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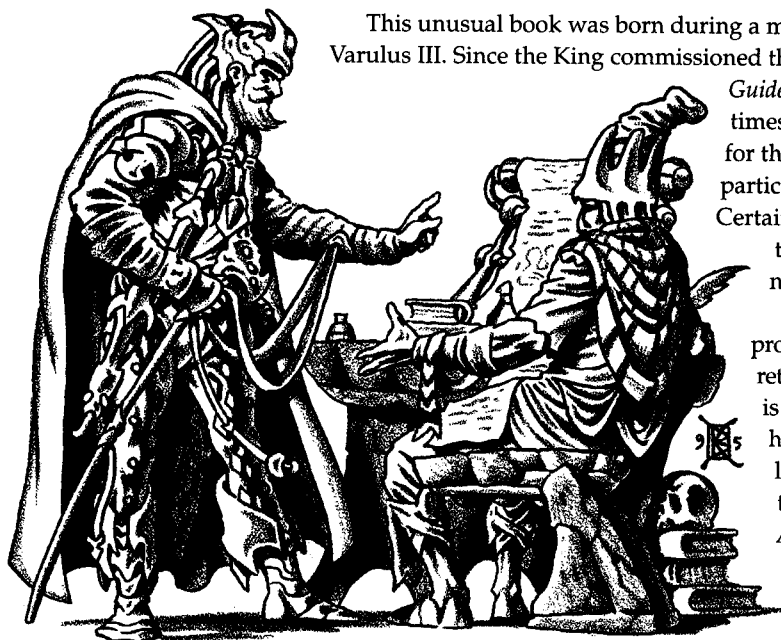
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 FASA Corporation can be reached on the GEnie computer network (E. Mail—FASA.SUPPORT) on SCORPIA'S Roundtable (page 805) and on America OnLine (E. Mail— FASALou (Earthdawn), FASABryan (BattleTech) or FASAMike (Shadowrun and General Harassment) in the Online Gaming area (Keyword "Gaming"). Via InterNet use <AOL Account Name>@AOL.COM, but please, no list or server subscriptions. Thanks!







ON HOW THIS WORK CAME TO BE



This unusual book was born during a meeting between myself and His Highness, King Varulus III. Since the King commissioned the staff of the Great Library to create *An Explorer's Guide to Barsaive*, I have met with His Majesty numerous times in hopes of acquiring more scholars and materials for the library or to receive additional commissions. This particular meeting progressed no differently than most. Certainly I had no inkling of its awful importance (and I use the word "awful" advisedly) until our business was nearly concluded.

In an offhand voice, King Varulus inquired about our progress in completing the treatises he had suggested. In retrospect, his tone should have warned me; His Majesty is never offhand about anything. Suspecting nothing, however, I replied that we had but lately completed the last of the *Denizens of Barsaive* volumes and gathered together most of the essays for the book titled *The Adept's Way*. I spoke also of *Creatures of Barsaive*, the excellently informative tome gifted to us by the dragon Vasdenjas and informed the king that I had already contacted several possible contributors for a tome on the Passions and their questors.

"Well and good, Merrox," the king said, as he glanced over a scroll that I had given him listing needed supplies. I thought it strange that he did not look at me, but his next words told me why. "Tell me—what of the Horrors?"

Flustered, I spoke the only words that came immediately to mind. "I beg your pardon, Your Highness?"

"The Horrors, Merrox," he answered, lowering the scroll and looking me in the eye. "What efforts have you made toward documenting the Horrors?"

I stammered and sputtered, forgetting for a moment how the king dislikes that sort of thing. At length, I squeaked out an answer that I knew would lead to trouble even as I said it. "None, Your Highness. But if I may explain—"

"None?" asked the king, raising an eyebrow up to his noble hairline. "Why not? Surely if our purpose is to educate our people about Barsaive, we must include a treatise on the Horrors. Why have you not begun work on such a vital task?"

I took a deep breath to steady myself, marshaling my words to explain. His Majesty was not angered yet, but he might well be unless I could make him understand my reasons when I refused his command in this matter. Very little would I ever dream of refusing my king, but this task was one I could not bear to perform. "Your Majesty, if I may beg your indulgence?" Encouraged by his gracious nod, I continued. "A tome such as the one you request could prove most dangerous—for researchers and readers both. You and I know full well how the hazards of any contact with the abominations that have befouled our fair province. I fear that to read about them or study them in the depth required to produce such a volume entails more closeness to them than is healthy for a Name-giver. If I may suggest it, sire, some subjects exist of which ignorance is truly bliss. The Horrors are surely one such."

"Ignorance of danger is never bliss, Merrox, my friend," the king said. "But you know my mind on that subject. Tell me, what are the hazards to which you refer?"

My heart sank as I realized that I had lost the argument already. Nonetheless, I persevered. Short of openly defying my king, I would do almost anything to avoid creating this dangerous book. "Your Highness, many scholars believe that the mere speaking of a Horror's Name is dangerous. Supposing that is true—what right have I to expose the Name-givers of Barsaive to such peril, even in the service of knowledge? And if such scholars are wrong—which I, for one, much doubt—how can I ask my staff to seek information about the monstrous beings they fear so strongly?"





"I would risk no one's life unnecessarily," said the king slowly. "But this is knowledge that *must* be made available to all Barsaivians who seek it. If dangers exist, we must take precautions against them. I will arrange for questors of Garlen and Lightbearers to advise and aid you—they will know how to lessen any risks, if anyone does."

Seeing that I remained disconsolate, His Majesty came over to me and laid his royal hand lightly on my shoulder. This rare gesture moved me almost to tears and told me as no mere words could have just how serious he was about this project.

"My old friend, you must see the importance of creating this book," the king said. "What good does it do to explore our land if we turn a blind eye to the dark forces that have shaped it so forcefully? How many of Barsaive's bravest and boldest heroes might perish for want of knowledge because we are afraid to provide it? You asked me what right you had to expose your scholars to the peril of the Horrors—what right have either of us to decree that good men and women must die fighting the Horrors because we have left them in ignorance of their dreadful foes?"

Put like that, my objections suddenly seemed the craven foolishness of an ignorant old man. Reluctantly convinced that the king was right, I bowed my head in acceptance. "As you will, Your Highness. I shall keep you well apprised of our progress."

In the months since that meeting, those of us at the Great Library have labored to compile the tome you are about to read. Under the watchful eye of Adesian Skoln, a scholar of the Library and a nethermancer adept, countless scribes and assistants have painstakingly gathered whatever information they could regarding Horrors lesser and great. The information herein comes from diverse sources: diary excerpts, letters found in deserted towns, firsthand testimony from the Great Dragon Icing, even (as far as we know) the actual words of a Horror!

I did not work on this book, and so I cannot completely vouch for its accuracy. I believe that the Library's scholars have done the most scrupulous and accurate work possible on this dreadful subject, but that does not necessarily mean that every word you will read herein is true. I have not read it, nor do I intend to. Further, I cannot in good conscience advise anyone to read this work. The fact that it is devoted to knowledge of the Horrors makes reading it a dangerous undertaking. To those who choose to risk that danger, may the Passions safeguard you.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, 1507 TH

[The following are the words of Vasdenjas, Master of Secrets, transcribed by myself, Tiabdjinn the Knower. Readers familiar with the works in the Great Library of Throal may recognize Vasdenjas as the author of the treatise titled Creatures of Barsaive, a most informative book about the beasts with whom we share this land. As a condition of his agreement to allow us to leave his discourses on the Horrors out of the Creatures book (and later to use them in this volume), Vasdenjas insisted that we add his commentary to this text.]

Foolish Name-givers! Did the terror of the Scourge teach you nothing of the dangers of the Horrors? I admire the courage and the noble intent of Master Merrox and his fellow scholars of the Great Library, but I must tell you frankly that you have all committed an act of sheer idiocy. A work such as this one, dedicated to unearthing knowledge about the Horrors that should best remain buried, should never have been compiled. To study the Horrors is to grant them entry to your minds and hearts, to lead them to the very core of your beings. Rare Name-givers such as myself might withstand such a threat, yet neither I nor most of my dragon brethren would have attempted such an act of gallant foolhardiness as the writing of this book.

Of particular note, I must express my concern regarding the reference in this work to the Dark One, the Horror known by many Names such as the Great Hunter, the Horror of a Thousand Faces, and the Corrupter. Many know this monstrous thing as Verjigorm, the Hunter of Great Dragons. All the tales you have heard of this Horror are true, and in all likelihood they pale in comparison to what this Horror truly represents. The threat this thing poses to my kin and to all Barsaive—indeed, to all the world—looms over us all like a storm cloud from the darkest depths of our souls. I urge you not to delve into the corruption that is Verjigorm. Those who study this monster's dreadful doings might as well call up the Dark One to renew its former place as ruler of this world. Thus far, the Universe has been merciful; the Dark One's agents walk this land, but the Great Hunter itself has yet to appear. I pray things will remain so. If not, we are all lost.

In conclusion, I echo Merrox's advice to any who read this book: take great care. Knowledge is a powerful tool in this age of magic and often proves beneficial. Knowledge of the Horrors, however, invites their touch upon your mind and heart. The wise Name-giver will remember this and be wary.

—Vasdenjas, Master of the Secrets





REGARDING THE HORRORS, THEIR ORIGINS, AND THEIR NATURE

"The Horrors peel back the living essence of this land and feast upon the naked flesh within."

—Merion Ap Thuryn, Throalic scholar and nethermancer adept



To all who read this perilous but necessary tome, Adesian Skoln gives you greeting. I and my fellow scholars have labored long and hard to create this book, and we pray that the knowledge contained in it will help to heal, if only a little, the grievous injury done to Barsaive by the terrible abominations that we call the Horrors.

ON THE NATURE OF THIS WORK

Throughout our history, many a Name-giver has said that knowledge is dangerous. The reader of this tome holds in his hands perhaps the only book ever written by Name-givers of which this statement is true. Indeed, our decision to bring this particular child of scholarship into the world provoked fierce debate about the risk of making knowledge of the Horrors available to the general public. In the end, however, we determined that the greater evil lay in ignorance of our ancient enemies. Having spared the dissenters among our colleagues the necessity of aiding us in our labors, we began our perilous task.

As with any scholarly work, determining the exact nature of our subject was our first task. The nature of the beings we call Horrors proved a difficult subject to approach. Despite centuries of study, we still possess no more than crumbs of solid knowledge upon which to dine. Therefore, in this introductory essay I will address what we know and—more importantly—do *not* know about the Horrors. Following this essay, the reader will find several treatises and discourses on Horrors known to exist in Barsaive. Remember, however, that the Horrors written of herein are far from all the Horrors that one may have the extreme misfortune to encounter. The dreadful beings in this book are undoubtedly no more than a sampling of the vast number of Horrors in existence.

