curse* of vengeance against those who deface their tombs through theft or vandalism, whether offenders are directly present or not. Mummies' tombs and the goods stored within them represent those creature's ties to our world and to life itself. To mummies, any threat or damage to these ties is an ultimately profane act deserving the most grievous penalty.

Delay

This power allows a mummy to postpone the effects of one or more of its other powers. A mummy's disease-causing power is the one most commonly delayed.

Table 14: Delay

Rank	Delay*
First	30 minutes
Second	1 hour
Third	2 hours
Fourth	1 day
Fifth	1 week

* **Delay:** The maximum interval a power can be delayed. A mummy can opt for a shorter delay if it wishes.

Elemental Command

A mummy with this power has control of one of the four classical elements: air, earth, fire, and water.

At the first rank, a mummy can produce minor effects involving its element once per day, as a spellcaster of a level equal to its Hit Dice: *dust devil* (Air), *burning hands* (Fire), *wall of fog* (Water), or *grease* (Earth - in this case the "grease" is a slippery material similar to graphite).

At the second rank, a mummy can produce the appropriate minor effect from the list above twice per day, and it gains a +1 saving throw bonus against any attack based on the element it can control.

At the third rank, a mummy can produce effects from the list above three times per day, and it can create the following effect (related to its element) once per day: *control winds* (Air), *quench fire* (Fire), *transmute water to dust* (Water), or *rock to mud* (Earth). The mummy gains a +2 saving throw bonus against attacks based on the element it can control, and suffers -1 from each die of damage inflicted by such attacks, even if the save wasn't successful.

At the fourth power rank, a mummy can create all the appropriate effects listed above, and it is immune to attacks based on the element it controls. Once per day the mummy can create 2 cubic feet of its element for each of its Hit Dice. This ability has a range of 100 yards.

Air: The created material appears as a wall of wind that knocks down any creature of huge (H) size or smaller, unless the victim successfully saves vs. breath weapon. The "wall" is 2 feet thick and as long and wide as necessary to accommodate its volume. The "wall" otherwise acts like a *wind wall* spell.

Water: The created material appears as a geyser that snuffs out any normal fire it contacts and knocks down any huge size or smaller target, unless the victim successfully saves vs. breath weapon with a -1 penalty. The stream is 1 foot in diameter and as long as necessary to accommodate its volume. (The volume of a cylinder is about equal to its radius squared, times its height, times 3.14.)

Fire: The created material appears as a sphere of searing flame large enough to accommodate its volume. (The volume of a sphere is about equal to its radius cubed, times 4.19.) Creatures within the sphere suffer 12d4+12 points of damage, though they can each attempt a save vs. breath weapon for half damage. Flammable objects within the sphere burst into flame, but flammable equipment held by a hero remains intact if the hero makes the noted successful saving throw vs. breath weapon.

Earth: The created material appears in any solid shape the mummy desires and otherwise functions like a *wall of stone* spell, except that it is permanent and cannot be dispelled. The stone weighs 150-170 pounds per cubic foot. If dropped on a victim, the earth does 3d10 points of damage (save vs. breath weapon for half damage).

At the fifth power rank, a mummy can conjure a 16-Hit Die elemental of the appropriate type once per month. A cloud of billowing mists usually accompanies the elemental's appearance. The resulting elemental is a twisted, insane creature; it is mostly composed of a pure element, but the remainder of the creature is formed of corrupted matter and evil.

The elemental is chaotic evil and consumed by an insane rage that causes it to fearlessly attack the nearest creature before it moves on to its next victim. No force of less than divine power can control the elemental, but the summoning mummy can attempt a save vs. breath weapon each turn to banish the creature.

The corrupted material in the elemental imbues it with additional powers.

Fire: Everything the elemental touches burns for 2d6 rounds (nonliving matter burns away at the rate of 1 cubic foot per round). Air turns to smoke, creating a cloud 50 feet in diameter that obscures vision (vision is reduced to one quarter within the cloud). Living creatures suffer 1d4 points of damage for each round they burn.

Water: All water and liquids containing water. (including holy water and magical potions) within 30 feet of the elemental become foul and putrefied. Living creatures touched by this dreadful elemental must each

successfully save vs. spell or suffer a debilitating disease per the cause *disease* spell.

Air: The air becomes turbulent within 50 feet of the elemental. Vision is reduced to zero within this cloud. Random electrical discharges require any creature in the area to successfully save vs. death magic each round or suffer 2d4 points of damage (the elemental being immune to lightning). Living creatures touched must successfully save vs. spell or they become unable to breathe for 1d4 rounds (-2 or -10% penalty to all die rolls for duration).

Earth: Everything this elemental touches turns to stone. The air within 20 feet fills with graveyard dust, obscuring vision. Living creatures within the area must hold their breaths, or choke and suffer 1d4 points of damage each round. Stone, crystal, and metal touched must successfully save vs. crushing blow or crumble to dust (5 cubic feet of material can be affected at one time). Living creatures must successfully save vs. petrification or be turned to stone.

Grapple

Mummies with this power make two normal melee attacks, inflicting melee damage according to the mummy Strength table following. If both melee attacks hit, the victim is enfolded in the mummy's arms, then crushed or strangled. A victim can win free of a mummy's grapple by scoring a throw or gouge on the wrestling table (*Player's Handbook*, Table 58), by inflicting damage on the mummy with a weapon (the mummy's iron grip imposes a -4 attack penalty), or by other methods determined by the Dungeon Master.

Table 15: Grapple

Rank	Score*	Damage**
First	21	2d8
Second	22	2d10
Third	23	3d8
Fourth	24	3d10
Fifth	25	4d8

* Score: A mummy's effective Strength ability score when making wrestling or grappling attacks.

** Damage: The amount of damage a mummy inflicts each round it grapples a victim.

Illusion

Table 16: Illusion

Rank	Senses*	Area**
First	1	20
Second	2	40
Third	3	60
Fourth	4	80
Fifth	5	100

* Senses: The number of senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell) that the mummy's illusion can affect.

** Area: The number of 10-foot cubes in area that a single illusion of the listed rank can fill. A mummy can opt to create smaller illusions. Note that mobile illusions, such as creatures, cannot leave their given areas of effect.

A mummy's illusion generally lasts as long as the mummy concentrates on the effect, plus one turn (10 rounds) per power rank once its concentration stops. A mummy usually can create an illusion in any area it can see, regardless of range.

A mummy with an illusion rank of third or higher can "program" its illusions as if it were using the 5th-level wizard spell *advanced illusion*. The mummy can create one such illusion each day.

A mummy with an illusion rank of fourth or higher can create illusions with quasi-real components, as if using

the 4th-level wizard spell *shadow monsters* or the 5th-level wizard spell *shadow magic*. The mummy can create three special illusions each day, either quasi-real or programmed.

A mummy with an illusion rank of fifth can create quasi-real illusions as if using the 5th-level wizard spell *demishadow monsters* or the 6th-level wizard spell *demishadow magic*. The mummy can create four special illusions each day, either quasi-real or programmed.

Passage

This ability allows a mummy to pass through solid rock, earth, wood, or other common materials as though it were casting the 7th-level wizard spell *phase door*, which creates a passage usable only by the caster. The mummy can move directly through the passage or it can linger in it for one turn per power rank. A mummy typically can create one passage per power rank per hour. The length of the magical passage a mummy creates depends on its power rank.

Table 17: Passage

Rank	Length*	Uses**
First	1 foot	1
Second	10 feet	1
Third	25 feet	1
Fourth	50 feet	2
Fifth	75 feet	3

* Length: The maximum length a passage can have. The passage need not be open at both ends, and the mummy can use it to create a hiding place for itself in objects that are too large to allow passage. If a mummy's passage rank is high enough, it can use this power multiple times to extend the length of a passage.

** Uses: The number of times a mummy can use a passage before the passage is dispelled. Only the mummy or creatures closely accompanied by the mummy can use the passage.

Resist Magic

Table 18: Resist Magic

Rank	Magic Resistance	Class Bonus*
First	10%	+5%
Second	20%	+10%
Third	30%	+15%
Fourth	40%	+20%
Fifth	50%	+25%

* Class Bonus: If a mummy could cast spells of any type during life, its magic resistance is increased by the listed amount. A mummy does not receive the bonus if it belonged to a spellcasting class, but had not achieved a level sufficient to actually cast spells. For example, a 1st-level bard or a 7th-level ranger would not qualify for the bonus.

Retained Abilities

The transition between life and unlife often wipes clean the subject's memory - this usually is true for mummies of the third rank or lower. Fourth- and fifth-rank mummies retain their previous skills. All mummies retain their racial abilities. Once created, a mummy cannot gain new experience levels under any conditions.

Racial Abilities:

Elves: Mummies from any elf stock, including drow and half-elves, gain enhanced infravision (an extra 30 feet in range). The unusually long elf life span often produces mummies with high *invulnerability* and *rejuvenation*

powers. Mummies of elf stock retain special weapon skills only if they also retain relevant class abilities. The elf resistance to *sleep* and *charm* spells becomes irrelevant to the ancient dead. Drow mummies retain their magic resistance or gain magic resistance commensurate with their power rank, whichever is higher.

Dwarves: Mummies of dwarf stock receive enhanced infravision (an extra 30 feet in range) and retain whatever saving throw bonuses they had in life. Dwarf mummies retaining any class abilities also retain their abilities regarding stonework and mining. Dwarf mummies often possess superior forms of the *passage* ability and might have some form of earth elemental control power.

Gnomes: Mummies from gnome stock receive enhanced infravision (an extra 30 feet in range) and retain whatever saving throw bonuses they had in life. Gnome mummies that have retained any class abilities also retain their abilities regarding stonework and mining. Gnome mummies often possess superior forms of illusion-creating abilities.

Halflings: Mummies from any halfling stock possess infravision to 60 feet and retain whatever saving throw bonuses they had in life. Halflings that retained any class abilities also retain their abilities with slings and thrown weapons. Mummies from stout halfling stock retain their direction sense and ability to detect slopes, if they have class abilities.

Humanoids Most humanoid races do not practice funerary customs elaborate enough to create mummies. When encountered at all, humanoid mummies are created servitors or naturally preserved creatures of the third rank or less. These frequently have infravision of variable range.

Class Abilities:

Priests: Priest abilities of all kinds appear to survive the transformation from living being to mummy very well. Not only do most priests become fairly powerful mummies (usually third rank or higher), but priests of evil deities often increase in level when they become mummies, as their respective deities are likely to find such a transformation an attractive one. Priests of deities whose portfolios include death, disease, curses, forbidden or evil knowledge, or deceit often gain several (1-3) levels when becoming mummies. However, priest mummies cannot thereafter gain experience. Specialty priests of evil retain all their spells and granted abilities.

Specialty priests of good and neutral deities generally retain most of their spells and granted abilities upon transformation to mummies. A priest's transformation into an evil monster will sever contact with a good deity, but evil deities or dark powers step in to fill the gap. Note that a usurped mummy might retain contact with a good deity so long as it seeks to further that deity's interests or seeks its own final rest. Such a mummy probably would not have an evil alignment.

Evil mummies who were once good priests receive spells in keeping with their new roles. (Healing spells usually can be cast only in their reversed forms, for example.) The ability to turn other undead is always lost. Granted abilities involving divination, combat, and warding usually are retained. Granted healing powers might disappear or become reversed.

Rogues: Thieves tend to die ignominious deaths and receive burials not aimed at preserving their bodies, so thief mummies are rare. However, infamous figures or the heads of guilds might find themselves the subject of veneration, which could lead to mummification and, later, ancient dead status. If such a rogue becomes a mummy, its abilities are largely unaffected. The ability to move silently increases to 95%. Climb Walls, Pick Pockets, and Open Locks abilities are reduced by 50% (0% minimum score).

Bards retain most of their abilities; however the ability to influence reactions and inspire allies is lost, even if bard mummies are in preserved or pristine states of preservation. The vital spark that makes these abilities possible in bards is absent from mummies. The mummies might, however, gain the *charm* ability.

Warriors: Warriors generally retain all their skills after becoming mummies, including multiple attacks and weapon specialization. A paladin who becomes an evil mummy loses all special paladin powers and becomes a standard fighter. If the paladin had a war horse, the mount does its best to destroy the mummy - a task probably beyond its means. Retaining paladin status in the case of becoming a good mummy is unlikely, as most paladins are likely to consider themselves compromised by the transformation; the faith of the paladin in

himself is at least as important as his faith in his patron deity.

A ranger who becomes an evil mummy retains all stealth, combat, and spellcasting abilities. The ranger's followers, if any, shun the mummy and might try to destroy it. The ranger's animal empathy ability is lost, though the mummy might gain the *charm animals* ability.

Wizards: The effects of mummification on wizard abilities are unpredictable. Often the ability to cast spells is lost altogether. The transformation to undeath, with its flood of positive and divine energy, disrupts the complex mental patterns that make the casting of wizard spells possible. Equally often, mummies are physically unable to speak or perform somatic components.

Unless the mummy forms are intact or pristine, wizards lose one or more levels. Most mummies cannot learn new spells, though they can replace lost spell books. Mummies who were necromancers in life usually can learn new spells, to the limit of their Intelligence scores. Wizard mummies might possibly be wild mages, as detailed in the *Tome of Magic*.

Psionicists: Usually only an invoked mummy will retain psionic abilities through the shock of becoming undead. Powers that affect or rely on a living body no longer operate, but other powers may still work. No new powers are even gained. A number of PSPs are regained every hour equal to the mummy's rank, regardless of the mummy's actions. If the mummy *rejuvenates*, it regains ten times its rank in PSPs per hour.

Summon Horde

A mummy does not have complete control over the creatures that make up the horde of vermin, but it can direct the horde to swarm in any area within sight; the effect is similar to a *summon insects* spell. A typical horde lasts 1d4 rounds and has a movement rate of 18. A swarm obscures vision in its area of effect.

Table 19: Summon Horde

Rank	Volume*	Damage**
First	5 cu.ft.	0/2
Second	10 cu.ft.	2/1d4+2
Third	20 cu.ft.	3/1d6+3
Fourth	40 cu.ft.	4/1d8+4
Fifth	60 cu.ft.	5/1d10+5

* Volume: The maximum cubic volume a horde can occupy without effectively dispersing. Generally, a horde can attack one man-sized creature per 5 cubic feet of volume.

** Damage; The amount that victims typically suffer when attacked by a horde. The number before the slash is the damage suffered each round if a victim does nothing except try to fight off the horde. The number after the slash is the damage suffered if a victim ignores the horde. Other possible effects include:

Poison: The creatures in the horde are venomous; such creatures might inflict less damage than indicated, but they carry deadly or debilitating poison. Victims can attempt a saving throw vs. poison each round to avoid the cumulative effect of many small bites or stings.

Incapacitation: The stings and bites inflicted by the vermin horde are so distracting and painful that a victim is rendered helpless until the horde departs, unable to attack or defend in any way. Victims can attempt a saving throw vs. spell each round to avoid the effect. This type of horde might or might not inflict actual damage.

Disease: The creatures are infected with some malady that they can pass on to their victims unless the victim successfully saves vs. poison each round. The Dungeon Master can assign a specific disease or treat the horde's attack as a *cause disease* spell. Specific diseases typically take 3d12 hours to develop; effects include:

Blindness: The victim's eyes and eyelids become swollen and useless. A *cure blindness* spell restores sight for 1d4 days, but the condition persists until the disease is cured.

Coma: The victim falls into a deep coma for 2d12 hours. During the coma, the victim's Constitution score decreases 1 point per hour. If the score drops to 0, the victim dies. Once the victim awakens, 1 point of lost Constitution returns for each hour of complete rest. If the disease is not cured, the coma recurs every 1d4+1 months for the rest of the victim's life.

Fever: The victim becomes incapacitated when a bout of alternating fever and chills strikes. The bout lasts 1d3 days, and the victim must make a System Shock roll each day or perish. If the disease is not cured, the bouts of fever and chills recur every 1d4+1 months for the rest of the victim's life.

Inflammation: One of the victim's limbs (determined randomly) swells two to four times its normal size and becomes useless. The victim loses 1 point each of Dexterity, Constitution, and Charisma. Further, if the afflicted limb is a leg, the victim's movement is reduced by half. The swelling persists until the victim is cured. A cured victim recovers lost ability scores after one day of complete rest or a *heal* spell is cast.