ON THE ORIGINS OF THE HORRORS

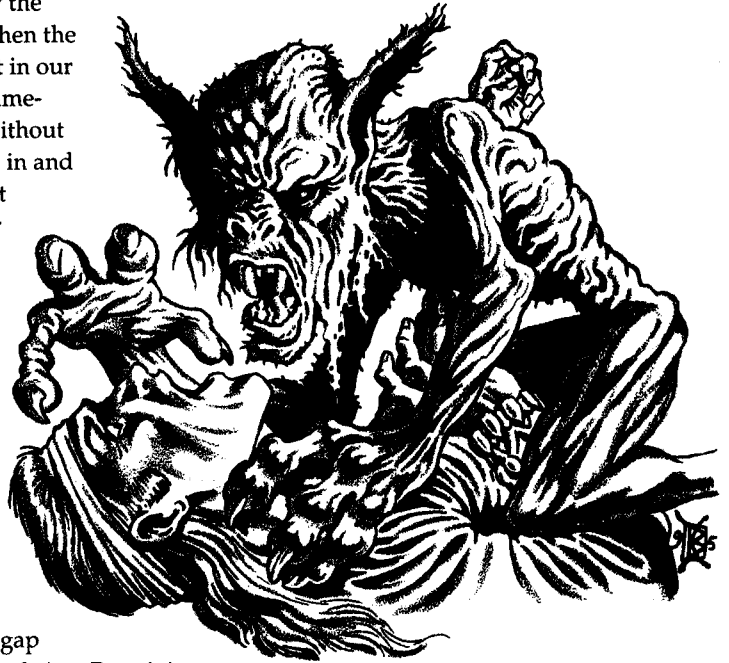
As the *First Book of Harrow* foretold, the Horrors entered Barsaive hundreds of years ago at the beginning of the terrible time we have Named the Scourge. On this topic, the incisive conclusions reached by the famed dwarf scholar Jaron regarding the nature of magic and its relation to the physical world have been elaborated on, but never bettered. According to Jaron, the Horrors' native lands lie somewhere in the deepest (or perhaps furthest) reaches of the astral plane. These dark netherworlds are surely places of fluid, ever-changing evil, and it is doubtful that any Name-giver could reach the Horrors' homeland without losing body, mind, and soul.





Explicating his theories, Jaron states that, "the darkling spirits may only exist in a world that supplies them sufficient magical energies. Without sufficient energies, the Horrors suffocate, just as we Name-givers suffocate without sufficient air to breathe." (*First Book of Harrow, 1, III*) Jaron goes on to state that the level of magical energies in our world fluctuates as do the tides. It may be that at low tide, no magic exists—certainly the Horrors cannot exist in such an environment. However, when the tide rises to a critical point, the Horrors can enter and exist in our world. If the tidal analogy is correct, it appears that we Name-givers are magically "amphibious," able to exist with or without such energies as amphibious creatures can exist immersed in and outside water. (Certain scholars, mostly human, assert that only humans and perhaps dwarfs can exist as Name-giver races without a certain amount of magical energy. This human-centered theory, of course, is a source of great contention in many academic circles.)

If we accept Jaron's hypothesis as accurate, we can conclude that the Horrors come from a magic-rich netherworld whose landscape thankfully remains unimaginable and inaccessible to Name-givers. The question then immediately arises: why do the Horrors leave their home plane to wreak havoc in our world? If we presuppose that the Horrors have all the magical energies and anything else they can possibly want in their netherworld, then this question can have no answer. However, all too many Horrors appear eager to bridge the gap between the astral and physical realms to feast upon our land. Any Barsaivian who glances out his window at the still-scarred landscape, or listens to family stories about our forebears' time in the kaers, knows the truth of this. Therefore, we can only conclude that the Horrors want or need something our world has to offer.



REGARDING THE NATURE OF THE HORRORS

Though it is extremely difficult to make any statement that is true of all Horrors, we know that every one of these monstrosities shares the need to feed. This need for sustenance is one that all living creatures possess, and the Horrors are most certainly living creatures. However, Horrors do not all feed on flesh or plant life or other such physical substances as most creatures. In fact, most Horrors seem to feed on intangible emotions and the very energy of life. The life force of all living beings appears to draw the Horrors to our world, and the more complex and varied the life force, the richer a source of food the Horror finds it. For this reason the Horrors are particularly drawn to Name-givers, who have the most rich and complex emotions and life energies of all Barsaive's creatures.

Even those Horrors that feed on physical flesh seem to share the need to cause emotional upheaval in their victims. It is interesting to note that, although the type of emotional disturbance each Horror seems to most enjoy varies, all Horrors cause some sort of emotional or psychic distress in their victims. The conclusion seems inescapable that the Horrors either need or strongly desire these powerful emotional energies.

However, this theory alone does not adequately explain why no Horrors appear to feed on such intense but pleasant emotions as love or joy. Instead, Horrors prefer to cause madness, pain, terror, despair, jealousy, and the like. Some of my colleagues suggest that this preference means pleasurable emotions might hold the key to driving the Horrors away forever, but such a conclusion is highly theoretical at best. I certainly would not advise anyone to use a smile instead of a spell or a sword when faced with a Horror!

We have so far established that Horrors must feed upon powerful, negative emotional energies. Unfortunately, we can make few additional general statements about these terrible entities. No two types of Horrors appear to be the same, nor can





we assume they possess the same strengths and weaknesses. We can describe several magical abilities that known Horrors possess and point to those that seem more or less common than others. But in truth, the only characteristic that unifies these monstrosities is their amazing diversity!

Not all Horrors are unique creatures—for example, there exist such general types of Horrors as bloatforms, dopplers, kreescra, and so on—but the vast majority are singular beings. As with all unique creatures, most Horrors have Names. As the documents in this tome prove, the Horrors are the most singular creatures ever to exist in Barsaive. Most of them have different ways of behaving, differing abilities, forms, modes of hunting, and desires. Such an incredible range presents terrible problems for those brave souls who attempt to rid our lands of these monsters. There is no certainty save uncertainty when facing a Horror.



I am certain that each and every sane Name-giver in Barsaive believes with every fiber of his being that the Horrors are evil, perhaps even evil incarnate. I must say that I wake sweating, my heart in my throat, at the merest thought of a Horror in my dreams. Such a reaction is natural, given the devastation the Horrors have inflicted (and still inflict) on our world.

However, we perhaps do ourselves a disservice to simply label the Horrors “evil” and have done with it. Though this book attempts to shed some light on the darkness that is the Horrors, we still comprehend almost nothing about them. No sages or scholars specialize in studying the desires or motives of Horrors. No peacemakers exist to help Horrors and Name-givers understand each other the way some have done between the different Name-giver races. Certainly, no scholar or adept—no, not even nethermancers, for all our often sinister reputation—questions that Horrors perpetrate tremendous evil. However, we urge anyone who faces or studies these creatures to keep an open mind regarding their motives and true goals. When

dealing with Horrors, blind fear, hatred and ignorance can all too easily prove fatal.

ON A SINGULAR TRUTH ABOUT THE FORMS OF ALL HORRORS

As the reader of the essays in this volume will notice, the Horrors are amazingly varied in nature. In a particularly unusual variation, not all Horrors exist on the same plane. Some Horrors possess only astral bodies and cannot exist in the physical world. Other Horrors possess only physical forms during their sojourns in Barsaive. Still others seem to have both astral and physical bodies. This last variation is particularly intriguing, as all other creatures known to us have only one mode of existence. Either all individual creatures of a given type exist astrally, or they all exist physically, or they all exist in both planes—there is no variation between individual members of a given species. Of all the creatures that we know to exist, only the Horrors depart from this pattern.

This has led some scholars to the intriguing hypothesis that those beings we lump together as Horrors are actually individual members of countless separate species. This hypothesis, however, does not adequately explain why we encounter in Barsaive only one, unique example of most Horrors. It may simply be that the vagaries of magic and existence in astral space produce countless permutations of the same basic stock.





The advantage that our knowledge of this variation gives us in categorizing and understanding Horrors remains questionable. However, many nethermancers agree that variations in physical and astral manifestation might provide a primitive means of classifying Horrors as astral in nature, physical in nature, and dual in nature. This simple classification may at first appear to have little or no practical application. However, anyone who ever attempts to destroy a Horror would be well advised to keep these categories in mind, as they offer one of the few clues we have concerning how to kill or banish Horrors.

Specific rituals of banishment, physical attacks, astral quests, and more may be necessary to destroy or repel a Horror. If the Horror only exists on the physical plane, then one may safely assume that destroying its body destroys the Horror. However, an astral Horror can only be destroyed through spells, astral combat, and other means that attack the creature's intangible essence. And Horrors that reside in both the physical and astral worlds must be destroyed on *both* these planes; destroying one form or the other will not suffice to kill the Horror. Any number of brave Name-givers have no doubt prematurely celebrated a Horror's destruction, only to find themselves dying a horrible death inflicted by the supposedly deceased creature. It is important *never* to assume you know a Horror's true nature or how to destroy it. Read every legend, question all witnesses, consult with every learned person you can find and still do not forget the great risk you take when facing any Horror.

ON THE DANGERS OF STUDYING THE HORRORS

This narrative may well cause disquiet (or worse) in its readers. Such a reaction is understandable and probably all to the good. Worry, confusion, fear, and more should be our companions when we consider how little we know about the Horrors—indeed, when we consider them at all. Some might even say that the Horrors are too terrible, too destructive for mortal minds and hearts to bear. Certainly the number of people driven insane by the slightest contact with a Horror should be caution enough for anyone. Unfortunately, such concerns can play no part in the work of scholars like myself and my colleagues. We and the more heroic-minded among Barsaive's people detest the very thought of a dread secret remaining unknown, particularly if the revelation of it may save lives one day. Such heroic souls and seekers after truth are most likely to peruse this tome and therefore are the most vulnerable to the Horrors. Their noblest qualities are the very things that may draw the Horrors to them.

To safeguard ourselves, my colleagues and I carefully divided the creation of this tome among several trustworthy persons so that no one worked on more than a single section of it. Even the youngest apprentices and scribes who worked on this volume were subjected to rigorous questioning and provided with numerous wards of protection. Furthermore, the tome itself we heavily warded. Even so, several individuals disappeared and two young persons died during the making of this book, for no apparent reason. It is always dangerous to dwell overlong on thoughts of the Horrors, for they appear able to sense attention directed at them. It is also *highly* inadvisable to speak a Horror's name aloud, as the chance of attracting the creature's attention grows much greater with every utterance.