Insanity: The victim falls into a maniacal fit that persists for 1d4 hours. During this time, the victim attacks any creature within reach, biting and scratching like an animal. At the end of the fit, the victim falls into a coma for 1d12 hours, and at the end of this interval the victim must make a System Shock roll. If the roll is successful, the victim wakes up and appears to be normal. If the roll is unsuccessful, the victim dies. If not cured, the fits recur every 1d4+1 months for the rest of the victim's life.

Symbiosis

The body of a mummy with this "power" is home to another monster. Typical symbionts include the various deadly molds (yellow, brown, and russet), green slime, oozes and puddings, venomous arachnids, rot grubs, brain moles, and any other creature small enough to make a home in a mummy's body. The mummy itself always is immune to any special attacks that involve physical contact with the symbiont.

Weightlessness

At the first rank, a mummy with this power can move at a rate of 18. It can climb smooth surfaces whose slopes do not exceed 45 degrees and vertical surfaces that are rough; the mummy moves at a rate of 9 while climbing. The mummy also can pass over soft surfaces such as mud, snow, or loose sand without becoming mired or leaving tracks.

At the second rank, a mummy can move at a rate of 24. It can climb as described above, but the movement rate is 12. The mummy can pass over very soft surfaces such as bogs and quicksand without becoming mired.

At the third rank, a mummy can move at a rate of 24. It can climb as described above at its normal movement rate, and can climb smooth, sheer surfaces at a rate of 12. The mummy can walk across any surface without leaving tracks; the mummy can even walk across water and other liquids with ease.

At the fourth rank, a mummy has all the movement and climbing abilities listed above, and it can *levitate* each day for a number of turns equal to its Hit Dice.

At the fifth rank, a mummy has all the abilities listed above, and it can *fly* at a rate of 9 (D).

*There are thousands hacking at the branches of evil
to one who is striking at the root.*

- Henry David Thoreau
Walden

Weaknesses

To orchestrate a victory over a mummy, it is usually necessary to discover and exploit some vulnerability or weakness in the monster. Often a group with the proper knowledge can utterly destroy a mummy. At other times, a mummy can prove to be indestructible. Even then, the mummy might be laid to rest or temporarily stilled.

Here, I shall discuss what I know about the weaknesses of the ancient dead. I gleaned this information through both research and firsthand experience. Nevertheless, I must warn the reader that what follows is not an irrefutable guide to battling the ancient dead. What I am about to present are methods that have led to success in the past. What might prove efficacious in the future has yet to be revealed. Still, take heart! The mummy hunter's task is to discover the fatal chink in a mummy's defenses. A judicious mix of common sense, courage, and a smidgen of luck makes this goal attainable.

Typical Weaknesses

Just as I began my discussion of the ancient dead's powers by examining those few abilities that seem universal among mummies, I shall begin this discussion with a few weaknesses that also appear some degree in most of the ancient dead.

Be warned, however, that these ordinary weaknesses seldom lead to a mummy's ultimate defeat. Rather, they serve as checks and restraints that allow the hunter time to discover a monster's true and fatal weakness, or to gather the materials necessary to send the mummy back into slumber.

Elemental Vulnerability

Most ancient dead creatures are vulnerable to attacks based on some form of energy or the elements: fire, cold, electricity, air, earth, and water. Of these, fire is most frequently effective. When used against a very weak mummy, fire can have a mummy's effect. Flames can consume a creature's embalmed body, feeding on the very resins and tinctures that preserve the mummy's tissues.

I believe that a mummy's susceptibility to fire is partially symbolic. In many cultures, fire is part of the funerary ritual, consuming the body and freeing the spirit to ascend to the afterlife. It seems that fire can break a mummy's ties to the physical world and put the creature's spirit to rest, or at least destroy its physical body and force the creature to retire to its tomb and *rejuvenate*. In nearly all cultures, fire is a great purifier. It banishes disease, consumes rot, and clears away the old to make way for the new. Insofar as a mummy represents a being existing beyond its allotted time, it is no wonder that fire is a mummy's bane.

Of the remaining elements and forms of energy, cold and water seem the least likely to cause a mummy harm. Because a mummy's body is biologically dead, exposure to freezing cold or immersion in water usually have no effect.

However, a naturally preserved mummy that originally froze to death or perished from some ailment brought on by the cold frequently is susceptible to magical cold. This may be the case even with a mummy found lurking on a mountaintop or glacier. So strong is a mummy's tie to its former life that what was a fatal scourge in that life still plagues the creature in death.

Surprisingly enough, mummies found preserved in water usually do not exhibit any special susceptibility to water. The mummy of a person who had drowned, however, might have an aversion to water (see below).

Holy Symbols

Ghosts maintain few connections with their former lives and consequently are not hampered or repulsed by physical manifestations of human faith. It stands to reason, then, that the ancient dead, with their tenacious grasp on the world, would be affected by holy objects. One might also surmise that the ancient dead are restricted from passing through sanctified areas and are subject to damage if a holy or blessed object touches them.

Alas, this is not the case. Holy objects, except for holy symbols wielded by priests or paladins, usually have no effect on the ancient dead at all. The same is true for hallowed ground; unless the area is protected by some potent magical ward or formidable physical barrier, a mummy can invade any sanctified place.

It is true that ghosts are unhindered by consecrated objects and places because of their detachment from the world. Mummies are similarly unaffected by the symbols of human faith because they maintain their hold on the world in complete defiance of all natural and supernatural laws. Mummies are no more deterred by mere holy symbols than thieves are by "no trespassing" signs; the convictions that lie behind holy symbols or sanctified places have ceased to have any import to mummies.

Mummies that have retained priest abilities are an exception. By maintaining links with their deities, these creatures leave themselves vulnerable to the symbols of mortal faith. Holy symbols from faiths that are not those of mummies inflict damage if they strike priestly mummies.

Conversely, touching holy symbols of their own faith actually heals priestly mummies. It is thus possible for priest-mummies to have aversions (as per my later comments on allergens) to certain holy symbols or sanctified ground.

Holy Water

A generous supply of this remarkable liquid is essential for any successful undead hunt. Though the mummy is immune to other blessed or holy objects, holy water has the power to dissolve a mummy's preserved body in the same manner as acid sears living flesh. I believe this is the case because of the sheer power imparted to the water during its creation.

Unfortunately, the more powerful the mummy, the less effective holy water is against it; a very powerful mummy might be entirely immune to holy water. However, holy water serves only to destroy a mummy's body, but it does not prevent *rejuvenation*.

Further, a mummy hunter must be sure that the creature actually is splashed by holy water. This usually means opening a flask and hurling the contents. Tossing a stoppered vial at a mummy is not a good idea, as the vial is unlikely to shatter if it strikes. Instead, the vial usually bounces off and falls to the floor, where it *might* break. The mummy is not harmed at all unless the water actually touches it. Hurling a stoppered vial at the floor, wall, or ceiling near a mummy might make a generous splash that sprays the mummy with holy water, but the effects might be reduced and there is still a chance the vial won't break.

Spells

Spells are perhaps the most potent and versatile weapons in a mummy hunter's arsenal. They possess many virtues, not the least of which are their abilities to work at a distance (as it often pays to stay as far from an undead opponent as is practicable) and be renewed (assuming the spellcaster survives to acquire spells once again).

Unfortunately, the often unpredictable nature of magic, combined with the mysterious power of the ancient dead, can result in the unexpected, and even in disaster. Worse yet, I am given to understand that wise spellcasters never count on their magic to work perfectly in our own world and realms. Therefore, one should never consider any given spell to be a panacea in a battle with a mummy, let alone any other creature of darkness. Even when the arcane seems to be the ideal solution, I would strenuously urge the spellcaster to test his incantation from a safe distance before facing the enemy at close quarters.

Recall as well that many ancient dead are quite resistant, if not immune, to any number of spells. See my notes regarding magic resistance in the preceding chapter.

Turning Undead

In spite of the ancient dead's general immunity to holy objects and places, a priest or paladin can still drive away these

undead. A priest's power over the undead stems from the priest's own force of will, backed by the power of a deity. To my knowledge, no undead creature is completely immune to this ability.

Undead turning is not infallible, however. The more powerful the undead, the more difficult it is for a priest to summon enough spiritual energy to destroy or drive them off. The more powerful undead cannot be completely destroyed by this method, and very powerful undead, including mummies of third rank or higher, are not even driven off; they simply become unable to attack the priest.

Weapons

As noted in Chapter Two, specially constructed and enchanted weapons can inflict damage on a mummy's body. I must reiterate, however, that only a very weak mummy can be permanently destroyed in this fashion.

Salient Weaknesses

Thus far, I have discussed those few methods that are at least somewhat effective in combating the majority of the ancient dead. If a mummy hunter is lucky, these methods will be sufficient to destroy the foe. Luck, however, is an undependable ally.

A powerful mummy can be defeated only by discovering a vulnerability - frequently one that is unique to that mummy. For purposes of discussion, I have divided all these vulnerabilities into five general categories: *allergens*, *bonds*, *dependence*, *exotic weapons*, and *spells of retirement*. I have added a sixth category, *latent powers*, which does not provide the key to a mummy's defeat but is important to all mummy hunters nevertheless.

Please understand that I speak in general terms here. These vulnerabilities exist, but the particulars of each one vary from mummy to mummy. It is a mummy hunter's task to discover these particulars and determine how to exploit them.

Allergens

In my previous works I described various items that are useful for battling the undead. A typical vampire is repulsed by common objects such as mirrors and garlic, whereas some ghosts are repulsed by objects important in their lives (the exact object varying from ghost to ghost). Like ghosts, some mummies are repulsed by substances or items that were important to them in life. I call such items *allergens*. No two mummies share the exact same allergen, and a great number of mummies have no allergens at all.

The most striking example of this variation in my journal is the case of the Ghost Clan. This misnamed band of no less than twenty-eight mummies was a gang of murderous highland bandits in life. All were blood relatives. The bulk of them proved to be minor creatures; my party overcame them by outright attack.

The three leaders, however, were far more powerful. One proved to be *fascinated* (a term I explain below) by its own family badge. We laid the creature to rest by placing its body, along with the badge, in a suitable grave. Another could not bear the sound of a drumbeat, apparently because the soldiers who defeated the clan marched to drums. The third was equally discomfited by the whine of bagpipes, which had keened throughout the battle in a vain attempt to rally the clan's fleeing troops.

My companions and I discovered these weaknesses mainly by discussing the clan's final defeat with the victorious soldiers' descendants. These three mummies had a similar history, and each met death under the same circumstances. It was the particular individual's feelings and personality that determined that mummy's allergen. One was stripped of its clan symbol and wanted it back. One feared the pounding drums that brought it death. And one loathed the bagpipes that failed to bring aid in its hour of need. The details of each bandit's history had a huge impact on the resulting mummy.

Presentation

In most cases, an allergen has no effect unless an opponent consciously presents the item in a forthright, forceful way. The allergen must be held toward a mummy in a clear, direct, and courageous manner.

An allergen's effect depends on a mummy's power. A mummy of low rank is usually unable to approach within 50 or 60 feet

of an opponent presenting the item. More powerful mummies are less effected. Very powerful mummies might attack the presenter, though even in these cases the mummy will strive to eliminate the item that triggers the aversion in preference to anything else. Be warned, however, that aversion does not render a mummy helpless. The creature can still attempt to maneuver around a person presenting an allergen, or it can launch ranged attacks. If possible, these attacks will be directed at the person presenting the allergen, as the mummy seeks to remove the offending item.

A final warning: Absolute dependence on an allergen is a recipe for disaster. Even with exhaustive research, it is very difficult to determine exactly what item might be an allergen, and there is no guarantee that any particular mummy actually has this weakness. Trusting one's fate to an untested allergen is an excellent shortcut to death - or worse.

Wards

It is possible to use an allergen to erect a barrier against a mummy. In some cases, the mere presence of the item is sufficient to keep a mummy at bay. For example, my companions and I found the Ghost Clan mummy with the aversion to drumbeats could not approach us so long as we maintained a spirited marching cadence on a drum.

In other cases, a line or circle of items can create a ward that shuts out a mummy. Be warned, however, special care is required to construct an effective ward. In one case, I determined that the mummy of an ambitious woman, who had risen from humble origins to a position of wealth, had an aversion to brooms. Apparently this was because brooms reminded the woman of her days of labor as a common housemaid. A broom simply lying on the ground had no effect, but a broom held upright or at an angle, with bristles down and the handle facing the mummy, was effective. The mummy was unable to open any portal sealed by leaning a broom against it. I surmise the broom's angle was significant since a broom is held upright during normal use.

It is unwise to depend on the power of wards. Any mummy can ignore an improperly created ward, and some mummies seem altogether unaffected by them. Occasionally a mummy that has been thwarted by a ward will return after a time to test it again. The smaller the protected area, the more secure a ward seems to be.

Fascination

In a few mummies, an allergen produces an effect that is exactly the opposite of aversion. These creatures are actually attracted to certain objects. When such items are presented, a mummy might stand transfixed for a short time, or it might attack, trying to obtain the item. Such items often are an integral part of a spell of retirement (see below). Allergens that cause fascination should not be used to create wards, for obvious reasons.

Bonds

A fair number of mummies are bound to certain places, objects, or other creatures. It is possible for several mummies to be bound to the same thing, but one should not depend upon the chance, even with a group of mummies encountered together.

Knowing the item to which a certain mummy is bound can be helpful in anticipating the creature's actions - and in remaining out of its reach. A mummy bound to an ancient temple, for example, cannot leave the site to harry its hunters in their distant camp.

In some cases, gaining control over an item that binds a mummy also grants control over the mummy. If the reader should ever be in this position, I strongly recommend using the control to quickly lay the foe to rest. Exercising prolonged control over an undead creature often triggers unforeseen consequences.

A mummy frequently can be destroyed or badly weakened by demolishing the object to which it is bound (see my later notes on dependence). In other cases, severing the bond frees the mummies which is seldom grateful for its newfound freedom to wander.

Place

Mummies bound to certain locations are usually created or servitor creatures, deliberately placed there as guardians or stewards. It may be possible to visit a place without arousing its guardians, particularly if visitors are respectful and refrain from vandalism or theft of any kind. Other guardians ruthlessly attack all intruders. Visitors might placate guardian mummies by performing special rites or rituals. These rituals can be highly complex and thus difficult to complete properly. They might require venerating evil deities or performing other dark acts. Such actions bring dreadful punishments.

A mummy bound to a particular place cannot leave it and generally does whatever is required to protect the area. However, I am compelled to point out that the ancient dead are not overly precise in their interpretations of their guardianship. A mummy bound to a certain building and charged with protecting it might normally confine itself to the building's interior, but if the building were subjected to an assault from the outside, the mummy might have the ability to leave and travel freely outdoors, so long as it kept the building in sight. Similarly, a mummy encountered within a ruined castle might not be bound to the castle itself, but to all the territory formerly under the castle's sway.

Object

A mummy is frequently bound to an object, and sometimes one is bound to several objects. I call these objects *focus items*. Focus items are likely to be things the mummy owned or coveted in life, which often were interred with the mummy after death. Indeed, it is not uncommon for a powerful mummy to be bound to each and every item contained in its tomb. This phenomenon is quite in keeping with the nature of mummies, as they are forever obsessed with the material comforts of the world. It does not matter that they can no longer enjoy such comforts.

In rare cases, a mummy is bound to some item that was hurtful to it in life, such as the weapon that killed it, a special tool owned by a rival, or a personal possession that failed to live up to its expectations. In these cases, the mummy usually has an aversion to or is fascinated by the item.

One such case immediately springs to mind: the tale of Hugh Ignolia, an aspiring artist in Il Aluk. Ignolia became obsessed with completing a massive, epic painting that he hoped to present to Lord Azalin. The artist expended a considerable fortune assembling the finest materials for the work, including some exquisite paintbrushes made from rare and exotic materials imported from distant lands. True to his nature, Lord Azalin ridiculed the artist when Ignolia presented his painting, and the poor wretch was driven mad. When Ignolia rose from the grave, he set about retrieving his rare paintbrushes, even though these implements had only led him to disappointment and madness. My colleagues and I used one of the brushes to seal Ignolia into his tomb.

In *very* rare cases, a person possessing a focus item has some control over a mummy. While such control can be useful when confronting the mummy and laying it to rest, the mummy not unsurprisingly resents any effort to control it. It always seeks to subvert the intent of any orders it is given and gain control of the focus item to obtain its freedom.

Even if a focus item does not grant the owner control, a mummy always seeks to protect it. The theft of a focus item from a tomb is always a serious matter. Such thefts are considered grave robbing in most cultures; worse, a mummy will go to any length to retrieve its focus item. Further, the mummy always knows a focus item's near-exact location, though it does not always know who has the item or how powerful or well protected the holder is. The destruction of a focus item may end a mummy's ability to unfailingly track the grave robber, but the mummy will not rest until it recovers the item. If the item is destroyed before it is recovered, the thief earns the mummy's eternal enmity.

A clever mummy hunter might use a focus item to entrap a mummy in preparation for an attack, or to distract it while some vital research into the mummy's background is completed.

Creature

It is not uncommon for a mummy to be bound to some other creature, usually to the being that created it. Just as a living lord or lady commands the loyalty of family and serfs, so too might an ancient dead's creator command obeisance from its undead servants.

Control over a mummy might be granted to the holder of a particular office or title, and it can be passed down through several generations. The reigning high priest at a temple, for example, might inherit control over that temple's guardian mummies. Care must be taken, however, to be certain where the binding actually lies, with either the title or a physical item that the titleholder also inherited.

Dependence

Some mummies are not entirely self-sufficient. They require something extra to maintain their ties to the world. I have noted three types of dependence during my campaigns against the ancient dead: *object*, *substance*, and *action*

A mummy that has withstood the most potent direct assaults can be extremely vulnerable to attacks that exploit its

dependence. The reader should not assume an indirect campaign is necessarily easier or safer than a pitched battle. The virtue of attacking a mummy through its dependence lies solely in the fact that indirect attacks have a better chance to succeed, provided the mummy hunters have done their research properly. Usually, the best clue that one is following the correct scent is the increasing in deadly counterattacks from the mummy, which seeks to protect itself.

Objects

Mummies are frequently each interred with one or more symbolic objects that represents the creature's powers. I call these *spirit items*. Many spirit items are also focus items, as detailed earlier.

A spirit item is usually found with a deliberately created mummy, though an ancient dead that has risen through force of will sometimes has a spirit item as well. Destroying a spirit item does not destroy the mummy's spirit - that rests in the mummy's preserved body. Instead, some aspect of the mummy's being is diminished or destroyed.

A spirit item might represent the mummy's force of will, but it usually represents that mummy's typical or salient powers. I am reminded of the case of the Feathered Hunter. This creature could change its shape and also summon swarms of biting, stinging ants. When my colleagues and I located its earth-and-log tomb, we found pipes carved from soapstone, a collection of stone tools, and many clay bottles decorated with grinning faces. When we began selectively destroying these items, the mummy appeared and attacked fiercely.

Fortunately, we had chosen our targets well, and the mummy was unable to either change shape or summon ants. At last unhindered, our party defeated the creature, which could not *rejuvenate* once we had destroyed the clay bottles.

Patient research is essential when dealing with spirit items, as the methods for destroying them are often linked to a mummy's history. As the mummy described above had abhorred drunkenness in life, the clay bottles in the tomb had to be filled with strong beer before they could be smashed. Only repeated blows from an enchanted weapon broke the soapstone pipes.

It is not always necessary to destroy a spirit item to weaken a mummy. Often, removing an item from the tomb is sufficient. This course is frequently perilous, because if the item is also a focus item, the mummy can unfailingly track the thieves.

Elixirs

A mummy might need periodic exposure to a certain substance, which I call an elixir, to maintain its powers. If the supply of an elixir is interdicted, the mummy becomes weak and vulnerable. In some cases, an elixir might be so necessary as to cause fascination in the mummy that requires it. Indeed, an allergen can be mixed with an elixir; if the tainted elixir is applied to the mummy in the normal fashion, it suffers a traumatic shock that immobilizes it for a time.

Elixirs are as varied as the ancient dead themselves. I have encountered mummies that sought the fresh leaves of rare trees, common pine boughs, spices, resins, and beeswax. Elixirs are nearly always associated with the embalming process that initially preserved the mummy's body, and not with its life or death. This makes identifying a particular mummy's elixir difficult, as one must either locate the records of the priest who embalmed the mummy, or study the mummy's tomb and the surrounding area for traces of the substance. In one case I identified a mummy's elixir by studying a merchant's shipping records. The mummy had been purchasing its elixir, an herbal extract from a tropical flower, on the open market through agents, who shipped it to various locations near the tomb.

Maintenance Rituals

In certain very rare cases, a mummy has to perform a ritual (or compel others to do so) to use its powers; I call these *maintenance rituals*. It is very difficult to exploit this kind of dependence, but knowing about it can be useful to a mummy hunter, as it allows one to predict some of the mummy's actions with reasonable certainty. If, for example, a mummy must observe the sunrise every seventh day, it is not difficult to guess what the creature will be doing at least one morning a week. While this knowledge has limited use, a successful hunter never disregards even the smallest advantage.

Even rarer are mummies that derive their powers from veneration by the living. My encounter with one mummy and its living allies was one of the most bizarre episodes in my long career.

We spent days in the claustrophobic depths of the catacombs, carefully charting their innumerable twists, turns, and

intersections. Geddar and Jameld (an elf ranger with a particular interest in the ancient dead) carefully studied the moss-slick wall, searching for a hidden value that would open a door into the mummy's lair. For three days we did not see the sun. In fact, we had quitted our rooms at the local inn and for all anyone in the town knew, we had left altogether. We felt it prudent not to be seen by the townsfolk entering and leaving the catacombs. This precaution was wise, though we had no idea just how necessary it would prove.

Our search finally revealed a hidden portal, and we eagerly traversed the passage beyond, hoping to enter the mummy's burial chamber and unveil some vital secret that we might exploit to its undoing. What we found instead was a vast and profane temple. The mammoth chamber's lofty vaults soared above our heads and disappeared into smoky darkness. In the light of guttering oil lamps (whose charnel stench suggested the oil came from a singularly vile source), we saw the mummy, robed as an unholy priest. Before it stood an altar upon which lay the three embalmed bodies of the brigands who had attacked our camp. In the flickering shadows surrounding this altar stood fully three dozen people, including our former host at the inn. The bodies and the onlookers were draped in the same funereal garb.

We watched in horrid fascination as the mummy performed a ritual over the bodies, accompanied by a throaty and vulgar chant from the assembly. Soon the corpses stirred with unlife, and an awe-struck hush fell over the temple.

The crowd did not shrink from the newly wakened mummies; rather, they embraced the mummies as lost friends. Indeed, a strong family resemblance was noted between the creatures and two onlookers, an altogether innocent-looking bourgeois couple. After the worshipers fawned over the new creatures, they turned to the robed mummy, prostrating themselves and singing its praises. The sight was so blasphemous we could hardly bear it.

After trailing the cultists back to town, we presented ourselves at the inn once more. Entering that place, which once seemed so full of comfort and bonhomie, sent a shiver down my spine. The innkeeper smiled and welcomed us in the way of all innkeepers. He bobbed his head and exclaimed how glad he was business had brought us back to his house. He could little guess our business concerned the dark pact into which he had secretly entered.

Setting Claudia to distract the fellow with idle chat, Jameld and I managed a surreptitious look around. Our search revealed a small effigy of the robed mummy. Most illuminating of all was a tall closet where two mummies stood. These undead creatures resented being disturbed, and the resulting confrontation was a violent affair.

After dispatching the mummies, we interrogated our host. He confirmed all the members of his sect kept small effigies in their homes, brought regular offerings to the tomb, and were to become servitor mummies upon their own deaths.

Now that their unholy priest has been put to rest, it is my sincere hope that the surviving cult members are living out their lives in a manner that will grant them a more wholesome afterlife.

—From the private journal of Dr. Van Richten

Exotic Weapons

In Chapter Two, I discussed the value of enchanted and specially constructed weapons in battling the ancient dead. As useful as these weapons are, they cannot replace an understanding of a mummy's origins, which can provide clues that lead to that mummy's ultimate defeat. A hunter's wits can be sharper and cut deeper than any magical blade.

As with ghosts, research into a mummy's past often reveals a weapon that can slay the creature outright or seal it in its tomb. These items might also serve as allergens, but their real value lies in their power to defeat the mummy. Why merely hold off an ancient dead foe when a little further effort can remove its foul presence forever? These items invariably are objects that played an important role in the mummy's life or death.

In one such case, I led a party against the mummy of a barbarian chieftain. Though the creature resisted most attacks, we finally laid it low with an heirloom sword borrowed from a rival's family. The rival had once overwhelmed the chieftain in combat, resulting in an eternal vulnerability. What defeated the mummy in life defeated it again in death.

The fatal implement is not always a weapon. Though the violent demises that lead to unquiet afterlives would seem to favor the tools of violence, many a person's downfall is rooted in hubris and greed. These have their own implements and trappings that can serve to defeat the ancient dead. I once was called upon to investigate the gruesome deaths of several

knights who had tracked a band of daring thieves to a lair after a series of spectacular burglaries. My investigations revealed that the gang's leader was the mummy of an infamous burglar who had contrived her own death and reawakening to elude pursuit many decades before. With the help of a few stalwart companions, I bound the mummy in chains made of gold from the thief's own stolen hoard.

Spells of Retirement

The supernatural processes that set a mummy walking among the living can sometimes be reversed or suspended under the proper circumstances. I call such circumstances spells of retirement, as they most often involve some series of actions that are symbolically linked to the mummy's origins. Alas, no universal spell of retirement exists for all mummies; each is unique. Further, unfortunately, a spell of retirement does not exist for *every* mummy.

A spell of retirement might be a ritual created along with a mummy and recorded, either in the temple where the mummy's body was embalmed or in the mummy's tomb. Unfortunately, these records are often difficult to locate and even more difficult to translate. The records might exist only in fragments, scattered by the ravages of time or by the mummy itself. Other spells of retirement are not recorded at all, but they can be discovered by a mummy hunter who diligently searches out all the clues and correctly puts them together.

In either case, the first task (and often the most difficult) is identifying the ritual for what it is. A formal ritual might be concealed in a lengthy hieroglyphic or runic inscription that relates the story of the mummy's life. (Such inscriptions are well worth translating, as they can contain vital clues about the mummy's origins.) Other rituals are even more elusive.

A typical ritual requires a focus object or allergen that is placed on the mummy's body or used to seal the tomb. My companions and I were able to lay to rest one of the leaders of the aforementioned Ghost Clan in this manner; we reburied the mummy's body in a respectable grave, accompanied with an appropriate funeral ceremony.

I offer the reader two important pieces of advice when seeking out spells of retirement. First, learn as much as possible about the mummy's death and initial burial. These events are likely to provide clues about the elements of the ritual. Second, look for signs of a past ritual. All too often a mummy is laid to rest, only to be inadvertently reawakened by some ignorant or greedy person.

I have used spells of retirement with great success. Of the many examples I could relate, my brief encounter with the skeletal mummy of Three Wolf Priest comes most readily to mind. Three Wolf Priest was a savage devotee of a jungle deity whose cult is all but forgotten today. I cannot tell how often this creature stalked the land, but some time ago, at the fringes of living memory, a band of hardy souls laid Three Wolf Priest to rest by binding his limbs with horsehair ropes and sealing the tomb with an iron horseshoe. According to local legends, the mummy could not abide horses; however, horses were all but unknown in that rugged area. (It seems that a mounted knight ended the mummy's mortal life.) Three Wolf Priest arose to menace the area again when foolish treasure hunters broke open its tomb and rifled the body. Once the horsehair bonds were loosed, it was only a matter of time before the mummy sallied forth to recover the goods looted from the tomb.

Between our battles with the mummy, I discovered a venerable old woman who had known the mummy hunters of three generations before. From her, we learned the tale of the earlier campaign and were able to reconstruct the ritual. In the end we located the original horseshoe and used that to seal the tomb. Getting enough horsehair rope to bind the mummy proved to be a problem, and we ultimately were compelled to stave off the mummy's attacks while a companion went to fetch it from farther afield.

Curiously, a mummy itself sometimes strives to complete its own spell of retirement. The reunion between Ahmose Tanit and Simbel (see Chapter Two) might be considered a spell of retirement, as might Quinn Roche's quest for *plate mail of etherealness*.

Latent Powers

Any sortie against the undead is best accomplished with all due speed. I do not mean to imply that reckless or ill-considered attacks are preferable to a more deliberate approach. Rather, I urge the reader to avoid unnecessary delays and get on with the job. Groups who are reluctant to finish their task often find themselves counterattacked.

The speedy completion of a hunt can be even more important when the quarry is a mummy. As was explained briefly in

Chapter One, it is possible for a mummy's powers to change over time, the powers usually growing stronger. A newly awakened mummy might not gain the full use of its powers until certain items looted from its tomb are recovered. Another mummy might gain extra powers during astrological events such as equinoxes or planetary conjunctions. Although I have no direct proof, it seems likely that some mummies can gain considerable power when a comet appears, which helps explain a comet's reputation as a harbinger of ill omen. I have four accounts of mummies that gained power each time they were slain and subsequently rose again through *rejuvenation*.

Elemental Vulnerability

A typical mummy is immune to all types of cold, but is susceptible to fire. A more powerful mummy might be resistant or immune to other types of attacks, as described in Chapter Three, in addition to any immunity the mummy might have due to the *elemental command* power.

If the mummy is susceptible to an element or form of energy, nonmagical attacks based on the element can inflict damage, and magical attacks, including blows from an elemental, inflict +1 point of damage per die. Typical damage for nonmagical attacks is:

Flaming torch, flask of water, chunk of ice, small rock: 1d3.

Flask of burning oil, immersion in water, avalanche: 1d8 for first round of exposure, 2d8 for second and subsequent rounds of exposure.

Holy Symbols

Only a mummy that retained priest abilities is subject to damage from holy symbols. A holy symbol has no effect on a mummy unless the symbol is held by a living being while it touches the mummy.

Table 20: Holy Symbols

Rank	Damage*	Healing**
First	2d4	1d3
Second	1d6+1	1d4+1
Third	1d6	1d6+1
Fourth	1d4	2d6
Fifth	Nil	2d8

* Damage: The amount of damage a symbol from any nonevil faith inflicts when used to strike a mummy. The wielder must make a normal melee attack roll.

** Healing: The amount of damage that is healed (*rejuvenated*) when a mummy is touched by the symbol of its own faith. Other evil holy symbols have no effect.

Holy Water

Table 21: Holy Water

Rank	Damage per Vial
First	2d4
Second	1d6+1
Third	1d6
Fourth	1d4
Fifth	Nil

A normal missile attack roll is required to splash a mummy with holy water. If an unstoppered vial is thrown, it will not break unless it strikes a solid object - a mummy's body does not count for this purpose. If the vial strikes a solid object, the player rolls a saving throw vs. crushing blow to see if it shatters. See the section on

"grenadelike missiles" in the *Dungeon Master Guide* and consult the scatter diagram for resolving the effects of throwing and breaking vials of holy water.

Effects of Spells upon Mummies

* Spell is described in Tome of Magic.

Wizard Spells

Antipathy/sympathy: This spell might drive back the ancient dead, but the persistent itching that generally affects targets doesn't necessarily occur. If a mummy makes its saving throw vs. the *antipathy* form of this spell, it can remain in the area of effect or handle the protected object with no ill effects.

Antimagic shell: Many ancient dead can freely cross the barrier created by this spell, but a created, servitor, or recalled mummy cannot do so. No matter what the mummy's origin, an *antimagic shell* stops all special powers except those delivered by touch - a typical mummy's *fear* aura is negated (normal fear checks might still apply), but its rotting touch is not. This is because a mummy's touch puts its victim in physical contact with the positive energy emanating from the mummy's body, so the victim suffers the consequences. Nevertheless, an *antimagic shell* prevents the mummy from projecting its powers over a distance.