A word of warning for readers of this work. We recommend that no reader peruse this tome in a single sitting; to lessen the danger, it is best to take this work in small doses. Against such beings as the Horrors, wards and precautions can only provide so much protection.

Even now I dream of claws and fangs and of floating in a vast sea of evil, my lips only a fraction above the water's surface. At other times I dream of being devoured from the inside out, my skin only minutes from crumbling away to reveal my true self as a Horror. These dreams are no doubt brought on by my work on this tome, but as I carefully write this last line, my imagination cannot help but make of this quill a great fang, this ink its blighting poison. A tired old man's fantasies, that is all—yet I don't believe I shall use this pen again.





REGARDING NAMED HORRORS

The greatest portion of this work contains various documents concerning those Horrors known by specific Names. Each of these immensely powerful Horrors is unique, different from every other in appearance, activities, abilities, and methods. These Named Horrors run the gamut from Artificer, a Horror that forges ingenious and diabolical traps with which to capture and torment its victims, to Verjigorm, the Hunter of Great Dragons. The reader should keep in mind that many Named Horrors doubtless exist about which we could learn little or nothing, and that consequently do not appear in this volume; rumors and stories remain all that we know of such.

The distinction between Named Horrors and those without Names is a critical one, and not simply because the Named Horrors are unique (though the world should surely be thankful that there exists only one Hunter of Great Dragons; were there more than one, we would surely not have survived the Scourge). Any Horror that has a Name also has a True Pattern, and is therefore subject to the same laws of magic that we Name-givers know. Of course, using thread magic against these Horrors, while certainly possible, is extremely difficult, not least because the hero who would boldly attack one must first learn his enemy's true Name. As the reader of this book will discover, many of the Names by which we call these Horrors are labels rather than the true Names of these beings. And as every Barsaivian knows, to learn the true Name of a Horror is often as dangerous as directly confronting one. We must, however, strive to meet this challenge—for it may be that only through thread magic will we have any chance of driving the Horrors from our world.







THE EURYDON DOCUMENT

The following text is an edited version of the notorious Eurydon Document. The document, purchased by the traveled scholar Falamica from an itinerant peddler in 1502 TH, has since become the center of much controversy here at the Hall of Records. Purportedly, the document is the human merchant Eurydon's account of his experiences under the Horror Mark of a being known as Aazhvot Many-Eyes—hence its inclusion in this compendium.

The document also holds great interest for linguistic scholars of Throal, for it veers seemingly at random between three languages: human, Throalic, and a tongue as yet unidentified. The noted language historian Verrif Kanos and his apprentices studied the document intensively between 1503 and 1504 in an attempt to identify this unknown script. Though the group made little progress in decoding these passages, Verrif Kanos concluded that the weird letters represented the language—or one language—of the Horrors themselves.

When several of Verrif's apprentices were implicated in the so-called Copper Dagger Murders of 1504, King Varulus, in his wisdom, elected to suppress the Eurydon Document, identifying it as the cause of their madness. And so it is only with the special dispensation of the king—and under the provision that the passages in the unknown language be stricken from the document—that we present it here, in this most secret and restricted of Great Library compilations. We hope that what remains of the document can shed light on the nature of the Horrors, with minimal risk to the sanity of the reader.

—Ardiv Fasha, apprentice archivist, Great Library of Throal, 1507 TH

I had not seen nor spoken to my brother Uraxes for more than three years. Though no quarrel divided us, our paths through life had become separate. Uraxes had chosen the way of the adventurer, seeking to build a great legend. I had chosen the way of the merchant, seeking only to build a respectable business.

I learned of Uraxes's death when a messenger delivered his worldly goods to me, per the note found on his body. The authorities had dutifully delivered my brother's effects—minus the death tax, of course—but the accompanying document describing the circumstances of Uraxes's demise was hardly illuminating. That missive said merely that my brother had been slain in an inn, the Briar Lizard, in the city of Iopos. The note's lack of detail preyed on my

mind, and, after a period of contemplation, I arranged my affairs and set off for Iopos.

The proprietor of the Briar Lizard was obviously not pleased to see me and close-mouthed about my brother's fate. However, the purchase of several rounds of *hurlg* bought me considerable information from the ork patrons of the inn's tavern. They said Uraxes had frequented the tavern shortly before he died, trying to recruit adventurers to help him salvage goods from an abandoned kaer he had found. Unfortunately he had little success, for it was widely known that his previous companions had been slain in the kaer and he had little money to attract recruits. The orks said that Uraxes's behavior became more and more erratic over several weeks, until one night he smashed the tavern's large mirror and launched himself at the patrons, swinging his axe and screaming in rage. Uraxes slew many of the unfortunate souls, as well as the soldiers sent to subdue him. The mirror, its hundred pieces hastily affixed in its frame, hung above the bar in silent testimony to the havoc he had wrought that dark night.

After awhile, I left the inn and sought out the officer in charge of public order for the district. He hinted that, for a fee, he might release into my care an item that had been withheld as evidence. I paid the troll the silver pieces he wanted and he provided me with a map to a kaer that had been drawn with Uraxes's characteristic precision. I decided to use the resources at my disposal to hire a crew of adventurers to investigate the kaer, in the hope its contents might shed some light on my brother's demise. In a short time I had assembled a group of Name-givers experienced in such matters, and we set out.

I had never taken part in the exploration of a kaer before, but by the time we reached the site the mystery of my brother's fate filled me with a consuming curiosity. Undoubtedly this curiosity suppressed my usual caution as I plunged into the kaer alongside my hired companions, never suspecting the danger awaiting us.

As we entered the foul place, I gasped and clutched at my throat. As my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, I discovered the source of the rancid vapors that filled the dark air. Strewn about the dirt floor were the bodies of the kaer's inhabitants, seemingly mummified by some unknown process. The uniform expression of terror on their





pitiful faces remains fresh in my mind, as if burned into my memory. At the time I felt much dismayed by the casual, almost joking manner the others displayed at our gruesome discovery. Though I now understand it as a hardened, necessary reaction of those all too accustomed to such shocking sights, it angered me then. I recklessly hurried ahead, stumbling into an anteroom—where I beheld IT.

At first, it seemed nothing more than a forgotten old shield hanging on the wall, dusty and corroded. But then the lid appeared, sweeping open languidly to reveal the eye—that horrible, round, liquid EYE! I staggered back, shaken, and when I looked again I could see no trace of the cursed orb. I said nothing to my companions. Instinctively, I knew I had found the clue I had sought—and in so doing had committed the worst error of my life.

That night, I went back to the Briar Lizard. Though I could well afford superior accommodations, I found myself driven by an inexplicable, irresistible urge to retrace the footsteps of my departed brother, to understand what had gone on in his mind. Already I had grown certain that he had seen IT as well, and like me he had been unable to purge the terrible image from his mind.

And so I sat in the tavern, this time seeking no companionship. I overindulged in the nectar of the vine and I thought of my brother, and of his strange demise, and the terrible thing in the kaer.





I next remember reeling into my room, hot wax from the candle dripping onto my hand. I set the candle down onto the chest of drawers and emptied my pockets, spilling out my coins next to the taper. Suddenly, eleven liquid eyes blinked open from the silver pieces and stared at me, boring into me and penetrating my soul. I screamed and fell backwards, and then all went dark.

I awoke with sunlight upon my face. I shook my throbbing head and thought of the eyes in the coins—a dream, a wine-fueled hallucination, I admonished myself. I staggered to my feet and walked over to the chest of drawers.

The coins were still looking at me—for an instant at least. Then they blinked shut. I grabbed them and held them tight. They were metallic, solid—common coins. I clattered them together, threw them against the wall—common coins in every respect. I threw myself down upon the crude and musty bed and wept, for what had happened seemed obvious. I had been marked by a Horror in the kaer—the same Horror that had marked Uraxes. It had driven him mad, and now it would do the same to me.

For several days this went on. Coins, buttons, saucers, the wine in my goblet—each of these things opened their eyes to me; their staring, malign, relentless eyes. It happened in my room. It happened in the tavern. I tried my best to conceal my growing agitation, but soon I began to tremble uncontrollably. Sleep became impossible, for whenever I drifted off I began to dream of those eyes, that Eye, everywhere, boring through me, paralyzing me. Nowhere could I escape its unceasing gaze!

Somehow I located an expert on the Horrors and their magics, a nethermancer who had recently retired from the Denairastas's service. I spoke to her of my recent experiences and told her of my brother's demise. She listened attentively to my desperate outpouring of words with an expression of deep sympathy. When I had finished, I pleaded desperately for a solution to my dilemma.

"You have been marked by Aazhvat, also known as Aazhvat Many-Eyes," she said. "Legends speak of several ways of breaking the mark of Aazhvat. Self-blinding is said to be one, but some tales claim this method is ineffective. Seeking the mark of a more powerful Horror is another way, but that is clearly undesirable. But there is a third way," she said as she slid a dagger across the table to me. Fixing me with a brief, piercing gaze, she walked from the room. Her meaning was clear; suicide was the only surcease. But I could not bring myself to surrender.

As I walked back to the tavern, all those I passed on the streets seemed to stare at me with the awful eyes of

Aazhvat. As I returned to the tavern, I saw workmen installing a new mirror. Before it was securely in its frame, it had already become an Eye of Aazhvat—looking at me, taunting me. Suddenly I found an empty bottle in my hand and I was smashing at it, again and again and again and again, until the shards were shards of shards of shards. The proprietor advanced on me, fury in his eyes. I knew what I must do, and I seized one of the shards, plunging it into my left eye. I plunged it again and again, and into my right eye as well. The pain, the pain was indescribable. The proprietor had stopped, shocked by this display of self-mutilation. His anger melted, and his knees buckled beneath him. He lurched for a table.

A feeling of terror then began to grow in my stomach, for I realized I had not escaped. For though I had destroyed both my eyes, *I could still see!*

GAME INFORMATION

Aazhvat Many-Eyes exists solely on the astral plane but maintains a close connection to the physical plane, where it finds its victims. Like many Horrors, it feeds by inducing terror, dread, and despair in its victims. But Aazhvat does so in a very particular manner.