Banishment: Successful use of this spell forces a recalled mummy's spirit permanently into the afterlife, destroying the creature. This spell has no effect on other types of mummies.

Continual light: Unless the creature has an aversion to light, this spell does not cause a mummy discomfort or drive it away. The spell can blind a mummy if cast directly on its eyes.

Death fog: This spell cannot poison the ancient dead. Mummies, however, are corporeal, and the spell's solid vapor slows their movement.

Emotion: This spell has no effect when used against the ancient dead. The spell's *courage* variation negates the results of a failed saving throw for mummy *fearM*.

Feeblemind: This spell is effective only against mummies with spellcasting abilities. A mummy's *rejuvenation* power, however, quickly restores its lost faculties. A mummy's mind is restored in the same amount of time that it normally requires to *rejuvenate* 25 hit points.

Infravision: A mummy's body radiates no heat. When motionless, a mummy is all but invisible to infravision of any kind. When moving, a mummy creates disturbances in the air that infravision can detect. If the surroundings are very warm (sunbaked rock, volcanically heated cavern), a mummy shows up as a cool spot. Dungeon Masters who interpret infravision simply as an ability to see in the dark should adjudicate accordingly.

Legend lore: This spell is an invaluable tool for determining a mummy's history. This spell can also reveal a mummy's salient weaknesses, and what actions or materials are required to destroy it or lay it to rest. Best of all, this spell can work at a distance, which usually allows a group to be fully informed about its foe before any combat is joined.

Light: See *continual light*, above.

Leomund's lamentable belaborment: This spell generally has no effect on the ancient dead. A mummy who was a noted orator, politician, or debater in life might be subject to its effects, however.

Limited wish: This spell can be very useful for revealing key facts about a mummy's background. It is not powerful enough to lay a mummy to rest, but it can usually cure *mummy rot* and negate other lasting effects from a mummy's attacks. A *limited wish* also can be used offensively, suppressing one of a mummy's abilities temporarily. *Limited wish* generally negates a First-rank power for 1d8 hours, a second-rank power for 1d4 hours, a third-rank power for 1d10 turns, a fourth-rank for 1d8-1 rounds, and a fifth-rank power for 1d6-1 rounds. If adjustments reduce the number to zero or less, there is no effect. The mummy is allowed a saving throw vs. spell to avoid the reduction.

Mordenkainen's disjunction: This spell works normally when used against spell effects created by a mummy, but it has no effect on the mummy itself.

Past life*: This spell is sometimes useful in researching a mummy's history. It is limited by the need to touch the mummy or, in the case of more powerful casters, handle one of the mummy's possessions.

Protection from evil/protection from evil, 10' radius: These spells do not hedge out the ancient dead, but they do offer attack penalties and saving throw bonuses to beings in the areas of effect.

Reincarnation: This spell can destroy most mummies by restoring them to life. However, the ties that bind mummies of the fourth or fifth rank to their undead "lives" are so strong that this spell cannot override them. Even if the spell works, a *reincarnated* creature tends to be dangerously psychotic: The transition from life to undeath tears at the mind; an abrupt change back to life is far more damaging.

Remove curse: In very rare cases, a powerful spellcaster can lay a very weak (first- or second-rank) mummy to rest with this spell. Generally, this works only on a usurped or servitor mummy.

Temporal stasis: This spell can prevent a mummy from *rejuvenating*.

Trap the soul: This spell works against all mummies, and it is particularly useful for containing a powerful mummy while a permanent means of putting the creature to rest is being sought.

Wish: This spell is powerful enough to literally *wish* a mummy right out of existence. Great care must be exercised, however, as this spell is notoriously dangerous. The spell also is most useful for uncovering a mummy's origins and weaknesses - that process is less dangerous than *wishing* a mummy out of existence, but only slightly less so.

Priest Spells

Abjure: Recalled mummies can be laid to rest with this spell.

Atonement: This powerful spell can bring peace to a restless, recalled, or usurped mummy. Extensive and careful research into a mummy's origins and history is necessary to determine if this spell will be efficacious. For the spell to work, the mummy must have performed an act that doomed it to undeath, and it must be willing to undergo the spell.

Cloak of Bravery: This spell is useful for combating the effects of mummy-inspired *fear*, but the spell's reverse has no effect on the ancient dead.

Continual light: See the wizard spell of the same name, above.

Cure disease: This spell is a necessity for any mummy hunter, as only magical cures can combat *mummy rot*. The spell's reverse is useless against the ancient dead.

Dispel evil: This spell sometimes lays a mummy to rest. Generally, only a servitor or usurped mummy is affected.

Emotion control*: This has no effect when cast on the ancient dead, but works normally if cast upon a priest or living being controlling a mummy.

Holy word: This spell can obliterate a very weak mummy, and a more powerful mummy is fully subject to the spell's side effects. In some cases, a very powerful mummy can be laid to rest by this spell; only careful research into a mummy's history should reveal if the creature in question is vulnerable.

Know age*: This spell is sometimes useful when researching a mummy's background or identifying objects associated with a mummy.

Light: See the wizard spell *continual light*, above.

Moonbeam: This spell might have an effect on certain bound or dependent mummies.

Personal reading*: This spell can be very useful in uncovering details about a mummy's past. Its chief limitation is the need for the caster to know the mummy's birth name or exact birth date. Such information is not always easy to find (see Chapters Five and Eight).

Protection from evil, 10' radius: See the wizard spell *protection from evil*, above.

Raise dead: A powerful (third-rank and higher) mummy cannot be destroyed by this spell. The spell also is ineffective if a mummy has been dead longer than the maximum time allowed for a dead being to be so *raised*. The return to the world of the living is always physically and mentally traumatic, especially for undead creatures. In many cases the creature's body does not survive the transition, and the monster is merely dead (inactive, no longer undead). Even if the creature survives, it is usually hostile and suffers from some form of dangerous psychosis as well. The reverse of this spell has no effect on the ancient dead.

Regenerate: Like the various cure spells, this spell and its reverse have no effect on the ancient dead. The spell is somewhat useful for closing the wounds of a creature afflicted with *mummy rot*, but cannot cure the rot itself.

Remove curse: See the wizard spell of the same name, above.

Resurrection: This potent spell is essentially a more powerful version of the *raise dead* spell. It can affect any type of mummy, but see the *raise dead* spell for a caution. The reverse of this spell has no effect on the ancient dead.

Squeaking floors*: A mummy using the *weightlessness* power will not trigger this spell.

Sunray: This potent spell can damage any type of mummy.

Thought capture*: This spell is sometimes useful in researching a mummy's history. To use the spell successfully for this purpose, the caster must visit a location where useful thoughts might still be available for capture.

Time pool*: This spell can be very useful for researching a mummy's past, especially when the caster seeks to round out previous studies. Curiously, the spell sometimes fails to reveal any information. *Time pool* sometimes fails because it cannot reveal information about events that have taken place on another plane.

Zone of truth*: This spell can be very useful when making inquiries about a mummy's past. Unfortunately, beings within the warded area are aware that they are being compelled to speak the truth, and they often refuse to answer questions.

Effect of Psionics upon Mummies

The Dungeon Master must carefully adjudicate the effects of psionics powers used against mummies, using the previous spell effects as rules of thumb. *Mummy rot* is an extraordinary disease and could be made immune to psionic cures in a Ravenloft campaign. Divination-type powers might be useful only when used in a mummy's lair or on objects belonging to a mummy. Psionic powers establishing a mental link to a mummy place the psionics user at grave risk of making a madness check. Other specific effects might include allowing *banishment* to put a recalled mummy to rest, and allowing *wrench* to cut a mummy's connection to the Positive Material Plane, preventing it from causing *mummy rot* or *rejuvenating*.

Turning Undead

A mummy is turned according to its Hit Dice. Treat 3 or more bonus hit points as another full Hit Die. A typical mummy (6+3 HD) is turned as a 7-HD creature.

Table 22: Turning Undead

Rank	Turning Penalty*
First	Nil
Second	-1
Third	-2

Fourth	-3
Fifth	-4

* **Turning Penalty:** If the turning attempt is successful, it remains necessary to roll 2d6 to determine how many creatures are turned, then apply the listed penalty. If the adjusted number is zero or less, a mummy is not turned but cannot directly attack the priest who made the attempt.

Allergens

This weakness can produce two possible effects (sometimes both at once): *aversion* or *barrier*.

Aversion: A single allergen produces either *repulsion* or *fascination*, but never both. However, a mummy may be repulsed by one type of allergen and fascinated by another.

Repulsion: The hero with the item must have a clear view of the mummy, which must be aware of both hero and item. The effect persists as long as the hero can see the mummy and concentrates on repulsion. If the mummy is within the item's effective radius when repulsion is established, it must leave at the first opportunity. If unable to do so, it must remain as far as possible from the allergen.

Table 23: Repulsion

Rank	Radius*	Saving Throw
		Penalty**
First	40-60 feet	-5
Second	20-40 feet	-4
Third	10-30 feet	-3
Fourth	5-25 feet	-2
Fifth	0-20 feet	-1

* **Radius:** This is the typical radius of aversion. If the radius is 0, the mummy physically attacks the magic-wielder in an attempt to stop the (ineffective) repulsion.

** **Saving Throw Penalty:** If a mummy cannot leave the radius of effect, or if the hero presenting the item pursues the mummy to keep it within the radius, the mummy can ignore the repulsion for one round if it successfully saves vs. spell with the listed penalty. A saving throw can be attempted every round that the mummy is involuntarily kept within the radius.

Fascination: The allergen must be presented as described above. A fascinated mummy moves directly toward the allergen, but it stops within 1d4 feet of the object.

Table 24: Fascination

Rank	Duration*	Saving Throw
		Penalty**
First	1d12 rounds	-5
Second	1d10 rounds	-4
Third	1d8-1 rounds	-3
Fourth	1d6-1 rounds	-2
Fifth	1d6-2 rounds	-1

* **Duration:** The typical interval a mummy remains fascinated. Fascination is broken if the mummy's view of the object is blocked, or if the object touches the mummy. If the duration is zero or less, the mummy attacks the wielder and tries to seize the allergen.

** **Saving Throw Penalty;** A mummy can make a save vs. spell to avoid fascination. If the roll is successful, the mummy isn't vulnerable to the same object for an amount of time determined by the Dungeon Master. A typical interval is one full day, or until the next sunrise or sunset.

Barrier: The allergen prevents a mummy's passage if positioned to block a portal or laid down in a line or

circle.

Table 25: Barrier

Rank	Radius*	Saving Throw
		Penalty**
First	50 feet	Nil
Second	30 feet	Nil
Third	20 feet	-4
Fourth	10 feet	-4
Fifth	5 feet	-3

* Radius: The maximum area the object can ward. An object centered within a room whose radius is smaller than this distance wards the entire room. Warding objects in a line or circle can be no farther apart than the listed radius.

** Saving Throw Penalty: A mummy can breach a ward if it makes a successful save vs. spell with the listed penalty. If the saving throw fails, and the mummy can retreat outside the allergen's effective radius, it can attempt a new breach at another location after a number of hours equal to the saving throw penalty.

Bonds

If a focus item grants control over a mummy, the table below determines the item's extent of mummy control.

Table 26: Bonds

Rank	Time*	Range**
First	2d4 hours	21 hours
Second	1d4 hours	9 hours
Third	2d4 turns	3 miles
Fourth	2d4 rounds	1 mile
Fifth	1d4 rounds	500 yards

* Time: The typical interval during each day in which a hero possessing a focus item can control a mummy of the listed rank. Controlling any undead generally requires a powers check.

** Range: The typical maximum distance between a mummy of the listed rank and its focus item, beyond which control is broken. In most cases, the focus-item holder must first summon the mummy to his or her presence before issuing any commands (the wielder and the mummy must be able to actually see each other).

Dependence: Spirit Items

Table 27: Dependence: Spirit Items

Rank	Number*	Radius**
First	1d4	0-90 yards
Second	2d4	90-180 yards
Third	3d4	180 yards - 1 mile
Fourth	4d4	1-10 miles
Fifth	5d4	10 miles +

* Number: The typical number of spirit items a mummy of the listed rank can possess.

** Radius: How close a mummy must be to a spirit item to benefit from it. A radius of zero means the mummy cannot be separated from the item.

Types of spirit items: Most spirit items are durable things such as jewelry, tools, weapons, or statues, which were buried with a mummy. It is possible for the tomb itself to be a spirit item. A spirit item's form might reflect its function (see below); for example, a jewel representing a mummy's life force or *rejuvenation* power might be shaped like a heart.

Assigning spirit items: Typically a spirit item represents one of a mummy's powers. Destroying the item reduces or eliminates the power. More than one item can be assigned to the same power, and a single item can be assigned more than one power.

Destroying spirit items: A spirit item can usually be smashed with blows from a weapon. A typical spirit item has the same Armor Class and invulnerabilities as the mummy and 3-5 hit points for each of the mummy's Hit Dice.

A spirit item might be destroyed only through a specified manner. This might involve treating the item with an allergen, taking it to a specific place, subjecting the item to a specific ritual relevant to the individual mummy, or anything else the Dungeon Master desires. Generally, the higher the mummy's rank, the harder a spirit item is to destroy. If a hero simply tries to smash such an item, the Dungeon Master must decide what happens. Possibilities include: the implement the hero uses to attack the item breaks; the spirit item is unmarked by the blow; or the spirit item appears to break, but the mummy is unaffected and the item re-forms itself over the next few days.

Effects of destruction: The power assigned to a spirit item usually decreases by one or two ranks when the item is destroyed. If a power's rank drops to zero or less, the mummy can no longer use that power; however, typical powers (*rejuvenation*, *fear*, *mummy rot*, and *invulnerability*) are unlikely to be reduced to zero in this fashion. If the item represents a mummy's force of will, the mummy loses 1-2 Hit Dice when the item is destroyed. Alternatively, an assigned power can be lost when an item is destroyed. It might be possible to destroy a mummy outright by destroying a spirit item that represents its life force. Power losses can be permanent, but they might be restored by replacing the spirit item.

Dependence: Elixirs and Maintenance Rituals

A typical elixir or maintenance ritual applies to the mummy's force of will and must be renewed. If the elixir or ritual is denied, the mummy loses 2-3 Hit Dice, and all its powers decrease by one rank. These losses accumulate if the mummy is denied the elixir or ritual often. (If the mummy has at least 1 Hit Die, it still possesses first-rank *rejuvenation*, *fear*, *disease*, and *invulnerability*.)

Table 28: Dependence: Elixirs and Maintenance Rituals

Rank	Frequency*	Disability**
First	1-4 months	1-12 days
Second	1-4 years	1-8 days
Third	1-10 years	1-6 days
Fourth	10-100 years	1-4 days
Fifth	100-1000 years	Nil

* Frequency: The typical maximum interval between doses of an elixir or performance of a maintenance ritual.

** Disability: The typical minimum interval required for the mummy to recover its lost Hit Dice and power ranks when it begins receiving its elixir or maintenance ritual again. If the mummy has lost multiple Hit Dice and power ranks, it typically recovers one set of Hit Dice and power ranks during each disability interval. For example, if a mummy of the third rank is denied its elixir for 30 years, it might need as long as 18 days to recover all its Hit Dice and power ranks.

Mixing Allergens with Elixirs

Only allergens that produce repulsion are effective in tainting an elixir.

Table 29: Mixing Allergens with Elixirs

Rank	Detection*	Duration**
First	-5	1d12 rounds
Second	-4	1d10 rounds
Third	-3	1d8-1 rounds

Fourth	-2	1d6-1 rounds
Fifth	-1	1d6-2 rounds

* **Detection:** A mummy of the listed rank can detect the allergen, no matter how well mixed with an elixir, if it rolls a successful save vs. spell with the listed penalty.

** **Duration:** The mummy is incapacitated for this interval when it uses a tainted elixir. If the number is zero or less, there is no effect.

Latent Powers

As stated earlier, a mummy does not acquire new powers, but instead gains fuller use of abilities it has always had. The table below is only a guideline; the Dungeon Master can also choose to invest the mummy with power gains according to astrological events or the recovery of looted grave goods.

Table 30: Latent Powers

Rank	Frequency*	Scope**
First	1-10 years	1-3
Second	1-12 months	2-5
Third	1-30 days	3-7
Fourth	24-128 hours	4-9
Fifth	8-24 hours	5-11

* **Frequency:** The typical interval required for the mummy to gain use of a latent power. The actual number can vary widely.

** **Scope:** The typical number of powers or power ranks the mummy gains.

Death comes on wings to he who enters the tomb of pharaoh.

- Marie Corelli
Walden

Awakenings

Thus far I have shown the reader the ancient dead in their various forms and guises, described their powers, and explained their weaknesses. But to fully understand the ancient dead (insofar as this feat is possible for a living mind), the reader must also consider the events that form the preamble for each mummy's return to the world of the living. I now cover the processes that enable mummies to walk the earth. I also give consideration to the mentality of the ancient dead; one must understand one's foe to defeat it.

Creating a Mummy

In Chapter Two, I briefly explained that the creation of an ancient dead being requires a preserved body and some reason for the departed spirit to return to that body. The first step, preserving the body, is not always sinister or evil. Embalming the dead, while not practiced everywhere, is an essential part of solemn and respectable funerary rituals in many lands. I have already warned the reader of the perils of interfering with such rituals. Still, the following particulars might prove to be useful in some circumstances.

The first step in preparing a body for proper (that is, ceremonial) disposal usually involves evisceration and drying. This can take anywhere from 1 to 80 days. The residents of Har'Akir, for example, use an elaborate process that involves drying the body in a bed of natron (a naturally occurring salt) for 40 days. The internal organs are not discarded, but placed in sealed vessels called Canopic jars. Curiously, the Har'Akiri place the heart back after mummification - they consider it essential that this organ remain with the body. The body is then washed out, stuffed with various aromatic herbs, and carefully wrapped in linen bandages.

In other lands the ritual is considerably different and might involve baking the body, cremating it so that only the bones remain to be interred, or coating the body with waxes and resins.

Once a body is embalmed, a period of mourning and farewell usually follows; this can last up to a month (the Har'Akiri mourn for 30 days), sometimes longer. The mourning culminates in the interment of the corpse, often with a large assortment of grave goods, which are intended to provide the deceased with all necessities during the afterlife. My next chapter examines these goods in detail.

It is at this stage that the true creation of an ancient dead begins. Powerful spells or alterations to the standard rituals serve to bind a spirit within its body, or to call it back from whatever afterlife to which it has gone. The conversion of a preserved body to an undead mummy usually is fairly rapid, regardless of the mourning period (usually no more than a few days). However, the resulting mummy often lies in "slumber" until wakened by an outside force.

In all my dealings with truly powerful mummies (creatures of at least the fourth rank), each deceased was given full funerary rites, totaling 70 days or more, and interred in a resplendent tomb. My investigations in the land of Har'Akir revealed that the tomb of Anhktepote has in excess of 80,000 square feet of floor space, including a complete temple to a deity of the underworld and no less than thirty subsidiary tombs for the pharaoh's family, servants, and advisors. Most of the tomb is carved from solid rock, and the structure is filled with monumental statuary ranging from 1 foot high to titanic figures many feet tall. The tomb's ultimate cost is incalculable by any standards.

Lesser mummies, by contrast, might not receive any funerary rites at all. This is obviously the case with naturally mummified ancient dead and with most that were created by other mummies. In the latter case, a victim generally is subjected to a ritual that is similar to the local burial rites, but bent entirely toward creating an undead creature.

Triggers

The ancient dead, being fully corporeal, are permanent residents in the physical world. Nevertheless, they are prone to long periods of slumber. I suspect that this interval of sleep is similar to vampiric hibernation, in that the undead creature's mind enters a dreamlike state. Unlike vampiric hibernation, a mummy suffers no ill effects from its slumber, can rouse itself at any time, and can immediately use its powers.

A circumstance that rouses a mummy from slumber is a trigger. It is similar in most respects to a ghostly trigger. I have identified three types of triggers: *time*, *action*, and *event*. It is possible, even typical, for a single mummy to have several triggers to awaken it.

Time

A mummy with a time trigger rises on a regular schedule. How long it slumbers between awakenings depends on its origins. A guardian mummy might bestir itself every day and patrol an area for a few hours. The so-called Sage of Levkarest appears once a decade; presumably, it is curious to see what the living are doing. Given the political intrigues and torrid affairs in Borca, I'm sure the sage has much to discover.

Mummies with time triggers are very difficult to combat. Their awakenings seldom leave clues about their origins, and they may return to slumber - and so seem to be defeated - after a fixed period or after completing some repetitive task. In many cases, the most expedient way to deal with such creatures is to help them complete their tasks! An ancient dead that slumbers through the centuries is not the most pressing threat. Of course, mere dormancy may not be the hunter's ultimate goal. When combating this type of mummy, it is therefore important to be certain one actually has slain it or laid it permanently to rest. Otherwise, it might have simply returned to a "sleep" from which it will emerge again when the time is right.

Action

This is the most common type of trigger. The mummy wakes immediately when some specified act takes place. An ancient dead often has an action trigger in addition to any other it might have. Typically, a mummy wakes when its tomb is opened, when its grave goods are disturbed, or when some other act of disrespect is committed. A created or servitor mummy may wake at some other creature's behest. An invoked mummy often wakes when a spell or ritual is performed. A naturally mummified ancient dead wakes when its body or equipment are disturbed.

Event

This trigger wakes the mummy when a specific phenomenon comes to pass. The occurrence can be mundane, such as the rising of the moon or a particular constellation, or esoteric, such as the reincarnation of one of the mummy's old enemies, a wild change in local politics, or a rare astronomical event. Event triggers are more difficult to identify than action triggers, because there may be no immediately obvious connection between the event and the mummy's reappearance.

Nevertheless, properly identifying an event trigger reveals quite a bit about a mummy, because the trigger might be symbolic of the creature's life or death. Further, cyclical event triggers such as astronomical events allow a hunter to anticipate where a mummy will be at certain times. They also make verifying a mummy's destruction a fairly simple matter.

Psychology

If any culture or people does not believe the dead should be separated from the living, I do not know of it. The living may respect or venerate the dead, but the act of interment irrevocably severs the deceased's last physical link with the mortal world. This link can never truly be reforged.

When the living intrude upon the dead, the infraction might go unnoticed. Grave robbers and their ilk should count themselves lucky if some curse or misfortune does not overtake them. When the dead are thrust back among the living, however, trauma is inevitable.

A mummy's "rebirth" might create such an intense mental shock that its original personality is obliterated. The mummy is

not mindless, but it loses all its skills and memories. It is left with only a vague recollection of what it was like to be alive. It yearns for the earthly pleasures it has lost, and it bitterly resents living beings for the vitality they still possess.

When awakened, such mummies lash out at beings they encounter. Because they are bereft of higher reasoning, they are not inclined to brood or lay plans for the future, but they can be cunning in a fight, moving to their best advantage. They seldom leave their tombs except to pursue invaders or to recover stolen grave goods.

Mummies that retained their memories are more complex creatures. They fully recall their former lives and thus fully appreciate what they have lost. In addition, most retain their professional skills. They have the mental capacity to lay plans, ponder contingencies, and brood.

When awakened, these mummies first look to their own safety. They may leave their tombs and scout their surroundings, trying to anticipate how attackers might approach. If driven by sufficient motivation, they might wander the countryside. Such mummies may seek to complete or continue unfinished tasks. Other ancient dead go abroad simply to get a taste of life again, however weak that taste may be. Mummies that have the ability to create undead or charm other creatures invariably seek to locate and enslave a cadre of servants, especially if they can do so without arousing undue suspicion.

Yet, for all its intellect, even the most powerful mummy is a lethargic creature. When one considers a mummy's state of being, this is unsurprising. Compared to a living being, a mummy is frozen in time. It never ages, tires, hungers, or sickens. Of all the sentient undead, a mummy is the most unfettered by external concerns.

For all its immortality, a vampire's fate is inexorably linked with the living by its need for sustenance. For all its power, a lich's thoughts are turned outward by an insatiable thirst for still more power, which eventually leads to demilichdom and a final exit from the mortal world.

For all its obsession with the world, a mummy is utterly divorced from it. A mummy's powers are fixed at the moment of its creation, so the creature has no goals or ambitions beyond protecting what it already has. No wonder, then, that a mummy slumbers.

It also is no wonder that a mummy is a tenacious foe once disturbed. Though it seldom has anything to gain, it usually has much to lose.

*Lo! Death has reared himself a throne
 In a strange city, lying alone
 Far down among the dim West,
 Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best
 Have gone to their eternal rest....
 Go blend the turrets and shadows there
 That all seem pendulous in air,
 While from a proud tower in the town
 Death looks gigantically down.*

- Edgar Allan Poe
 "The City in the Sea"

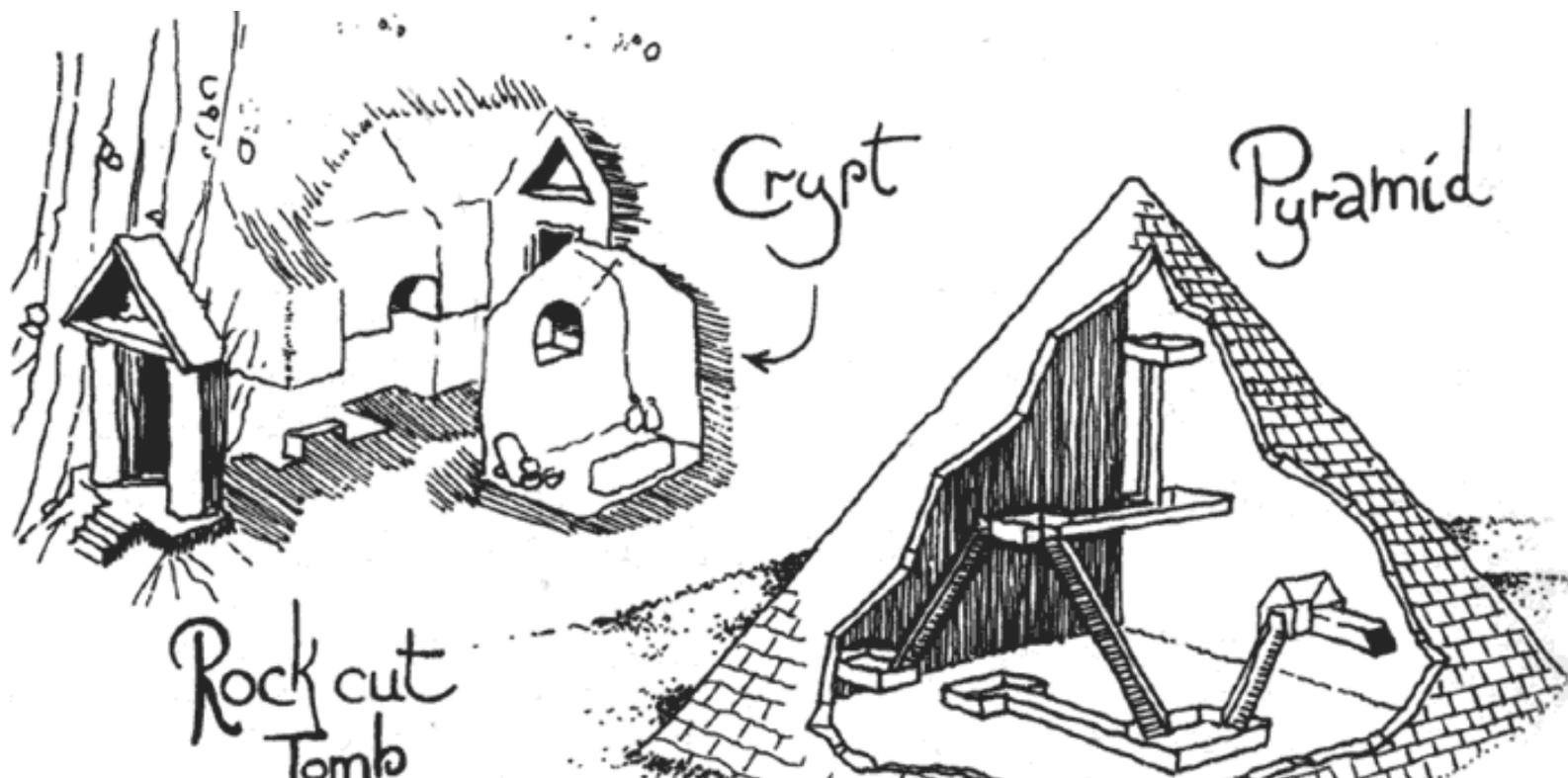
The Houses of the Dead

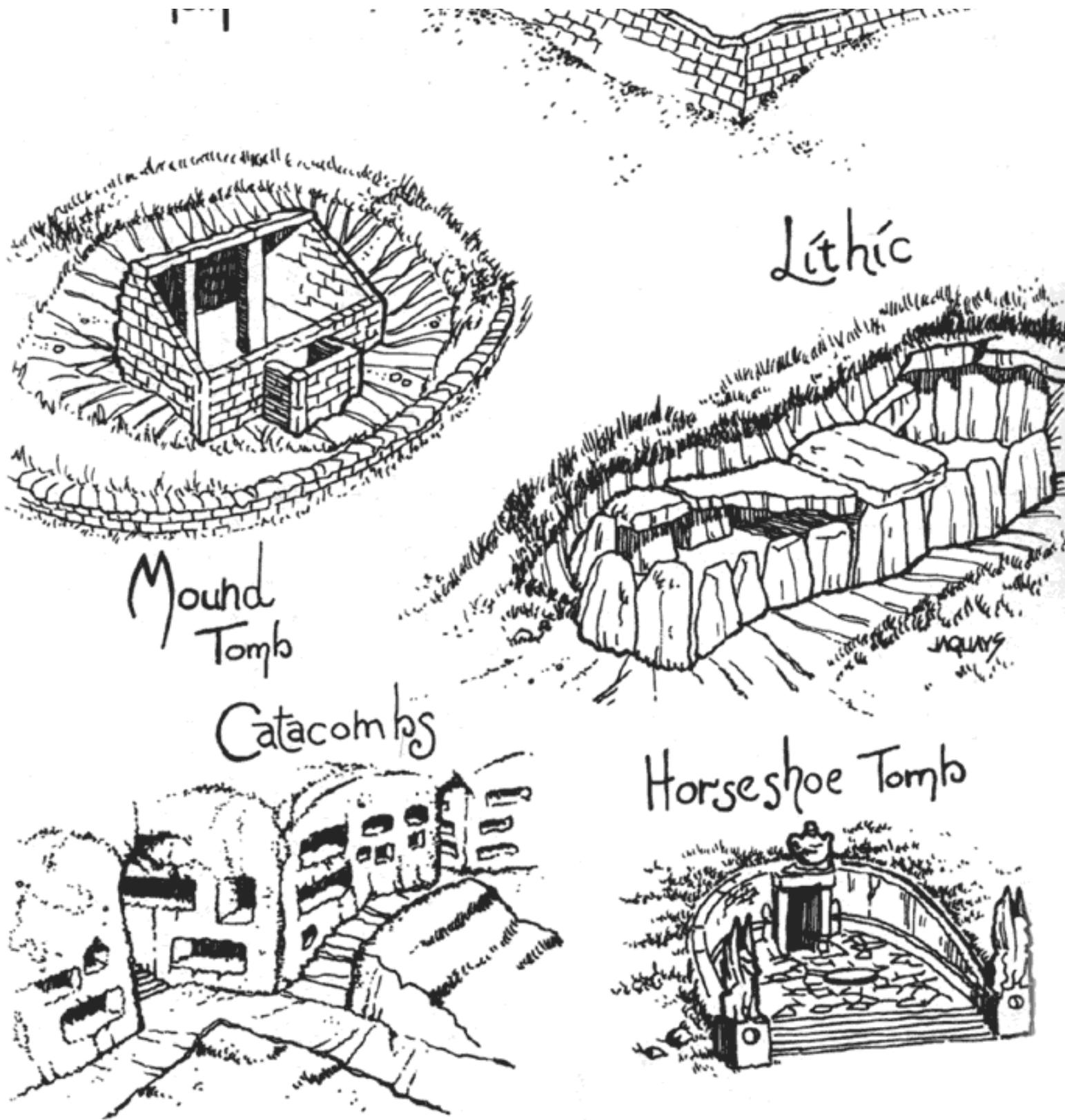
To bring about a mummy's ultimate defeat, it is often necessary to locate its lair, which is most frequently the tomb where its body was interred. From there, the intrepid hunter must play out the final battle on the creature's home ground.