Throughout Barsaive, Aazhvat maintains psychic manifestations of itself, which it overlays onto mundane objects in the material world. These objects are always large, round items such as shields, plaques, broken pot bottoms, circular box lids, and so forth. Additionally, these objects must be located in areas of the physical world adjacent to highly polluted portions of astral space, such as Tainted or Corrupt regions (see **Casting Raw Magic**, p. 155–156, **Earthdawn** rulebook.) These areas often retain a heavy Horror taint; examples include the Badlands, the ruins of Parlainth, or any kaer ravaged by Horrors during the Scourge.

Aazhvat maintains a maximum of thirteen of these charged objects throughout Barsaive. When one is discovered or destroyed, the Horror searches the physical plane for another likely spot and object to imprint with its essence. The act of imprinting an object requires no tests, but it costs Aazhvat 12 Karma Points. Once an object has been so imprinted, that object is considered Horror Marked by Aazhvat.

Aazhvat senses whenever a suitable being ventures across one of these charged objects. When a victim beholds the object, Aazhvat employs its Corrupt Reality power to temporarily transform the object into a socket for one of its





own eyes (understandably, most Name-givers find this a deeply disturbing sight). Aazhvat then uses this conduit to the physical plane to attempt to Horror Mark the victim. If the character does not immediately avert his gaze from the eye of Aazhvat, the Horror gains a +3 step bonus to its Horror Mark Test.

AAZH VAT'S POWERS

Aazhvat's unique Horror Mark ability is much more powerful than that of other Horrors. Aazhvat may mark victims who merely gaze at objects charged with its essence, rather than only victims it can see. As long as the original charged object exists intact, Aazhvat may always use any of its other powers on the victim, regardless of the distance between them. Aazhvat may also renew its Horror Mark when it expires by spending 13 Karma Points.

Aazhvat does not regain karma naturally; it must leech karma from victims it has marked by using its Karma Drain power (see **Game Information**, p. 102). To ensure itself a supply of karma, Aazhvat typically maintains a dozen or so marked victims of various races at any given time. Because Aazhvat experiences intense pleasure when its victims go mad and destroy themselves, Aazhvat must constantly balance its hunger with its need for fresh victims to sustain its karma supply.

Aazhvat usually induces insanity in its victims by using the Corrupt Reality power, which enables it to distort the very fabric of reality (see **Game Information**, p. 99). It uses this power to make every vaguely round object appear to the victim as a manifestation of one of the Horror's gruesome eyes. It can even transform other Name-givers so that their eyes momentarily look like its eyes. Aazhvat never communicates directly with its victims, because it savors their terrified confusion.

Aazhvat's Horror Mark is exceedingly difficult to break because the Horror can renew the mark without regard to distance. Destroying the original object containing Aazhvat's imprint changes Aazhvat's Horror Mark to a standard one, which forces Aazhvat to occupy a point in astral space no more than ten miles from the Horror Marked character to manifest its powers. However, the only guaranteed way to completely erase Aazhvat's mark is to destroy Aazhvat. Because this Horror dwells exclusively in astral space, characters must fight Aazhvat in astral space to harm it. In astral space, Aazhvat appears as an enormous blob of wet, blinking eyes, roiling and bubbling in a chaotic mass. It has no appendages and fights solely by casting spells. Aazhvat is somewhat

vulnerable to physical attacks, assuming that the characters can get to astral space and are carrying weapons that will manifest there as well. (Assume that only magical weapons with threads attached to them can do damage to the Horror on the astral plane.)

USING AAZH VAT MANY-EYES

Characters can become involved with Aazhvat Many-Eyes through exposure to Aazhvat's Horror Marked items or through contact with one of Aazhvat's victims. Once a victim is marked, the Horror stalks the victim, using its powers to torment him.

One possible adventure involving Aazhvat involves a number of travelers in a rural area. Aazhvat marks the individuals, leading to a number of recent deaths. In response to the slayings, local village leaders have pooled their resources and hired the player characters to find and destroy the object that Aazhvat has imprinted with its essence. In this case, the object is a rounded knot of a tree in a patch of jungle that was corrupted during the Scourge and is currently inhabited by bizarre plant creatures.

AAZH VAT MANY-EYES

Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 7 TOU: 18
PER: 25 WIL: 23 CHA: 23

Initiative: 7

Number of Attacks: 0

Attack: NA

Damage: NA

Number of Spells: 5

Spellcasting: 30

Effect: See Powers

Death Rating: 180

Wound Threshold: 18

Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Karma Points: See text

Powers: Corrupt Reality 20, Horror Mark 20 (special, see text), Karma Drain 20, Spells: Circle 9 Nethermancer

Legend Points: 195,000

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Physical Defense: 9

Spell Defense: 25

Social Defense: 23

Armor: 10

Mystic Armor: 15

Knockdown: Immune

Recovery Tests: 10

Combat Movement: 24

Full Movement: 48

Karma Step: 15





A DISCOURSE ON ARTIFICER

Shortly after I began to research the Horror known as Artificer, I discovered that no solid documentary evidence of it existed. The literature contains many fragmentary, offhand references to it, but no coherent legends describe it directly. Therefore, I elicited the aid of a number of adventurers who have experienced personally the handiwork of this most curious Horror. What follows is a transcript of a discussion, which I moderated. The participants are Ajmar the Admirable, Court Wizard to the King of Throal; K'reena T'shimon, accomplished thief and leader emeritus of His Majesty's Exploratory Force; and Thridula, freelance scout.

—Vomonica Cerrov, apprentice archivist, Library of Throal

Vomonica: The topic of discussion today is the Horror known as Artificer. Thridula, you seem ... discomfited.

Thridula: You may be willing to speak the Name, but I am not.

Vomonica: How are we to discuss the entity if we do not speak its—

Thridula: I consider it unwise to speak the Name of any major Horror at any time.

Ajmar: Superstition, mere superstition! It is well known that Artificer resides on the astral plane exclusively, and that it can harm us only through its traps. As I see no traps in this comfortable reading room, I believe we can be confident that we are beyond its reach.

Thridula: Still, one can never be too—

Vomonica: Ajmar, this is the nub of the matter I wish to explore today. You say that such and so is well known about Artificer, but I found almost no references to the Horror in the existing literature.

K'reena: You must have experience in the field to understand this, boy. The Name of Artificer echoes in the mind of any seasoned explorer.

Vomonica: But the many adventurers' journals here at the library mention this Horror only sparingly.

Thridula: One does not tempt Fate by referring idly to a Horror such as this one.

Vomonica: Well, perhaps each of you could briefly describe Artificer, from what you know of him.

Thridula: It.

Vomonica: Very well, *it*. K'reena?

K'reena: Artificer is the nightmare of every explorer who ventures underground. Whenever you creep through a

passageway, open a door or drop through a hole, a part of you fears that one of Artificer's cruel surprises is waiting for you, hungry to rend your flesh and taste your blood.

Thridula: Thankfully, the foul creature of which we speak leaves ample evidence of its work. It leaves all that it touches—be it earth, stone, whatever material—a smooth, gleaming, unearthly metal.

Ajmar: Strictly speaking, little about the metal itself is unearthly. I have extensively tested the material in my laboratory, as has an elemental colleague, and I have found that the metal created by Artificer has no innately magical characteristics. However, the material cannot be duplicated by any known means. The greatest metalworkers of Throal have gazed at it in wonder, admiring its absolute smoothness and seamlessness.

Vomonica: So Artificer is a Horror that changes underground complexes, covering them in this unusual metal and larding them with vicious traps. To what end?

Thridula: It wishes to feed on our pain.

Vomonica: And how do you know this?

Thridula: I have scars. The first two joints on my index finger I lost in a trap in the ruins of Landis. This leg was crippled by a crushing mechanism in an alcove in an abandoned kaer to the west of Blood Wood.

Ajmar: Curious, Thridula. I have never noticed you limping.

Thridula: A questor of Garlen healed it for me. Good as new on the outside. But on the inside, it still *feels* crippled. I've been wounded many a time in my day. Were I to recount all of my wounds, we would be here for hours—

Ajmar: No doubt.

Thridula: —but of all these, it is the wound I suffered from that thing's trap that still haunts me.

Vomonica: But how do you know that Artificer fed on the pain you suffered?

Thridula: I could feel the vile thing. For the briefest moment, when my head was swimming with agony, I could feel its presence. Far away, yet close as well. It was terrifying and might have driven me mad had it lasted longer than a moment.

K'reena: I felt the same thing when I was hit with the scythe blade of a trap in a kaer outside Urupa. The Horror did not speak directly to me or communicate any specific thoughts, but I knew it was there nonetheless.







Ajmar: I must say that I have not been as unlucky as my colleagues. Though I have been in a kaer altered by Artificer—the one catalogued as K626 in Jabru's *Atlas of Excavated Kaers*—I have never been personally injured by one of its traps. Not that I haven't had several close calls, I hasten to add! However, several of my companions on that desperate day were harmed by the traps and reported sensing a vast, impossibly strange consciousness touching theirs.

Vomonica: So no one knows what Artificer looks like? They just know its presence in their minds.

Thridula: I know what it looks like. The Horror of which we speak is half a league long, made of metal and covered with curious mechanisms and devices: wheels, pulleys, dials, rivets, seams. Its orifices excrete hot steam, dark and foul liquids, and throat-tightening gases.

K'reena: The only thing like it is the engine of one of my people's riverboats. Yes, it is a gigantic, distorted boat engine turned inside out. Its image is madness.

Vomonica: And how do you know this?

K'reena: I simply know it.

Vomonica: Have you always known this?

K'reena: No, I suppose not. Tales of this thing were never told in our compact.

Ajmar: I believe that Thridula and K'reena's visions of Artificer came to them when they were harmed by its traps. I have spoken to many adventurers about Artificer since our own encounter with its awful works. Those who have been in its traps describe it as our friends have done just now. Those who have not profess ignorance of the Horror's nature and appearance.

Vomonica: You also said it is well-known that the thing exists only on the astral plane. How is this well-known?

Ajmar: Perhaps it is not. I thought it was well-known.

Curiously, I have always believed it to be common knowledge, yet I rarely speak without being completely assured of the veracity of my statements.

Thridula: Indeed.

Vomonica: Have there been any reports of the Horror manifesting on the physical plane?

Ajmar: I am aware of none.

Vomonica: Is there anything else anyone cares to add about their experiences with Artificer?

Thridula: I could describe its traps more fully, but as to the thing itself, I have nothing more than those odd impressions. It is something I shall never forget.

Ajmar: I will speculate on its origins, if you will permit me. Having consulted an elementalist colleague when studying

the metal mentioned earlier, I came to the conclusion that the Horror might be related somehow to the elemental spirits.

K'reena: An elemental spirit and a Horror both? How can that be?

Thridula: Never trust an elemental spirit, that's all I'll say.

Ajmar: Needless to say, our theory is tentative. But my experiences in K626 seems to suggest such a connection. Our warrior had a magical lance bequeathed to him by an earth spirit in exchange for services rendered. The lance, which the warrior knew to be useless against other earth elementals, simply went dead within the confines of the complex. The threads he wove to it vanished as if dispelled, but sprang back into being as soon as we escaped from the kaer. From this, I conclude that Artificer is in part either an earth elemental or a related entity.

K'reena: The concept of elemental spirits being corrupted in this manner is most disturbing. Thank Mynbruje that no corrupted water elementals exist.

Ajmar: Do not be so sure, my t'skrang friend. What we know about the Horrors can fit in a thimble, tossed on a vast ocean of ignorance.

Vomonica: In conclusion, then, is there any advice you would like to present to readers of this tome who may find themselves in one of Artificer's mazes?

Thridula: If you find yourself in an area of worked and gleaming metal, the like of which you have never seen before, turn back immediately.

K'reena: The maze always contains a point that blocks one's exit. Map very carefully, for you will likely have to search for another way out.

Ajmar: Most of Artificer's mazes contain another route as well—one engineered to take you through the worst of the traps.

Thridula: Forget about any treasures you see. The Horror of which we speak packs its mazes with fabulous jewels and magical objects, enough to whet the greed of any dwarf. Remember, these items are placed there as bait.

K'reena: Two of my finest comrades were slain attempting to remove gems from a statue found in one of Artificer's kaers. Emeralds the size of your head, worth enough to retire on forever.

Thridula: I was with them. They retired, all right, but not in the manner they had intended. Another thing—beware of traps within traps. I found several traps that were triggered by actions necessary to disarm yet other traps. The Horror designs its devices to cripple the thieves and





scouts, so as to prevent them from disarming the more diabolical traps ahead.

K'reena: I shudder at these memories. We have said enough today. Let us retire to the tavern and speak of better things.

GAME INFORMATION

During a previous Scourge, a group of dragons summoned a powerful elemental to the physical world to use in their fight against the Horrors. This elemental was summoned from the Realm of Metal, an unearthly plane accessible via the larger plane of Elemental Earth. Unfortunately for the dragons—and countless Name-givers thereafter—the Horrors corrupted the elemental, turning it into a strange hybrid of Horror and elemental that contains certain traits of both.

Artificer feeds in an unusual manner. Whenever the magic level in the world is high enough to permit its entry, it burrows through the earth in search of underground caverns and tunnels. It then uses the Forge Trap power to transform these places into gleaming, metallic mazes strewn with fiendish mechanical traps (see **Game Information**, p. 100). When the mystic energies abate and the world becomes hostile to its presence, Artificer retreats to the astral plane and waits. The deformed patterns of its trap mazes are connected to its own pattern, and so whenever a living being falls into one of its traps, Artificer can feed on the victim's pain.

During the most recent Scourge, Artificer found breached kaers ideal environments to transform into trap complexes. It also searched for gold, gems, magical treasures and other items valued by Name-givers and placed these inside these complexes as bait.

Physically, Artificer appears as an enormous entity with a vaguely quadrupedal body shape. Gleaming silver, gold, and bronze comprise its body, and a chaotic mix of rivets, gears, pulleys, levers, and other mechanical devices cover it. An array of wheels along its underside enables the Horror to propel itself along the ground when necessary, and it can burrow through earth as a whale swims through water. The Horror may attack by shooting forth up to four gigantic, spring-loaded spikes from its body per Combat Round.

Artificer's elemental nature renders it immune to attacks by earth elementals and their kin and from the effects of earth-related elemental spells such as Earth Darts, Earth Staff, Metal Scream, Stone Cage, Tossing Earth, and so on.

Though terrifying in combat, Artificer has no great interest in fighting. Instead, the Horror prefers to feed on those caught in its traps. Current magic levels prevent Artificer from returning to the material world of Barsaive, though some dread rituals may be powerful enough to summon it back temporarily. The Horror now resides solely on the astral plane, usually in the astral space surrounding one of its trap complexes.

USING ARTIFICER

Artificer provides a rationale for the underground complex full of traps and treasure, a staple plot element of fantasy roleplaying. Gamemasters can use the classic "go in and get the loot" structure or vary the formula by having the characters form a rescue party to find and save someone who has disappeared into one of Artificer's complexes.

Alternatively, the characters may attempt to enter astral space in search of Artificer, in hopes they might destroy it. In this case, locating the Horror becomes the first step in a particularly dangerous, exciting adventure.

ARTIFICER

Attributes

DEX: 10	STR: 20	TOU: 25
PER: 17	WIL: 16	CHA: 10

Initiative: 10

Number of Attacks: 4

Attack: 16

Damage: 25

Number of Spells: 1

Spellcasting: 30

Effect: See Powers

Death Rating: 280

Wound Threshold: 24

Unconsciousness Rating: 260

Karma Points: 30

Powers: Forge Trap 35

Legend Points: 94,000

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Physical Defense: 13

Spell Defense: 17

Social Defense: 13

Armor: 30

Mystic Armor: 30

Knockdown: 22

Recovery Tests: 10

Combat Movement: 48

Full Movement: 84

Karma Step: 15





FROM THE JOURNAL OF MUSTAN

The following text was drawn from the Journal of Mustan, which was recovered from the ruins of Parlainth in 1502 by His Majesty's Exploratory Force. The journal appears to be an account of life in Parlainth at the time of the city's disappearance from our reality in 1044. The journal's author, Mustan Mustanicus, was the head of a Theran trading house. Unfortunately, the little of the journal that has not been rendered illegible by the ravages of time consists largely of curt notations of business dealings: it is not the key to the secrets of Parlainth's mysterious history that my superiors had initially hoped it would be. However, its disturbing last pages contain vital clues to the ongoing enigma of Parlainth's fate. As they also concern the baleful entity known as Bone Crown the Usurper, we chose to include them in this volume. In translating this journal excerpt from the Theran, I have retained the original Theran dating.

—Zamirica One-Knee, apprentice archivist, Great Library of Throal

Sixtieth Week/Third Day, 607

Meeting with Emila Fist-Heart, a supporter of Headbreaker. Fist-Heart requests support of my trading house and vassals in upcoming skirmish with Vastbelly's forces. Fist-Heart's loyalty to Headbreaker is strong but without apparent motive. I do not understand Headbreaker's success in rallying so many to her cause. I impress upon Fist-Heart the need for peace and the futility of shedding Name-giver blood.

Sixtieth Week/Fourth Day, 607

Meeting with Herek Quantz, chancellor to the Lord Mayor. Quantz also requests the support of my house and vassals. I repeat assertions given to Fist-Heart: need for reconciliation, mediation, solution—not fighting.

Sixtieth Week/Fifth Day, 607

Fighting breaks out in the merchant's quarter. A troop of Headbreaker's fighters ambushes Vastbelly's tax patrol. Six are slain, fourteen seriously injured. This is madness.

Sixty-First Week/Second Day, 607

Dinner with Phabre turns *peculiar*. Phabre is now a fierce partisan of Headbreaker. I detect a gleam in Phabre's eyes that seems, well, *eerie*. Last week he was fulminating against Headbreaker, crying "traitor" and "shame!" Now he

claims Headbreaker is Parlainth's only hope. Spittle flies from his lips as he swears death to Vastbelly. I upbraid him and he storms out.

Sixty-First Week/Third Day, 607

Still disquieted by dinner with Phabre. I begin inquiries, searching for a magical explanation for bizarre [text obscured by water damage]

Sixty-Seventh Week/Fourth Day, 607

No further outbreaks of violence. Mediation efforts seem to have borne fruit—for now. My suspicions of Headbreaker's supporters have grown stronger for their fervency seems unnatural. I feel I am getting closer to an explanation, however.

Sixty-Ninth Week/Fifth Day, 607

I swallow my pride and visit Jadrian. Past differences forgotten. Jadrian is concerned new outbreaks are imminent. Like me, he worries that desire for peace is shallow on both sides. I ask Jadrian about a possible Horror connection to the cruel and stupid behavior of Headbreaker's rebels. Jadrian replies, "Do not impute to the influence of Horrors what can be explained by the eternal folly of Name-givers."

Seventieth Week/Third Day, 607

Success! I have found an actual witness to the events leading up to the Kathaz massacre. The witness is an ork serving woman, Name of Lalak. She says the town prepared for the Scourge with a cooperative effort to build a kaer. Then a series of mysterious slayings occurred. Community leaders were killed in their beds or simply disappeared. Then a man Named Zornos, a long-lost brother of one of the slain, appeared in town. Zornos found blood-magic fetishes buried inside the kaer's foundations. He blamed the current councilors, and fighting broke out between those who followed Zornos and the city guards. Blood flowed, and all the councilors were slain or fled. Zornos was acclaimed the new headman.

Over the next few months, Zornos convinced the townspeople that neighboring villagers had plotted with the councilors to plant the fetishes. He told them their neighbors had planned to take over their farms when the Scourge ended. *Lalak says the eyes of the Kathaz townsfolk had the same kind of look I detected in Phabre's!*





tainted, but he remains unconvinced that it is related to Parlainth's current troubles. He promises to consult his library for similar accounts.

Seventieth Week/Fifth Day, 607

The agreement between Vastbelly and Headbreaker has been violated. A fight broke out between partisans of both sides near the fountain. Unclear which side



Zornos began training the townsfolk for war. Soon, kaer-building stopped and raids on other villages began. Zornos then told the townspeople their kaer had been permanently fouled and said they must kill other villagers and take over their kaers to survive. A series of raids followed over the next few months, in which dozens, perhaps hundreds, were killed. Lalak and others spoke out against Zornos, but they were arrested and tortured. Lalak escaped and was picked up by a Theran infantry patrol marching toward Kathaz.

Soon afterward, a Theran infantry unit attacked Kathaz. The townsfolk fought to the death, and every last man, woman, and child was slain. Zorno's body was never found.

I wondered if Zornos and Headbreaker are the same person, but it seems too simple. Also, Headbreaker is a troll and Zornos was an ork. Still, I feel Lalak's tale has some important connection to the present crisis.