In many cases, a mummy hunter's initial investigation requires a visit to the creature's abode, as this is the repository for many clues and records regarding the mummy's past. As with vampires, liches, ghosts - the entire gamut of undead creatures that prowl the night - one must almost inevitably seek out the monster where it is most powerful and destroy it there.

I pause to make one emphatic point: *A successful mummy hunter is not a grave robber!* It is often necessary to remove some item from a tomb for study or for destruction, but no matter how tempting they may be, it is best to leave all other treasures behind. Senselessly looting burial places can create or awaken all sorts of undead creatures as anchored ghosts, slumbering mummies, and fledgling vampires, to name but a few. Grave robbers might find they earn the enmity of the living as well. As pointed out in Chapter Two, burial is a sacred rite not to be tampered with lightly.

Finally, a power is abroad in these lands of ours that visits doom upon the greedy and foolish. Through this power, the ancient dead become endlessly trapped in prisons of their own making. Take care not to join them.





Tombs

Funerary architecture varies greatly from place to place, even today. Now, consider the simple fact that a mummy's tomb might date from a bygone era, built by hands long since withered to dust. The spectrum includes points not only widely spaced in geography, but also separated in time. As a consequence, a tomb only a few leagues from one's own home might be utterly alien in form - so much so that one might not recognize it as a tomb at all.

I have observed or documented mummies residing in the many types of tombs that follow. I have compiled this list to help

prospective mummy hunters recognize a tomb when it is found, as well as to disseminate the methods typically used to enter one. The list, I am certain, is by no means exhaustive, and a wary eye and an active mind are the best tools for sniffing out a mummy's lair.

Grave: This term covers any sort of burial where a body or a coffin containing a body is completely covered with earth. A mummy that has risen from a grave usually does not lair inside it unless it has the *passage* power. The only way for a mummy hunter to enter a grave is to use magic or dig it up. The former method is quicker and safer.

Mound: The mound tomb is an earthen mound covering a chamber of logs, timber, or stone that contains a body and its grave goods. A mound can have a varied shape. A simple dome is typical, but a complex geometric or animal shape is not infrequent. To the untrained eye, even the most elaborate mound can look like a natural hill, especially if it is partially eroded or overgrown with trees and weeds. A careful look often reveals a mound's true contours. Also, no matter how completely obscured a burial mound has become, its contours are unmistakable when viewed from the air. Having a spellcaster with the magical ability to fly is a marvelous way to accomplish many types of reconnaissance.

A mound burial generally has no entryways, and a mummy must use the *passage* or *shape change* power to get in or out. A mound can be merely decorative and contain no body at all. Great care is needed when excavating a mound to avoid trouble with the locals. As with graves, a magical means of entry is the best.

Lithic: This tomb is made from huge slabs of stone, sometimes covered with earth. Frequently, several tombs are built in a row, forming a long gallery of burials. A mummy uses its great strength to move the slabs aside when getting in or out of the tomb itself.

Crypt: This type of burial is found almost everywhere. It consists of a small chamber or building constructed according to the local style. The crypt is often part of a larger structure, such as a temple or residence. Large crypts may contain multiple burials.

Horseshoe: This unusual style of tomb is found dug into hillsides, often at the base of the slope. The tomb is marked by a low, stone wall describing an open-ended ring or oval. A more elaborate tomb has walls with built-in tiers, and the wall might surround a pavement. A door opposite the opening in the ring leads to a crypt. The space encompassed by the wall often serves as a ceremonial area where relatives of the deceased perform various memorial rituals according to local custom. A mummy residing in this tomb might have an associated cult.

Cavern: A cave is sometimes used as a natural mausoleum and usually contains other types of tombs, most often simple burials or lithic tombs. Caverns sometimes conceal entrances to other types of tombs. A mummy's burial mound, for example, could be built over one entrance to a cavern, and another opening into the cave might allow access to the crypt.

Labyrinth/catacomb: A massive, mazelike, underground structure might be found near, in, or under a city. A large catacomb can contain miles of tunnels with literally thousands of burials; a mummy generally haunts only one section or level. A catacomb likely has many entrances which are likely to be locked, to be legally opened only at the behest of local priests. Many areas within a set of catacombs are completely walled off or secured by secret portals. A mummy's burial chambers are almost always hidden in this fashion.

Rock cut: This ancient tomb can be crude but is more frequently elaborate. The entrance may be hidden under or in a cliff and sealed with stone slabs that a mummy slides aside when going in or out. A very large rock-cut tomb might contain multiple burials.

In any case, exploring a rock-cut tomb requires great care and patience. The mummy's actual burial chamber and store of grave goods is usually hidden behind a secret door (or several secret doors, if one chamber houses the mummy and a second the goods buried with it). Often a false tomb contains an inanimate corpse or a weaker mummy.

Because a rock-cut tomb is expensive to build, the occupant - dead or undead - was probably wealthy in life. Consequently, the tomb is often filled with precious grave goods and is a prime target for tomb robbers. This makes the mummy hunter's task even more difficult, because tomb locations are jealously guarded.

Each chamber within the tomb likely has a sentinel or trap. The local government may patrol the area. Even worse, the civil penalty for tomb robbing in such areas is usually death, especially for outsiders. Further, the government might be eager to make an example of anyone accused of tomb robbing, which provides for swift, but not necessarily equitable, justice.

Entering a tomb of any kind without carefully weighing the consequences is never a good idea, but the rock-cut tomb requires special consideration over and above weighing the physical hazards. If possible, win the support of the local priests.

Pyramid/ziggurat: This sort of huge structure is the most elaborate of all tombs. Traps, guardians, and curses abound within it. A pyramid has one or two entrances at most, always well concealed. The entrances can be located almost anywhere; sometimes a pyramid's entrance is in another structure nearby. A pyramid's burial chamber is often hidden underground or concealed high inside the structure. A pyramid likely contains multiple burials and is frequently part of a necropolis (city of the dead) containing many more burials. Within a pyramid, each burial has one or more nearby rooms to hold grave goods.

All of the cautions I mentioned in the section concerning rock-cut tombs apply to the pyramid or ziggurat, only more so. Such a wondrous monument often houses royalty, and trespassing within it can rouse local passions very quickly.

No matter what their outer style, mummies' tombs tend to be dark, cramped, dusty places on the inside. Whatever your reason for entering one, be prepared to fight in close quarters! Passages within a tomb are most often narrow (5 feet or less) and equally low. This creates opportunities for ambushes in which large adventuring weapons, such as swords and bows, are nearly useless.

Though battling the ancient dead is often a perilous exercise made even more dangerous by a lack of information, one pattern seems to hold true, especially in the case of a creature that has become undead voluntarily. The splendor of the tomb indicates the power of the mummy.

A powerful mummy's tomb is often a vast, sprawling affair riddled with secret passages. Indeed, the true extent of a major tomb is always hidden. Explorers might initially find only those chambers that cultists (discussed in detail below) visit regularly. Further investigation can establish the location of the inner lair, allowing hunters to vanquish the monster forever.

Guardians

A mummy is not always the only fearsome resident of its tomb, and it may not even be the most fearsome resident of its tomb. The more powerful the mummy, the better guarded its lair will be. The type of guardians a mummy employs varies greatly, but their nature usually reflects the mummy's powers and history.

The living: It is common for mummies to have human and demihuman allies. Most of these do not reside in the tomb itself, but live nearby. Perhaps the living *unwittingly* guard a mummy; priests, catacomb guards, and even grave robbers must be approached carefully, as they might be unaware that a mummy has awakened by their activities. Likewise, superstitious locals might resent a mummy hunter's well-intentioned intrusions into burial sites, either because they fear the mummy's wrath or because they believe the mummy hunter is being sacrilegious. When working in a populated area, gaining the trust of the locals is an important preliminary step in the hunt.

Even more dangerous to a mummy hunter are those folk who are firmly allied with a mummy. These individuals are usually part of a cult (see later); however, this is not always the case, especially if the mummy has the *charm person* ability. Some people who appear to be a mummy's allies might instead be its victims.

The dead: Frequently, other undead creatures guard a mummy's tomb. These can be servitor mummies created by the mummy itself or an allied cult, independent mummies who share the tomb or are interred nearby, lesser undead created through spells, or, as I once encountered, a fledgling vampire. A mummy need not command or create undead to employ undead guardians; it can forge alliances with intelligent undead beings or simply allow them as squatters in parts of its tomb. The tomb of a very powerful mummy is almost certainly steeped in evil, and the nature of the place will likely make it difficult for priests to wage spiritual combat with the undead.

Golems: Mummies with spellcasting powers or cults that include spellcasters often enjoy the protection of one or more golems. If present, golems are usually created when a tomb is built; most golems found in mummies' tombs are as old as the structures they guard. Guardian golems may be disguised to look like mummies or inanimate statues; indeed, it can be very difficult to tell if a belligerent statue is a golem or a figure brought to life by the mummy's *animate object* power.

Monsters: Unintelligent monsters are often allowed to lair in a tomb, so long as they pose no threat to the mummy or its grave goods. A mummy with the *charm monster* power seeks the most formidable monsters it can find.

Animals: A mummy with the *charm animals* power generally sees to it that a substantial number of the most dangerous local species live in or near the tomb (poisonous spiders, snakes, scorpions, giant insects, etc.). So, too, a mummy with the alter form power often contrives to keep animals in or near its own tomb. The ancient dead then uses its power to lurk undetected among the natural animals.

Curses

If one were to heed the tales of mummies' curses told by firelight on tempestuous nights, one might expect to be stricken afresh with a multitude of curses with each step taken within a tomb. Fortunately, the ancient dead do not employ curses so freely as that.

In many lands, however, tombs are thick with protective curses. It seems that most are warded with sweeping curses that visit afflictions upon all who steal from or damage them. These curses are rarely life threatening, and they seem intended more for marking grave robbers as enemies of the community. The rituals for constructing such curses are closely guarded secrets, and I have not been able to record them. Priests I have interviewed simply shake their heads and speak of powers beyond mortal comprehension.

Other tomb curses are evoked when trespassers commit a prohibited action or fail to perform one that is required. In Har'Akir, tombs are open and the living may visit them without fear - if they bring offerings of food and drink for the dead. To enter a Har'Akiri tomb with a disrespectful attitude is to invite disaster.

The particulars of a curse might be depicted in inscriptions found within the tomb. Typically, inscriptions warn trespassers against a prohibited action and hint at the consequences. It seems that curses are designed to discourage first, punishing only when warnings fail.

Traps

Whereas curses are apparently intended to provide ample warning to the foolish and the greedy, the traps found in tombs tend to be well-concealed, swift, and deadly, killing or maiming with no warning at all. A tomb might contain as many traps as it has chambers. The best advice I can give in this matter is to be alert - *always*. Beware of pits, deadfalls, tripwires, slides, and the like.

Keep in mind, however, that unless a mummy has the *passage* or weightlessness power, there will be at least one safe path through the tomb - or, at least, one path clear of the sorts of dangers that might harm or hinder a mummy. The "safe" path still might include deadly gases or other hazards that the ancient dead can safely ignore. Also be aware that these trap-free areas are frequently filled with guardian creatures.

Contents

The practice of burying goods with the dead is not restricted to those locales where mummification is the norm. In most places, one or two objects are interred with the deceased as a simple farewell gesture. In contrast, a mummy is buried with all the things it needs in the afterlife. This is no token demonstration of grief, but a serious and practical matter. As a general rule, cultures that mummify believe the dead have the same physical needs as the living, and who are we to gainsay them? To have a necessity withheld is to suffer eternal privation in the afterlife.

Not every deliberately interred mummy is buried with a vast treasure. The quality and quantity of the grave goods naturally varies with the wealth and status of the deceased, and with the intentions of the being that performs the embalming and burial. An ancient dead seeking undead servants might mummify its slain foes and provide them with no grave goods at all. A greedy embalmer might substitute inferior goods for family heirlooms that he hopes to resell for a profit. Still, one can surmise a great deal about a mummy by observing the contents of its tomb.

A mummy that enjoyed a respectable status in life would be buried with basic necessities such as clothing, tools, weapons, and the like. Food might be provided figuratively, in the form of frescoes or mosaics on the walls. If the mummy was higher up the social ladder, one might find actual furniture, cosmetics, inscriptions bearing the names of people important to the mummy in life, and perhaps a few statues to serve as servants. A mummy of the highest status might be interred with

hundreds of undead and statues - both servants and guards - vehicles, extensive inscriptions and paintings relating the story of the mummy's life, books and scrolls, and many valuable artistic treasures.

A mummy of great station might be supplied with offerings of fresh food, beverages, and other perishable items. This is a sure sign that a mummy cult is associated with the tomb.

Cults and Temples

A mummy cult is typically a secret society of worshipers who attend or venerate an ancient dead being, usually an invoked mummy. If the mummy employs living monsters or natural animals as guardians, the cult is responsible for their care and feeding as well.

A mummy cult can consist of only one individual, usually one of the mummy's descendants or an evil priest, but a cult almost never numbers more than thirty. The relationship between a mummy and its cult is bizarre and difficult to understand. The mummy seems to be the central figure and is venerated as a kind of minor deity or earthly representative of a greater power. Nevertheless, cultists enjoy the power to call their mummy forth to render service (and sometimes vice versa). Often cultists are at the mummy's mercy, but a mummy that slays its own worshipers may suffer from diminished powers or cease to exist altogether. As with all unholy pacts, the alliance between a mummy and its cult is uneasy at best.

In some cases a mummy cult actually serves to keep a mummy at rest. Cultists often venerate the mummy, keep its memory alive; they might also bring offerings to the tomb on a regular basis. If deprived of this attention, a mummy may rouse itself to seek new worshipers or punish the old ones.

The worship of one's deceased ancestors is not a dark practice in all parts of the world, and the presence of a cult does not always indicate that an undead monster is present. Again, I remind the reader that disrupting a cult may prove to be the very act that wakes an otherwise inoffensive corpse.

Whatever the circumstances, one must be very careful dealing with locals while hunting a mummy. One's foe might have allies in unexpected places, and an inadvertent misstep might alienate potential informants who possess valuable knowledge.

The tomb of a mummy with a cult is equipped with a temple where offerings are brought. In most cases the temple is dedicated to deities of death or the underworld to which the mummy ultimately owes its existence. If the cult is benign, the temple may be dedicated to deities of renewal, protection, or knowledge.

Cultural Types of Mummy Tombs

Table 31: Cultural Types of Mummy Tombs

Origin*	Common Tomb Types
Aboriginal	Grave, Mound, Lithic
Central/South American	Grave, Ziggurat, Rock-Cut
Chinese	Grave, Horseshoe
Egyptian/Mediterranean	Grave, Pyramid, Rock-Cut
European	Grave, Crypt, Catacomb

* Origin: The mummy's original cultural type; see the Cultural Types of Mummies table in the boxed text in Chapter Two for definitions.

Curses

Curses associated with mummies actually stem from diverse sources, including protective *curses*, punitive *curses*, and powers checks.

Protective *curses*: These are wards designed to prevent or discourage intruders from taking certain actions such as defiling a tomb. Their strength ranges from troublesome to lethal. They can be avoided simply by refraining from the proscribed action. Visual warnings in the form of writings or illustrations usually describe a method for avoiding the *curse*. A warning and effect might be:

Warning: "You have entered the eternal house of Sekenenre, who lies beyond. Your welcome ends at the threshold. May your senses fail if you heed not this warning."

Effect: The first person across the threshold fails to note the next danger he encounters. If it is a trap, the victim triggers it even if he searches for it. If the next encounter is a creature, the victim is surprised.

Or, you could have:

Warning: "A warning to vandals! Destruction is a shortcut to death!"

Effect: Anyone defacing the tomb automatically ages 10d4 years.