Seventieth Week/Fourth Day, 607

I visit Jadrian and recount Lalak's tale for him. Jadrian agrees that the Kathaz massacre sounds Horror-

started it, and whether either was authorized to fight. Riots spread throughout the administrative quarter. Several elderly, peaceful Vastbelly supporters were doused with oil and set afire. Tensions are high throughout the city. I was summoned to mediate once more. Vastbelly is alternately cooperative and bombastic. Headbreaker sends an emissary—Emila Fist-Heart, who seems even more fervent than before. *Something is missing behind her eyes.* I propose a direct meeting between Vastbelly and Headbreaker, but Fist-Heart refuses. Vastbelly is offended. I ask for an audience with Headbreaker; I'm told "not yet." Very peculiar. More meetings are scheduled for tomorrow.

Seventy-Second Week/First Day, 607

I am exhausted, but the conflict seems papered over. Peace again, for now. Firstweek festivities will be tense but not marked by bloodshed—I hope.

Seventy-Second Week/Third Day, 607

Summoned by messenger to meet Jadrian. His excitement is obvious in his demeanor. In various texts, Jadrian has found legendary references to a possible culprit: Bone Crown the Usurper.





Entity by this Name was active during the Invae Burnings in southern Barsaive, before the founding of Thera. The Invae were insect-like creatures that infested the ancient kingdom of Landis, assumed the forms of Name-givers, infiltrated the cult of Chorrolis and began turning others into insect beings. In the ensuing confusion and hysteria, many innocents died.

Much of the innocent blood was spilled by an officer of the army of Landis, a human named Husan Allar. Allar became known as the Questor Killer and the Passion Slayer. He began to recruit followers of his own, outside the authority of the king of Landis. Eventually the king sent loyalist troops to bring Allar to heel. Several minor battles ensued, and many of the so-called loyalists defected to Allar. Allar's army continued to grow even after the threat of the Invae had ended. Soon Allar's army had captured a small province, of which Allar declared himself king.

The king of Landis then sent two questors to Allar: one of the Trickster Vestrial, and one of Erendis, Passion of Order. Erendis's follower failed in his attempt to uncover Allar's true nature and was put to death. But the woman who followed Vestrial tricked Allar into believing she had converted to his cause. Then she exposed him to a mirror (why she thought to do so is unclear from the legend), and he was revealed as a monstrous thing, a creature "of a thousand eyes, most hideous; of a thousand tongues, all gibbering; of a thousand teeth; all gnashing." The thing (we know now it was a Horror) revealed itself as Bone Crown the Usurper. It proclaimed itself the herald of a host of abominations and screeched that it would one day rule all of Barsaive. Then it fled. Allar was never seen again, and his forces soon dispersed. The many deserters from the armies of Landis were granted amnesty by the king, on the grounds that they had been "bewitched."

Jadrian and I sit for many minutes in silence after reading this. Suddenly I wish not to believe my suspicions. For if they are true, Horrors have entered Parlainth despite all we have done to protect it.

Jadrian says he has found other possible accounts of Bone Crown's activities since then, and he will continue to research. Will meet again on the morrow.

Seventy-Second Week/Fourth Day, 607

I have been thinking much. If Headbreaker is Zornos, is Allar, is Bone Crown the Usurper, my previous neutrality must be abandoned. But my role as honest broker is precisely what has prevented great carnage. Do I remain a mediator, or do I throw my lot in with Vastbelly? Vastbelly's faults are as

enormous as his girth, and his sorcerer backers are mad and menacing in their own way, but at least they are not Horrors.

And do I have any real evidence to present to Vastbelly, to the people of Parlainth, to anyone? Can I better strike at Headbreaker by acting alone? More pondering in days ahead, no doubt.

On my way to consult again with Jadrian, I am accosted on the street by Phabre, who tells me that Headbreaker wishes to meet with me. Alone, I shudder. But perhaps this is an opportunity. I send a messenger with my regrets to Jadrian and spend the evening in the tavern, drawing what I can from Phabre. I soon become all the more convinced that something is wrong with him. Although he is inches from my face, he sounds like he is speaking to me from miles away.

Seventy-Second Week/Fifth Day, 607

Firstweek celebrations are only days away, but they will hold no joy for me. I went to Jadrian's home, but he was not there. Instead, I found blood on the floor of his study. His wife and children are also missing. Near frantic, I tracked down his friends, but none knew his whereabouts. I had sensed something strange in the maid's manner and went back to question her further, but she had disappeared.

Second Week/First Day, 608

After penning these words, I leave for my appointed meeting with Headbreaker. My hands are trembling. I have never been a warrior, never claimed to be a hero. I am a man of peace, of accommodation, of negotiation. But now I venture into the bosom of absolute malignity—if, that is, my guesses are right and not just the fevered imaginings of an old dodderer who has seen too much killing and mayhem.

There is a mirror in the left pocket of my robe, another in the right pocket, and a third sewn into the lining of my cape. May the Passions help me.

Second Week/Second Day, 608

Headbreaker is a great leader of Name-givers, but her chain of command leaves much to be desired. As Headbreaker's First Adviser, my top priority is to untangle the web of connections between her followers and mold this chance collusion of merchants, tradesmen and ruffians into a political entity that successfully can take power from Vastbelly when we finally tumble that incompetent from his feathered roost. I know my skills will allow us to make a smooth transition to rule with a minimum of slaughter and am confident that, under my tutelage, Headbreaker's rule of Parlainth will be glorious.







GAME INFORMATION

Bone Crown the Usurper cloaks its identity in deceit, passing among Name-givers as one of their own. The more Name-givers who follow its commands, the more mystical power it gains, whether the Name-givers in question obey it wittingly or unwittingly, directly or indirectly. If it wins the fealty of a scorcher chieftain, for example, it gains a magical benefit not only from ruling that chieftain, but from ruling all those loyal to him as well.

Bone Crown usually finds a community of Name-givers in grave trouble for one reason or another. It presents itself to them as a heroic adventurer and surreptitiously uses its powers to end the crisis of the moment—which it may well have caused. Bone Crown then uses its Aura of Awe power to convince the community to appoint it as their leader (see **Game Information**, p. 99). Once it has a grip on the reins of authority, Bone Crown begins to twist people, demanding that they violate their own principles in the name of authority and community stability.

Alternatively, Bone Crown selects one of the strongest-willed, noblest members of a community and methodically corrupts him. The Horror's powers of persuasion are so powerful that many of its followers continue to fight for it even after it is exposed as a Horror.

Sly and articulate, Bone Crown speaks in soft, soothing tones and moves slowly and gracefully. Bone Crown enjoys the pleasures that Barsaive has to offer, having developed a taste for fine food and drink and luxurious surroundings. It loves to be flattered, even though it is seldom fooled by the honeyed words of others.

Though Bone Crown is formidable in combat, it prefers to fight through its followers. Bone Crown may adopt the form of any Name-giver, with the exception of dragons. The Horror must spend 10 Karma Points to transform itself in this manner. For this reason, Bone Crown tries to transform only when necessary. The Horror zealously guards its true identity, revealing it only when presented with no other choice. Bone Crown loathes mirrors, as they reveal its true nature; in their reflection, it appears as a misshapen humanoid figure covered with hundreds of miniature faces.

Bone Crown usually wears chain mail and carries a dagger that has been specially forged to give it a total Damage Step of 4. When wielded by Bone Crown, this dagger does Step 24 damage.

BONE CROWN'S KARMA

The Horror's Karma step number is based on the number of followers it has under its sway. The Horror has a base

Karma step of 12, plus 1 for every 5 followers. For example, if Bone Crown has an army of 100 followers, its Karma step number rises to 32.

USING BONE CROWN THE USURPER

Generally, player characters will encounter Bone Crown the Usurper by coming into contact with a community or group under the Horror's influence. One possible adventure involves Bone Crown assembling a power base in an area of interest to the adventurers. Perhaps it has taken over a scorcher band that controls a crucial trade route or is building a coalition of river pirates. Maybe it has gained authority over a confederation of settlements agitating against the adventurer's political allies, such as the Kingdom of Throal. The player characters can struggle with Bone Crown's minions over a series of adventures and then infiltrate the Horror's "inner circle" in an attempt to learn more of the mysterious leader who has been causing so much trouble in the region.

BONE CROWN THE USURPER

Attributes

DEX: 20	STR: 20	TOU: 20
PER: 20	WIL: 23	CHA: 25

Initiative: 17

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 22

Damage: 30

Number of Spells: 4

Spellcasting: 25

Effect: See Powers

Physical Defense: 20

Spell Defense: 20

Social Defense: 25

Armor: 7

Mystic Armor: 15

Knockdown: 20

Recovery Tests: 10

Death Rating: 210

Wound Threshold: 20

Unconsciousness Rating: 190

Combat Movement: 100

Full Movement: 200

Karma Points: 60

Karma Step: See text

Powers: Aura of Awe 25, Corrupt Karma 18, Cursed Luck 20, Spells: Circle 7 Illusionist

Legend Points: 93,000

Equipment: Forged dagger (+2) (Damage 24)

Loo: None





CHANTREL'S HORROR

The following account is transcribed from the words of Chantrel the Troubadour, a young human whose fame as a bard is marred only by the eternal curse she bears.

Though this Horror is commonly named for its connection to Chantrel, it may in fact have an entirely different Name of its own. I had no desire to explore this possibility, as the less knowledge I take away from this book, the safer I feel.

—Lardo Muanto, apprentice scholar, Great Library of Throal

Dreams drove me from my kaer, dreams that sparked fear in my kindred and sheared the bonds of blood, family, and home. Each night, my sleeping eye watched horrified, transfixed by the gore on the smooth metal frame. Silent, whirring blades sculpted the Horror's features, and it spit bloody froth as it sought to speak to me. Its eyes always sought mine; but I turned away, all flailing torso and twisting neck, my body a whip cracked by terror. Often its gaze scraped at my mind, but it never found my eyes before I awoke. Then one night I awoke with the sheets bunched between my crooked, cramped fingers and my chest aching from exertion, and I saw my brother Aleac's face. The lamp-light reflected off his tears and gleamed along his upraised knife. Aleac looked at my mother for permission. I looked at her for mercy. Her chiseled features revealed neither.

"The elders shall decide her fate," she said, in a voice heavier than the thick marble walls of the temple. But knocks of mailed fists upon our door announced their answer before a word was spoken. Guards in chain armor, lacquered with the gleaming silver sigils of Thystonius and streaked with the bright blue and yellow war paints of an elder's blessing, carried me to the gates of the kaer. The clap of the closing gate echoed down the valley. As my ears rang with the sound, the mages chanted, forbidding my return to the only home I had ever known.

I cursed the guards, the elders, the mages, and eventually I cursed my family—my mother last. Their callousness might have held their only hope for survival, but I could not forgive them. Drawing on the myriad tales I had heard as a child, I conjured fates for them. I imagined questing for the enchantment that would defeat the Horror and then returning to the grateful cheers of my people. Sometimes I was gracious in my fantasies, but other times I spurned those who turned me out. These fantasies sustained me, growing

more and more vivid until my daily existence seemed a faint memory. I now believe that the Horror fed these daydreams to distract me from the bleakness of living.

I wandered Barsaive, saw the ravaged land marred like a plague-pocked face. Few devourers still scoured the lands. Other things had taken their place, things that left me alone. For I had been marked by another, and that mark warned the more mindless Horrors away. I slept very little for I could hear my tormentor as I tossed restlessly, its whirring knives changing speed and pitch in grating imitation of speech. It promised to sustain me, to protect me, to never let me be alone again. It said it would not be a false friend, but a true friend—an eternal friend.

I led an impossible existence, scrounging what I could from the broken land during the years of the Scourge. I expected to die. I wanted to die. I am not sure how many years passed, but I know that somehow my tormentor kept me physically fresh, young. The nightmares faded after months or years, I am not sure which. And as Barsaive began to heal, so did my spirit recover from the scars inflicted by the Horror. I did not hear from it for months, and then years. When the kaers began to open, I watched and trembled from the fear and hope in my heart.

I settled in the village of Kolomay, which lay a few days northeast of the city of Travar in the foothills of the Thunder Mountains. The villagers were cautious of all strangers, but my throat no longer cracked from the strain of carrying the Horror. They accepted me. I proved my usefulness during the hard days and increased my popularity by spinning tales under the soft glow of the evening fires.

I began to teach the young boy Calvis my trade, for the flow of magic within him bent easily to a story. He argued with me over most every point, as boys are wont to do, but he listened well. And while the village women sought to soothe me when crow's-feet first crinkled my eyes, Calvis sensed that my tears were a release of past sorrow, not a weeping for what was to come.

As Travar grew again, so did the flow of silver and traveler's tales through Kolomay. The tales stirred the restlessness within Calvis's young heart. He wanted me to travel the lands with him, but for me wandering Barsaive was as pleasant a prospect as trudging through a trackless desert without even the mirage of joy. Kolomay had become my home.





During the month of Charassa, all youths who wanted to leave the village had to declare their intent. Calvis spoke first, and the village council agreed that his path led away from Kolomay. On the final night of Charassa, the entire village celebrated the Night of New Journeys. Boisterous singing filled the night air, notes rising along with the sparks of the brilliant blue bonfires of enchanted wood. The night was filled with bold promises, the jangly excitement of those about to leave, the smell of roasted meat, the furtive touch of lovers not yet declared, the quiet pride of parents, the envy of siblings and those who had grown stagnant. I shall always remember Calvis that night. He stood straight and tall, outlined by the blue fire behind him, and led the village in "All Journeys End."

Later, I found I could not sleep, and so I worked on my gift for Calvis—a locket engraved with the opening lines of the first three epic poems I had taught him. I meant it to remind him of what he accomplished, to remind him that what once had seemed nearly impossible was now child's play. I knew he would scoff at a locket. But I also knew he would keep it—and one day appreciate it.

As the sun rose on the Day of Leave-Taking, I took the locket to his house. I noticed the sick, wet smell as I knocked on the door, which swung open too easily. For a moment I stared incomprehensibly at the drying pile of flesh that lay on the inside steps. The I recognized Calvis's mother's wedding ring on the half-hand lying at the base of the steps and I screamed, again and again.

As tears filled my eyes, I breathed through my sleeve and entered the house. I had to find Calvis. My legs trembled as I passed the raw heaps that had once been his younger brother and sister. I mounted the steps to the second floor, following the buzz of flies already feasting, and a whine escaped my throat as I slipped on the excretion on the landing. I nearly bit my lip through when I saw Calvis's father, his skin peeled away from his body as if he were a ripe fruit. I stepped over the corpse, keeping my balance by sliding my hand along the blood-spattered walls leading to Calvis's bedroom. Panting wildly despite the smell, I gripped the door frame of the room with an outstretched hand, willing my arm to pull me to the doorway. I pulled and stepped, but closed my eyes as I did so. I stood weeping in the doorway for several moments, unable to open my eyes. Then I looked.

The thing had dissected Calvis with impossible precision, leaving most of his skin intact. The boy's organs were sliced thinly and fanned out on the floor on the left of the bed, the bones separated and piled neatly on the right. I remember wondering where all Calvis's blood had gone

and sobbing because it had left his face intact, lying still handsome amid the carnage.

Then suddenly Calvis's eyes fluttered open, looked over at his bones, then found me. I tried to scream but my throat could manage only a wet rattle. The face smiled, and in a voice of whirring blades and metal-scraping-metal it said, "I missed you."

The villagers said I sobbed for hours after they pulled me from the house. I left the village as soon as I had the strength, but it was too late. My friendship with Calvis had given the Horror a gateway to others in the village and to their kin in other towns. Sometimes it killed one man, other times it slaughtered entire encampments. Even today many call that region of the Thunder Mountains the Butcher Hills.

The Horror again talks to me at night. My hair has lost its gray, and my face is as smooth as if I had never lived those years at all. I imagine I shall live as long as it wants me to. I have even thrown myself into Death's Sea, but to no avail. It can repair me, recreate a whole new me with its despicable magic.

Should you see me on the road, a slight woman with lips a little too crooked and a nose a little too small, eyes bright when telling a story, please be courteous. I promise to share nothing more than your fire and a story or two. You and your companions can then travel on your way. I shall take my own path, the one I share with my friend—my eternal friend.

GAME INFORMATION

Chantrel's Horror has never been observed in the physical world. It has only been observed in the astral form of a bloody, demonic humanoid suspended in a metal frame. The edges of the frame comprise hundreds of small whirring blades forged of many metals, including the magical metal orichalcum. If the Horror is killed in its astral form, the frame can be taken from astral space.

While many Horrors use their powers directly against their victims, Chantrel's Horror prefers to terrorize its victims by attacking their family, friends and loved ones.

The true Name of Chantrel's Horror is unknown, even to its victims. It is called Chantrel's Horror because of its relationship to the troubadour Chantrel. As a result, any magic that relies on the power of Names and Naming is useless against this Horror.

POWERS

Chantrel's Horror possesses many special powers. Some are possessed by other Horrors as well, while others







HORROR TRAVEL TABLE

Target Character	Success Needed
Related by blood	Poor
Related by marriage	Average
A business associate	Extraordinary
A recent friend	Excellent
A friend for year and a day+	Good
A lover	Average
Connected through a pattern item	Poor

are unique to Chantrel's Horror. All these special powers are described below.

Horror Mark

Many of Chantrel's Horror's powers can be used only against victims the Horror has previously marked. Generally, the Horror marks only appears in the dreams of its victims, through which it marks them. Chantrel's Horror first seeks a victim whose dreams are vivid enough to be sensed from astral space. To do this, the Horror makes a Spellcasting Test against the dreaming character's Spell Defense. The Horror must achieve an Extraordinary success to sense the victim. The Horror may attempt this test only once per month against any given character. Once the Horror has found its target, it Horror marks that unfortunate character per standard rules.

Once the Horror has marked a victim, it can travel the "thread that binds the bones" to attack or mark any other character related to the marked character by blood or friendship. To do this, the Horror makes a Spellcasting Test against the Social Defense of the targeted character. The required success level appears in the Horror Travel Table.

The physical distance between the marked character and the target character is irrelevant—the Horror can travel from a mother on the Aras Sea to her son in Bartertown by achieving a Poor success. Once the Horror has jumped to a new victim, it may mark or kill the new victim. Generally, the Horror does not kill victims it marks. Also, the Horror cannot reach casual acquaintances of a marked victim.

Chantrel's Horror draws sustenance from the pain of separation and loneliness that its marked victims suffer. According to dragon lore, the Horror revels in a twisted empathy with the victim. The Horror often lies dormant for years, allowing its marked victims to establish new

relationships. Dragon lore suggests that the number of the Horror's marked victims cannot exceed the number of full moons during a year, but even the dragons do not know why this is so.

Chantrel's Horror can heal or regenerate a marked victim by substituting its own Recovery Tests for those of the victim. If the body of a marked victim has been completely destroyed or is otherwise inaccessible, the Horror must have at least one point of blood memory (see **Blood Memory**, following) from someone connected to the victim. The Horror can use the power of the blood memory to sculpt a new body for the marked victim from scratch. This new body is identical to the victim's old one.

Chantrel's Horror can also keep a marked victim young by making Recovery Tests for the healthy victim. The Horror makes a number of Recovery Tests and the gamemaster records the results, keeping a total. Once the total equals the victim's Death Rating, the victim loses a year from his physical age. In this way, the Horror substitutes its own immortal essence for that of the marked character, undoing the work of time.

Additionally, Chantrel's Horror can use the Suppress Horror Mark power to bury its mark deep within the pattern of a character (see **Game Information**, p. 103).

Astral Slice

To use its unique astral slice attack, Chantrel's Horror makes a Spellcasting Test against a victim's Spell Defense. If it achieves an Armor-Defeating Hit (Excellent success), it can make an astral slice. In the following combat round, the victim takes physical damage from the astral slice. This attack originates in astral space, bypassing any physical protection or armor the target may have. The Damage step of this attack is 30, the Horror's base Damage step. The Horror rarely uses astral slice in combat. Instead, it most often uses this power to achieve ghoulish dissection effects, cutting and removing the bones and muscle from its victims while leaving their skin intact.

Blood Memory

The Blood Memory power enables a Horror to keep the essence of the slain character alive in the character's blood. In turn, the Horror keeps the blood in its own whirling, bloody mess of a body. To use this power, the Horror makes a Blood Memory Test against the Social Defense of the victim. A successful result absorbs the blood shed by the victim from attacks made by the Horror. If the target dies during the round in which Blood Memory is





used, Chantrel's Horror absorbs a number of "blood memory points" equal to the victim's Death Rating. The Horror may use these points to extend the grief and pain of any victim it has marked through the slain character (see **Horror Mark**, p. 28). Once the marked victim has recovered, the Horror expends 1 point of the absorbed blood, starting the pain afresh as if it had just happened. The renewed pain lasts for at least a year and a day each time it is renewed.

Chantrel's Horror may also use blood memory points to create a new body for a victim whose previous body has been destroyed.