Punitive curses: These are designed to punish certain actions. They typically do not involve a warning, and their strength ranges from embarrassing to troublesome. Punishable actions might include stealing treasure from a tomb (persists until the item is returned, intact), defacing a tomb (persists until the damage is repaired), and failing to observe a required ritual when entering a tomb, such as bringing an offering of food or reciting a prayer for the dead (persists until the victim leaves the tomb).

Punitive curses can be aimed at a specific hero - the one who took or failed to take the action that triggered the curse - or at an entire party. Sample effects include:

Disfigurement: The victim is branded with an unholy symbol of the back on the hand, cheek, or forehead. The victim loses a point of Charisma permanently and suffers a -15% reaction check when dealing with nonplayer characters who see the symbol and recognize it,

Ill omen: Heroes who enter a tomb without placing offerings of food or drink in a designated area suffer a -2 penalty to all saving throws and ability checks within the tomb.

Sensitivity: Some common substance invokes a severe allergic reaction in the victim, causing a rash, cough, or similar irritation that imposes a -1 penalty to initiative and reduces movement by one third.

Powers checks: Some of the effects Van Richten notes are actually the results of a failed powers check. In places where mummification is practiced, desecrating or violating a tomb is a serious moral crime, which requires a powers check of 1-7% when the offender is an outsider. If the offender is a local, violating a tomb is an act of ultimate darkness, which requires a powers check of 50-100%.

He lives not long who battles with immortals...- Homer
"The Iliad"

Battling the Ancient Dead

Defeating an undead menace requires careful thought, conscientious preparation, and immediate action when the time is right. This sequence of steps is, of course, vague, and carrying it out requires numerous smaller steps. The exact order in which substeps are performed varies with the circumstances. Each powerful undead creature is unique, and a slavish devotion to any generalized plan will only assure the hunter's death - or worse.

In my campaigns against the ancient dead, success has rested on accomplishing five tasks: *identification*, *research*, *assessment*, *reconnaissance*, and *the kill*. The method presented here is a somewhat abridged version of the steps I outlined in my earlier work on ghosts, as these two types of creatures require similar approaches. Readers familiar with the procedures from the previous work should nevertheless review the material I have included here. To guide the reader, I have provided practical illustrations of the techniques I describe in the form of excerpts from my own journal.

I cannot overemphasize the value of improvisation when hunting a mummy. Nevertheless, do not improvise blindly. One cannot best a mummy through mere guesswork. Do not be afraid to draw conclusions from your investigation, but always ensure your conclusions follow logically from the evidence.



Identification

Obviously, the hunt cannot begin until one learns that a quarry exists. One may encounter a foe first hand, or one can discover some tale or account that points to a creature's existence. Of the two, the latter is much more typical; it is highly likely that someone else will be the first to see the creature.

Even when one happens upon a mummy, clues about the creature can be found well away from its lair. In any case, the first task is to discover what sort of creature one faces, which is not always immediately apparent.

Picking Up the Scent

A prime example of the kind of early detective work required at this stage is the case of the Bog Monster of Hroth, which I mentioned earlier. This quest began, as so many adventures do, with a fireside tale.

My companions and I had paused in the town of Skald to put up our feet for awhile and enjoy a hot dinner (a stew of mutton and flavor ful Kartakan turnips, in this case) and warm beds for the night. In keeping with local custom, the landlord had barred every door and shutter in the place at sunset. This, I learned, was a precaution against wolves, which were bold enough to enter the town. When I remarked that I seldom had visited so dangerous a place, my host gave a belly laugh and

replied that but a few leagues west lay a land where the night was haunted by groaning spirits and where strange, horned beasts stalked the forest.

The landlord, of course, was referring to the adjacent land of Sithicus, whose border lay close at hand. The banshees of Sithicus were an old tale to me, but never before had I heard mention of any horned beasts. Knowing full well the Kartakan reputation for tall tales, I grinned and bade the landlord to recount the entire story. The fellow obliged, spinning a tale in that melodious voice for which Kartakans are justifiably famous. He told of the cursed town of Hroth, where on moonlit nights the melancholy elf folk shunned a certain bog where a horned fiend dwelt. The creature stalked the countryside, seeking vengeance, and could be appeased only through an offering of gold or silver.

My friends and I were well aware that investigating a Kartakan tall tale might prove a fruitless endeavor, yet there were elements to the yarn that intrigued us. What manner of creature was this nocturnal monster from the bog? A wereboar, perhaps? How was it any tale illuminated the gloomy land of Sithicus, where the elf natives were friendly enough, but the prevailing pessimism did not encourage long visits? We questioned the innkeeper at length, seeking to resolve certain contradictions and omissions. Our interest only deepened the fellow's jovial mood as he embellished his tale in response. At length he waived a hand, urging us to journey to Hroth and visit a certain Jameld, an elf hunter of some repute. It was this elf, the innkeeper maintained, who first told the story.

Our party had intended to return to Mordents/lire by road, north from Skald through Silbervas and Chateaufaux. After hearing of the bog beast, we opted to travel west to Sithicus and hence to Hroth. We would seek out Jameld and test the story's verisimilitude. That done, we could strike northeast to the Musarde River and travel it to Richemulot. A short overland trek would take us into Mordent and home to Mordentshire. Even if the tale proved spurious, the cross-country trek would save miles of travel, even if it would cause us more discomfort.

Confirmation

I draw the reader's attention to the fact that, as we gathered up the first threads of information about the monster from the bog, my companions and I had no clear idea of what we were facing. We had a vague and highly questionable physical description (horned beast), a probable location (a bog near the town of Hroth), and the name of a contact who might have more details (the elf Jameld). Having learned all we could from the first witness, and having determined that he had not seen the creature himself, we sought a more reliable source of information.

The innkeeper's tale in no way convinced us we were dealing with the supernatural. The story might have been a complete fiction or, more likely, spun from a mere fragment of truth. Perhaps the yarn was based on the exploits of some entirely human bandit, though the reference to moonlit nights suggested that a werebeast might be involved. Or, perhaps someone had been startled by an owl or fox one evening when the moon was out, and the tale grew in the telling.

To our surprise, we did find a hunter elf named Jameld living in Hroth. He seemed a robust and steadfast person, if a little past his prime. He confirmed that he had once ventured into Kartakass, seeking wolf pelts. In the end, a yearning for his homeland and the deep-seated suspicion most humans have of demihumans sent him back to Hroth, to once again hunt deer and even the occasional banshee.

Yes, Jameld assured us, the bog monster was real. No, he hadn't actually seen the beast, but he had discovered the bodies of its victims from time to time. Jameld spoke of homes wrecked and their occupants torn to bits. In several cases, he had found sets of prints made by cloven hooves, prints from a creature that walked two-footed, like a man.

In years past, elves living in the forested hills north of Hroth kept watch fires burning on moonlit nights, and left offerings of coins and livestock for the monster. Eventually, the folk moved away, south or into the town. Even so, Jameld assured us, all manner of people tended to disappear if caught north of the town after moonset. Over the years Jameld had tracked the beast, but always had lost the trail in a vast bog northwest of town.

Upon hearing his story, we questioned Jameld at length and discovered two key facts. First, the victim's corpses invariably rotted very quickly. Second, the bog had been the site of an unusual battle many years before.

According to Jameld, a band of minotaurs - strange creatures with the heads of bulls and the bodies of huge men - had once

tried to raid the town. The elves, however, were wary and laid an ambush for the monsters. Using their superior woodcraft, they surprised the raiders near the bog and inexorably drove them into it. The last phases of the battle took place in pitch darkness, after the moon had set. Both sides relied on their night vision during the fight.

To prove his story, Jameld introduced us to many veterans of the battle during the next few days. This was not a difficult feat, given the length of an elf's life span. Several elves confirmed the hideous condition of the monster's victims. The stories varied, but two factors were constant: the creature's great strength and the rapid decomposition of the bodies. Even more telling, all the accounts of the ambush at the bog were similar in their vital details: the date, the numbers of elves and minotaurs involved, the method of attack, and so on. It was clear that we were hearing accurate, eyewitness accounts of an actual event, and not retellings of a local myth.

Later that week, Jameld led us to the bog where the battle had raged. Several grassy mounds rose out of the still water, marking the graves of minotaurs that had fallen to the elves' arrows. The bog's murky depths hid the rest.

Commitment

Once it becomes clear that a foe is genuine, the next step is to hypothesize about its nature and powers, and to decide if one has the resources and skills to achieve the objective of destroying the monster. It is fruitless to commit to a task one cannot finish, and no higher purpose is served by one's needless demise. Before continuing with the hunt, one must decide if there is a reasonable chance of success. Doing so is instrumental in summoning the courage to undertake the job and see it through to its conclusion.

We pondered Jameld's information carefully. The elf had not actually seen the monster - nor, it seemed, had any of the other witnesses. Still, there were remarkable similarities in all the anecdotes we had heard. Of these, I found the condition of the victims' bodies to be the most telling; surely here was evidence of mummy rot at work. While I was not willing to rule out any possibilities, I doubted the bog monster was a ghost; incorporeal creatures don't need to batter their way into homes, nor do they leave tracks. Likewise, I doubted the creature was a lycanthrope; moonlight held some significance for the creature, but there was no sign of the bloodlust that leads werebeasts to consume their victims, nor were there inconsistencies that pointed to a hidden shape-changer lurking among the townsfolk. When the beast's hunting ground became barren, its depredations dropped off. Certainly a werebeast would have sought prey elsewhere.

Whatever the beast was, it seemed clear that its victims had little chance against it. There was no evidence that it had ever slain a spellcaster of any kind, nor had it ever faced an enchanted weapon. It remained to be seen if our own resources could meet the challenge.

Research

To begin the second phase of the hunt, gather as much information about the creature as you can. Speculate about the mummy's origins. If possible, uncover the creature's past and relive its life. Consider the creature's death and how that drama might have affected its undead form. As the facts emerge, classify the mummy according to categories discussed in Chapter Two. Draw some conclusions about the creature's reported powers and weaknesses.

When we made clear our intentions to hunt down and destroy the bog monster, Jameld became enthusiastic. The creature represented a continuing threat to the community, and nothing would please Jameld more than to end that threat. During the next few days, the elf led us over the sites of the creature's various attacks. Some careful map work confirmed that every attack took place no farther from the bog than a healthy human or elf could walk in a single night. Our most useful discovery, however, came when we found an elf who had survived one of the beast's assaults.

The witness, Aynruth, had decided to take over an abandoned homestead within what we had determined was the bog monster's hunting grounds. All had gone well for Aynruth and his family until one night, when the creature came calling. Aynruth had heard tales of a monster, but he had dismissed them. In any case, he was a frugal elf and felt he had no coins or

livestock to spare in appeasing the creature.

When it attacked, the monster used its massive horns and fists to literally tear the family home to bits. Only quick flight saved the elves. Once inside the house, the creature seemed more intent on plunder than on pursuing the fugitives; it stopped to grab furs, money, and anything else that might have value while the elves fled. Aynruth quickly determined that the attacker was an undead creature, and he lost no time dousing it with oil and setting it alight with a flaming brand from the fireplace. The monster's waterlogged body appeared to be utterly impervious to fire, however, and the beast simply rampaged through the wrecked house, setting what was left of the homestead ablaze. For a time the creature, too, was completely engulfed in the flames, and Aynruth lost sight of it. When it emerged, steaming, it bellowed and prepared to charge, but a shot from Aynruth's bow sent it scurrying into the darkness, still clutching its smoking booty.

Assessment

By this time, at least a few key facts should have emerged from your research. This is a good time to review them. Reflect on your original hypothesis about the creature. Consider modifying it if the facts seem to warrant a change. Try to refine your classification of the creature, but do not be discouraged if you cannot make a definitive identification. Your investigation is really just beginning, and chances are you will throw out a few of your earlier theories. Do not hesitate to do so; stubbornly clinging to an insupportable theory is foolish and dangerous. Review all you have done so far and decide if you can follow any new lines of inquiry.

We were hard on the creature's trail now. We had learned that fire would be of no avail against it, and its lust for treasure was confirmed. It seemed the creature could indeed be appeased by silver, gold, and other valuables.

Back in Hroth, we sought out a knowledgeable veteran of the battle at the bog and asked about the habits and abilities of living minotaurs (a subject we had neglected until now). The warrior protested that he knew very little, but his information proved valuable. We were reminded minotaurs could see in the dark in the same manner as elves. We also learned they were physically powerful, and that in their original home they believed themselves destined to rule all beings. Though neither I nor any member of my party had ever heard of minotaurs, the veteran insisted they were infamous brigands and pirates. Perhaps most importantly, we learned minotaurs took great pride in their horns. To be shorn of them was to suffer utter disgrace.

Further questioning revealed that the minotaur chieftain had been last to die in the battle. Volleys of arrows had driven the creature far into the bog until it finally sank from sight, thrashing and cursing.

It now seemed likely the monster from the bog was the restless, naturally mummified corpse of that minotaur chieftain. We surmised it was still seeking to pillage the area, as this would explain its desire for treasure. Several avenues of attack seemed promising: archer elves would likely defeat the creature, and elven bows might ward it off. If the mummy could not be slain through outright attack, shearing its horns might deal the final blow. If all else failed, a few gold coins seemed likely to distract the creature, should we need to escape a confrontation.

Reconnaissance

Once you have assembled enough facts to form a few solid theories about your foe, it is time to get a look at the mummy yourself. In many cases, your research will not be complete until you do this, as the mummy might have powers or vulnerabilities that other witnesses have failed to note. Now, too, is the time to test any suspected allergens and weapons. Use what you've learned to further classify the mummy.

Caution is still your byword. If possible, arrange to observe the mummy more than once, preferably from some position where it will not observe you. Also, if possible, test your allergens first by placing them where the mummy might stumble upon them. Once you've confirmed your theories about the mummy's weaknesses, you have a better chance of surviving your first assault. In all cases, plan your escape route carefully; time is not necessarily on your side, and if the worst consequence of failure is flight, you have cause to be grateful.

A succession of cloudy nights delayed our investigation for some time. We were certain that fading moonlight on the bog heralded the monster's appearances, and the fruitless nocturnal vigils we kept over the place seemed to confirm the fact. Our persistence was finally rewarded after a week of dreary nights spent in the open. A hush fell over the bog as the last rays of the waning moon diminished. The still water seemed to grow black, like a pit of tar. Shortly, my own sight failed altogether. I could see the stars above the trees, but nothing in the inky blackness at ground level.

Presently, I heard a clumsy splash in the bog, and Jameld hissed a warning. A musical tinkle filled the air as the elf moved forward, waving a bag of silver. (Because the creature had night vision at least as good as Jameld's, we assumed it would see us long before we could see it, and so we had resolved to distract it with some treasure.)

My ears strained to follow the beast's footsteps, but I heard only my companions carefully feeling their way downhill toward the bog. There was a hoarse bellow and a cry from Jameld, followed by a loud chink and the sound of pounding feet. The elf had dropped the bag of silver and fled.

Torches flared and the beast, which had stooped to seize the coins, straightened and whirled on us. I felt a wave of preternatural fear grip my heart as the creature faced us, but the feeling passed, leaving only a slight tingling in my limbs. (This, I noted, had to be mummy-inspired fear/ The hum of bowstrings filled the air as my companions loosed arrows out of bows we had borrowed from the elves of Hroth, and the creature staggered and bellowed as the shafts struck home.

The creature responded to our attack by lowering its head and charging down upon the archers, who held their bows high and stood ready to sidestep the beast if it came too close. This precaution proved unnecessary. The beast checked its charge, its watery eyes fixed on the upraised bows.

Taking the better part of valor, the company used this respite to end the confrontation, and we scattered like chaff. Bellowing once again, the creature gave chase, but we had chosen our escape routes well. The creature rapidly lost ground, its horns tangling in low branches that nonetheless stretched high enough to offer no hindrance to us.

The Kill

Once you are sure of your theories and your weapons, lay your final plans and strike quickly. Speed is important. Your foe probably is not mindless, and it undoubtedly has been observing you even as you have been observing it. Any delay invites countermeasures - or even counterattacks.

Planning

Your final plan should consider the following elements: *time*, *place*, *weapons*, and *escape*. Note also that no plan is complete until each member of the group knows exactly what is expected and is capable of completing all tasks without supervision. Your foe could have plenty of surprises in store for you, and you do not need any surprises from your own team.

Time: Assuming that a mummy doesn't force this decision upon you, time your assault to your own advantage. If, for example, the mummy's most potent ability depends on the rising of a certain star, attack when the star is not visible.

Place: Again, you might not be free to choose the site of your battle. If you can, study the area. An intelligent mummy fighting on its home ground undoubtedly will try to exploit its knowledge; do your best to anticipate what it might do.

If you are not forced into a location, choose terrain that will give you an advantage, and use what you know to bring your foe to you. Judicious exploitation of a mummy's allergens and motivations is far more reliable for this purpose than simply picking a locale for an ambush and waiting for the mummy to happen by. Focus items are particularly useful for this purpose, as mummies usually attempt to retrieve them no matter what the circumstances.

Weapons: If you accomplished nothing else during your preliminary encounters with the mummy, be sure you have tested every weapon you intend to employ in the final battle. I do not make this statement lightly. Test everything ahead of time. Enchanted steel, allergens, special weapons, even holy water and clerical power over the undead are unreliable until proven effective. If one item has failed during a preliminary encounter, replace it with another and test the replacement. I do not

suggest leaving every bit of untested weaponry behind, although that is not a bad idea if encumbrance is a problem. Who knows? Fate might intervene of your behalf when you employ an untested weapon, but fate is a notoriously undependable ally.

Escape: No plan is complete unless it allows for failure. After many years of undead hunting, I have learned to take nothing for granted. Confidence in a plan is fine, even desirable, but if things go wrong you must take steps to assure that you can retreat. Failure is perhaps the greatest teacher, but its lessons will go for naught if you don't survive.

If you have followed my suggestions thus far, you might already have confronted your foe several times and quit the field. If at all possible, plan a new escape route for your final battle. If the mummy has observed your previous escapes, it might anticipate your actions and trap you.

By now your plans should be ready to bring to fruition. With all contingencies accounted for to the best of your ability, you are ready to move in for the final confrontation.

Our success at the bog won us considerable support among the veterans of Hroth, and soon we had two dozen archers willing to take a hand in dealing with the beast. A quick scouting trip revealed a narrow footbridge spanning a deep, fast stream with high banks.

We positioned these archers on both banks downstream of the bridge. We moored boats close by to aid in any retreat. At next moonset, two fleet-footed elves bearing jingling sacks of coins lured the beast onto the bridge. The archers opened fire. Two of my companions, bows once again held high, blocked both ends of the bridge, trapping the beast in the open. The creature was swiftly transfixed by dozens of shafts and toppled from the bridge. Taking to our boats, my companions and I hastily recovered the body and hacked off the beast's horns, whereupon the creature's withered body crumbled to dust.

Confirmation

The ancient dead are notoriously resilient, and any celebration of their demise is premature without first confirming the kill. If you have access to a creature's tomb, check it for signs that the creature's body is *rejuvenating*; a mummy often reappears within its tomb even if "slain" far afield. If you have recovered a creature's body, watch that for signs of *rejuvenation*, too. If the mummy's appearances were connected with a trigger, watch for that trigger's next few occurrences. If the creature does not return, at last you can celebrate. Your task is well and truly completed.

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Dungeon Master Appendix

Most players in regular AD&D campaigns develop a healthy respect for mummies as powerful, if inflammable, foes. They rapidly learn that it is much more efficacious to quickly fry mummies with flaming oil than to risk the perils of *mummy rot* by engaging the ancient dead in melee. Enterprising Dungeon Masters can give overconfident players quite a shock by introducing a fireproof mummy or two into the game.

There is a place in horror roleplaying games for monsters whose primary threat is physical. There is no doubt that simply introducing a mummy with one or two enhanced typical powers and a single salient power will have players fearing for their heroes' lives. However, it is a mummy's potential for inspiring psychological horror that can bring true chills to a roleplaying campaign.

In the 1932 movie *The Mummy*, Imhotep (the mummy) proves to be a subtle and cunning villain. He is a foe who has endured through the centuries. He understands ancient secrets that the film's heroes must painstakingly rediscover. Initially Imhotep is a traditional bandage-wrapped Egyptian mummy. Once awakened, however, he masquerades as a modern archeologist and effectively becomes invisible; the heroes cannot detect the monster lurking in their midst because he looks and acts just like they do.

Likewise, Imhotep's motives are inscrutable because the key to his thoughts lies more than 3,000 years in the past. He seeks to revive his lover, Princess Anaka, who has been dead for centuries. She has long since passed from living memory, but Imhotep remembers.

The mummy also poses an unstoppable physical threat. To prevail against Imhotep, the heroes must abandon their twentieth-century weapons and rely instead on their knowledge of ancient Egypt. It is a frantic plea to a long-forgotten Egyptian deity that finally brings about Imhotep's destruction.

Mummy Adventures

To successfully create an adventure featuring a mummy as the primary villain, the Dungeon Master must pay special attention to four basic elements: history, trespass, retribution, and mystery. One element will predominate, but all must be considered. The primary element sets the tone and provides the focus for adventure.

For example, Van Richten's campaign against the Bog Monster of Hroth revolved around a single historical incident and the consequences that arose from it. To shift the adventure's focus to trespass, the scene describing the bog monster's awakening could be changed; perhaps the mummy rose when disturbed by a treasure hunter, or in response to an elf boasting about his victory over the minotaurs.

A mystery adventure involving the bog monster could do away with the tavern keeper's tale in order to create a story based upon trespass. Instead, the first hint of the monster's presence might be a set of unidentified footprints leading away from a burned-out cabin. While the hunters struggle to locate and identify the mummy, it could begin stalking them as trespassers on its territory.

A retribution adventure would redirect the mummy's attacks against the residents of Hroth. The monster would seek to destroy only the elves who slew it, instead of simply attacking hapless victims who find themselves too close to its bog at the wrong time.

History

A mummy's history is the factual story of its mortal life and death. This is the most crucial element in any mummy adventure, because who or what the mummy was in life foreshadows its powers, weaknesses, and motivations, which generally are symbolic of some aspect of its life or death.

If the mummy has a high *rejuvenation* power rank and several salient powers and weaknesses, a detailed history is essential.

If you have not developed a detailed history for your creature, you will find it very difficult to adjudicate all the detective work the heroes must complete to uncover the creature's weaknesses and defeat it. It is, of course, possible to create a mummy just by throwing together a few statistics, but if you do this, make sure the mummy is fairly weak and serves only as a minor character. Above all, be sure that you do not assign a high *rejuvenation* power rank to a mummy without also creating a detailed history, as these creatures are nearly impossible to destroy without recourse to a high-level spell such as *wish* or *resurrection*.

It is not necessary to develop all the minute biographical details about an important mummy's life, but you should note the mummy's profession, what it was doing and thinking when it died, and how and where its body was buried and preserved.

Trespass

A recurrent theme in mummy stories is transgression. Some person or sentient entity violates a moral tenant or disturbs something that is best left alone. This might apply to the mummy itself, to the events that wake the mummy, or to both. Anhktep, lord of Har'Akir, offended his deity by railing against his own inevitable death and the loss of his kingdom to his heirs. The Bog Monster of Hroth, greedy for treasure, sought to invade Hroth and steal from its citizens. The hapless archaeologists in *The Mummy* are very proud of their ability to read ancient hieroglyphics, and they carelessly read aloud from a scroll an incantation whose power they do not understand.

Frequently, the transgressor knows that his or her actions are wrong. The character is not necessarily a scoundrel; ambition, greed, lust, hate, vanity, or some other powerful emotion often clouds a person's judgment.

It is the nature of the trespass and the trespasser's identity that shape an adventure. As Van Richten points out, Anhktep is an undying bogeyman. He is consumed by his desire to rule, but prone to lie in his tomb and dream of better days. The Bog Monster of Hroth haunts the site of its death, lashing out at anything it can reach. The archaeologists in *The Mummy* must unravel a deadly mystery.

It's possible that neither the mummy nor the heroes are the transgressors. For example, an innocent victim of *mummy rot*, unwillingly turned into an ancient dead after death, becomes a tragic figure, even as a mummy. The actual transgressor is the being who slew the victim, or he who transformed the victim into a mummy. This being might play a role in the adventure, directing the mummy's actions, or he might be absent altogether. No matter what the case, heroes who put the mummy to rest ultimately serve as its liberators.

Retribution

The trespass invariably sets in motion a chain of events that have dire and unforeseen consequences. The retribution reflects the nature of the trespass (the punishment fits the crime), and both the victim and the entity that delivers retribution shape the adventure.

Mummy curses are a common type of retribution, though these tend to come into play only after a mummy adventure begins.

As beings trapped in living death, all mummies are stuck in a form of eternal punishment. However, in classic horror, retribution does not always fall solely on the transgressor. Anhktep and the Bog Monster of Hroth pay for their transgressions by becoming undead mummies, and both creatures use their newfound powers to menace innocents.

Retribution functions on two levels in *The Mummy*. The archaeologists suffer consequences for waking Imhoptep, but those same archaeologists ultimately frustrate Imhoptep's attempts to revive Princess Anaka. Just moments before completing his task, Imhoptep dies a permanent and agonizing death in the film's final scene.

Mystery

In a Ravenloft adventure, it is best to keep the players guessing. This is particularly important in mummy adventures, where the heroes often must discover a foe's one weakness. Long after mastering the terror of facing a strange new creature that turns out to be a mummy, the heroes must continue to struggle with the exact nature of the beast, having exhausted their standard approaches to dealing with such menaces. It is not only the horror in the face of the unknown that is important to the game, but the mystery of dealing with it.

As a dungeon Master, never simply blurt out vital information about a mummy's vulnerabilities; indeed, never blurt out the fact that the heroes face a mummy. Instead, be prepared to feed the players a steady stream of vague clues. In the case of the Bog Monster, Van Richten began with the innkeeper's questionable assertion that the monster came forth on moonlit nights, which suggested that it might be a lycanthrope, and several other fragmentary clues such as the monster's desire to collect treasure. During the investigation, the survivor's account of an attack only indirectly revealed the monster's immunity to fire.

It is usually best to give the heroes only brief glimpses of the monster before their final confrontation. This actually works in the party's favor, as *mummy rot* can devastate a party, especially if it is not well provided with *cure disease* magic. More importantly, keeping the foe hidden from the players slowly builds terror - everyone fears the unknown.

Constructing Mummies

The Quick Way

The Monstrous Manual tome contains monsters that can provide starting points if you need to create a mummy in a hurry, including the mummy and greater mummy. The son of Kyuss (MC5 Monstrous Compendium Greyhawk" Appendix, TSR #2107), Senmet (MC15 Monstrous Compendium Ravenloft Appendix II: *Children, of the Night*, TSR #2139), and Tiyet (RR1 *Darklords*. TSR #9331) are available and are good examples of mummies whose powers have mixed ranks. A typical mummy has 6+3 HD and a movement rate of 6, and it makes one attack each round for 1d12 points of damage. This places it in the second rank. It is harmed only by magical weapons and suffers only half damage from those, so it has fourth-rank invulnerability to weapons. It is immune to cold, but is vulnerable to even normal fire, so it has only first-rank invulnerability to energy. Its *rejuvenation* rank is not listed, but mummies are not known for regenerative powers, so we'll assume the power rank is first. *Mummy rot* from this creature is fatal in 1d6 months, a first-rank disease.

The typical mummy is a fearsome creature, but a few increases in its power ranks - say, third-rank *elemental invulnerability*, third-rank *rejuvenation*, and second-rank *mummy rot* - would make it a truly nasty opponent. To counteract these increased powers, we need to assign it a weakness the heroes can exploit. Perhaps it was a talkative barber who spread a little too much gossip; this might suggest that the mummy could be bound with a hair rope, damaged by a particular herbal tonic, or killed with a razor. The mummy's invulnerability powers could be dependent on clay tablets hidden in its tomb. If they are smashed, the invulnerabilities drop two ranks. These weaknesses also help make this "kit" mummy a unique creature.

From Scratch

This method is more difficult and time consuming than modifying an existing creature, but it allows you to create a truly mysterious and dangerous villain, tailored exactly to your needs. Start by considering your story's four basic elements. These form the basis for your mummy. It is not necessary to fully develop the story before turning your attention to the mummy. Actually, it often is best to move back and forth between the story and the creature.

Once you have a story in mind, pick the mummy's origins and form. These will usually depend on the mummy's history. For example, if the mummy was a scheming power monger in life, it probably will be an invoked mummy because it would want to wield power even after death. Such a villain does not have to be invoked, however; if the mummy was killed by rivals, it could also be usurped or accidental - it all depends on how the creature died.

If the schemer died in his or her bed, it probably will be invoked (having completed that one final scheme to gather power even after death). If the schemer was killed in an ambush instead, it probably could not have become an undead mummy unless it was naturally preserved. If the schemer was more subtly assassinated, it is likely to be usurped (the rivals wrought a complete victory by forcing the mummy into subservience after death).

Once you have determined the mummy's origins, choose its state of preservation from the examples given in Chapter Two. The circumstances of the mummy's death are the most important factor here. Naturally preserved mummies are usually withered or skeletal. Only mummies that have received elaborate or expensive embalming will be intact or pristine.

Now choose the mummy's general power rank and determine its powers. Examples given Chapters Three and Four provide suggestions, but many others are possible. Don't forget that the mummy's powers do not all have to share the same power rank. Its powers should reflect a mummy's history. For example, the schemer discussed above probably would have some kind of *charm* ability. Power mongers usually get ahead on a combination of ruthlessness and charm.

It usually pays to vary the power ranks a little bit from each other. This is particularly important if your players are the sort who read *Dungeon Master* material. For example, it is fairly easy for players to determine an opponent's Armor Class, damage per attack, and movement rate. If the mummy's powers have uniform rank, a quick look at Chapters Three, Four, and Five would allow your players to use their heroes' observations to determine the extent of all the mummy's powers. A little variety gives your villain strengths and weaknesses, and can keep players guessing at how hard they have to work.

When you've determined the mummy's powers, move on to its weaknesses; Chapter Five gives some guidelines for the many possibilities that can be used here. Pay special attention to weaknesses if the mummy has a high invulnerability or *rejuvenation* rank; if the heroes cannot discover some method to circumvent these powers, they probably will not be able to defeat the mummy.

When you have completed all the mummy's statistics, go back to your story and add or alter any details required to explain these statistics. If you haven't done so already, consider how the mummy came to wake and decide what it is doing during the adventure.

Finally, turn your attention to the mummy's abode. Does it reside in the tomb where it was initially buried, or does it lurk elsewhere? If the mummy has a superior *rejuvenation* power, it will need a secure place for its body to re-form after it has been "slain." In any case, the mummy's abode should be inaccessible and well defended. As heroes thread their way through a lair filled with unanticipated dangers, the players' tension heightens, too. These penultimate jolts make an adventure's climax - the final battle with the mummy - that much more horrific.

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A Recipe For Fine Mummification

Lay body on a stone slab.

Insert long metal instrument with hook through nostrils and pull brains out. Rinse brain cavity with palm wine.

To open torso, carefully slit skin of left flank with sharp stone knife.

Withdraw all vital organs through opening: heart, intestines, liver, lungs, and so forth. Set aside.

Rinse body cavity thoroughly with palm wine; rinse again with spice infusion. Pack body cavity with herbs and spices, especially myrrh and cassia.

To purify flesh, immerse body in oils and resins for no fewer than 40 days. Treat organs with spice and oils. Place treated lungs, liver, stomach, and intestines in individual Canopic jars of stone or alabaster, with stoppers.

Test body for doneness. When all flesh has been dissolved and naught but skin and bones remains, wash body again.

Plump body and face with bags of myrrh and cinnamon for a natural look.

Important: Return heart (center of intelligence and feeling) to chest. Return kidneys to abdominal cavity also, if desired.

Sew body incision if desired. Leave small opening so heart may be withdrawn for testing in the underworld.

Anoint body with scented oils, or treat with resin, or both.

Wrap body with strips of linen treated with gum. Enclose scarab over heart, along with other protective amulets.

Place mask over head.

Place *Scrolls of the Dead* between thighs so deceased can reach them easily in the underworld.

Place body inside series of coffins, including outer sarcophagus made of stone.

Store upright in a cool, dark place.