USING CHANTREL'S HORROR IN ADVENTURES

Chantrel's Horror spreads terror and corruption through its marked victims, who travel Barsaive, carrying death and despair with them. The Horror may use its powers to keep these victims alive for many, many years.

Additionally, it uses its Suppress Horror Mark power to keep many of them ignorant of the mark they carry and the danger they present to others.

The characters may fall under the sway of Chantrel's Horror if one of their relatives or friends is marked by the Horror or by meeting one of its victims or the troubadour Chantrel herself.

Alternately, the player characters may be approached by a victim who realizes he has been marked and is aware of the danger he presents. The victim requests that the characters seek out and destroy any and all records of his existence, in essence making the victim disappear from the minds of all of Barsaive. This could lead the characters to seek out the victim's pattern items and attempt to destroy them. Such action might also draw the attention of Chantrel's Horror away from the victim and to the player characters themselves.

CHANTREL'S HORROR

Attributes

DEX: 20	STR: 22	TOU: 18
PER: 20	WIL: 23	CHA: 19

Initiative: 22

Number of Attacks: 2

Attack: 23

Damage: 30

Number of Spells: 2

Spellcasting: 23

Effect: See below

Physical Defense: 20

Spell Defense: 21

Social Defense: 21

Armor: 32

Mystic Armor: 30

Knockdown: NA

Recovery Tests: 10

Death Rating: 220

Wound Threshold: 25

Unconsciousness Rating: 200

Combat Movement: 100

Full Movement: 200

Karma Points: 40

Karma Step: 15

Powers: Blood Memory 19, Cursed Luck 19, Horror Mark 19, Karma Tap 15, Spells: Circle 8 Elementalist, Suppress Horror Mark 22, Terror 15

Legend Points: 150,000

Equipment: None

Loot: Frame contains retrievable fragments of orichalcum, worth $40,000 + (1D10 + 1D6) \times 1,000$ silver pieces. The orichalcum counts as treasure worth Legend Points.





CONCERNING THE HORROR KNOWN AS DRUISTADT

The following text comes from the work of Reodlan T'rilclaw, a noted t'skrang sage and magician. The passage provides much invaluable insight into its topic, but readers will note that it does not provide the Name of the Horror, like several other entries in this tome. Instead, a word from the t'skrang tongue—druistadt—is used to denote the entity. Reodlan included the following definition of the term:

druistadt: (droo • i • staat). 1. mysterious name. Often applied to a particularly taboo subject as an alternative to verbalizing the forbidden phrase. 2. (prop. n.) The common name given to a particular Horror said to inhabit the region of Barsaive near the Serpent River and southeast of the dwarf kingdom of Throal.

—Ardonn Fil, apprentice scholar, 1507 TH

I, Reodlan Trilclaw, take up feather and ink to write these words with some trepidation, for there exist mysteries into which no one—not even a sage and scholar such as I—should inquire too closely. The Horror of which I write is one such mystery. Nevertheless, the importance of my task—spreading my knowledge of this abomination throughout Barsaive so that all may guard against it—outweighs the dangers it presents. Ignorance can only serve the foul needs of this entity, which roams our waterways and preys on unsuspecting travelers in a fair but false guise.

For those of you who are not familiar with my work (you really should read more), I am a spellweaver, a sage, and a reluctant student of Horror lore. During the past few years I have devoted particular attention to the Horror that we t'skrang call Druistadt. The monster's true Name is unknown except to its victims and should never be spoken

or recorded, for repetition of its true Name gives Druistadt power over Name-givers (but more of that later). My knowledge of this thing stems from a close friend's encounter with it—which he, the only survivor, related to me with tears and moans that would have melted a stone heart—and my subsequent prolonged study of ancient tales concerning various river monsters. I offer this treatise in hopes it might spare others the harm done to my friend and in memory of my dear sister Achatuss, who succumbed to this fiendish thing.

Here follow the words of my poor friend Khazios, once the proud bosun of the *Tarrywell*.

"We'd just put in at port in the town of Callomere, a few hours' travel from Throal, where the river takes a sharp bend between the foothills of the Throal Mountains and Lake Ban. A squall had come up suddenly the day before, causing an anchor line to slip its knot and drag one of our crewmen overboard. Well, we needed a replacement, didn't we? I suppose we could have done poor Sadji's work ourselves well enough, but none of us cared to tire ourselves out so when there was no need. And there was no need because the

perfect replacement turned up not an

hour after we dropped anchor. Lysteruss, she said her name was—a t'skrang so beautiful that half the sailors were calling down love-verses to her from the rigging before she'd been aboard ten minutes. Noble limbs, pleasing curves in all the right places, a head crest that sported all the colors of the rainbow as well as some hues that Nature can't imagine. Yes, she was a rare beauty. How were we to know, I ask you? *How were we to know?!*





"Well, we spent the rest of the morning patching up the storm damage, and Lysteruss proved her worth. She went right to work with a will, not shirking from any of the hard tasks, just as if she'd been born among the *Tarrywell's* crew and loved the ship as we did. She joked and bantered with us, and when it came time to break for our noon meal we were all ready to swear undying love for our new crewman.

"So we ate and drank, and Lysteruss sang us a rousing drinking song with some nonsensical words as the chorus. (I know now that one of those words was Druistadt's true Name, and I won't repeat it.) Well, we liked the song so much we insisted that she sing it again. She said she would, but only if someone joined her. Then she asked who had the sweetest voice in the crew, and Lajlion the stoker spoke up. So Lajlion and Lysteruss struck up the song, and Lajlion sang that unmentionable Name three times during the first chorus. About then, we all started to feel strangely tired, and Lajlion trailed off without finishing. We had to force ourselves to get up and cast off from Callomere's docks, because the captain was set on sailing a bit farther before nightfall. We didn't think anything of our fatigue at the time; but we should have known it was the first sign that the thing we'd taken into our midst had begun to feed off our spirits.

"We all had terrible nightmares that night. I dreamed of my own death—slow suffocation while trapped in the cargo hold of our burning ship. I woke with my throat raw from my own screams. All around me I heard the agonized cries of others as they died equally horrible dream-deaths. The next night it was the same, and the night after that. Lajlion threw himself overboard at dawn, driven half-mad by the night-

mares. We dragged for him, but found no trace of his body even though we'd all marked well where he went down. And all the while, we grew increasingly weak and listless—more even than our disturbed slumbers could account for.

"We turned away from the rail, numb with grief for Lajlion, and started back toward our posts. Suddenly, before my eyes, two sailors clutched at their chests and fell dead on the deck. Heart seizures, it looked like. We all turned and

looked at Lysteruss then, as if a compass needle had drawn our eyes. She smiled, and the air around her seemed to shimmer for a moment. Then it cleared, and we saw that her beak had grown two feet long. Poison dripped from its knifelike edge, burning the deck where it touched. Such terror gripped us that we couldn't move.

The thing we'd called Lysteruss walked right up to Achatuss, our bosun, stabbed its beak into her chest, ripped out her heart and swallowed it in a single gulp. Then the monster began to do the same to every crewman in turn. Not one could run, or fight, or even hardly breathe for pure, heart-freezing fear.

Finally some vestige of *jik'harra* broke my paralysis, and I leaped overboard and swam away from the doomed *Tarrywell* as

fast as I could. I didn't dare look back.

"I thought I had escaped. But then one night as I lay asleep, the infernal thing came to me in a dream and told me it could hear my heartbeat. It said the sound of my own blood pumping through my veins will always tell it where to find me, no matter how far I flee. I know the fiend spoke the truth; I've felt it lurking near me, waiting until it drains the last drop of fear from my heart before it kills me. I can never escape it. Never."





What little I can add to this account comes from considerable research into ancient tales, and I am as confident of its truth as anyone can be of legends concerning a Horror.

Druistadt appears to prefer groups of victims to individuals and always eats the heart of every Name-giver it slays. The Horror possesses great cunning as well and excels at turning members of a riverboat crew or adventuring band violently against one other before it finally destroys them.

Druistadt has the power to link its own pattern with those of its victims. This enables it to track all the victims it marks. Some claim this link is a Horror mark, while others insist it is an arcane ability unique to Druistadt. Whatever the true nature of this power, survivors of groups attacked by Druistadt invariably discover that fleeing only delays their eventual deaths. Druistadt relentlessly hunts down any Name-giver to whom it is linked and seems to focus

exclusively on a single group of victims until it has slain all its members. The most powerful magics may prevent Druistadt from physically reaching its victims, but nothing can break the Horror's link to its victims' patterns and minds. Some scholars believe that Druistadt is so dogged in its pursuit because it must destroy all the members of a linked group before it can link itself to another group; chance comments made by the Horror itself at various times tend to support this notion.

Druistadt's astral aspect resembles its physical form, but its beak is even longer, as are its fingers and claws. Its gentle curves and pleasing lines disappear almost entirely. The colors of its head crest shimmer and undulate, making one dizzy to look upon it, and its eyes glow redder than the heart of a fire engine.

The most intriguing tale of Druistadt concerns the Horror's origin. According to the story, when the Horrors first came to Barsaive long ago Druistadt corrupted a t'skrang riverboat captain Named Szdanzo Rela'zar. In return for promises of power, Rela'zar used foul magics to help the Horror return to the surface of our world. Druistadt used its abilities to read Rela'zar's thoughts, and responded by assuming the form of a voluptuous t'skrang to stalk all of its subsequent victims.

This story may also explain why Druistadt prefers to hunt near the Serpent River and prefers as its prey our sailing ships. It is quite possible that the monster lairs near, within, or underneath the Serpent. Some tales, however, speak of Druistadt tracking its prey thousands of miles overland. From what I have read of this Horror, I would not be too quick to dismiss those tales. He who underestimates such beings as Druistadt courts a dreadful and untimely death.

GAME INFORMATION

Druistadt prefers to operate through stealth, isolating its victims and attacking them after gaining their trust. The Horror usually presents itself to a group as a fellow traveler, assuming the guise of a female t'skrang. However, its spell abilities enable it to assume almost any form circumstances might require. After meeting its victims, the Horror manipulates one of them into repeating its true Name three times. That done, Druistadt may use its Horror Mark power.





Druistadt can track victims it has marked by the sound of their heartbeats.

DRUISTADT'S POWERS

Druistadt's Horror Mark power works slightly differently than the Horror Mark power described in the **Earthdawn** rulebook. Once Druistadt has manipulated a member of a target group to speak its true Name three times, the Horror can use this power to mark all the members of the group. (For purposes of Druistadt's powers, a "group" is any collection of Name-givers who are together in some fashion: the passengers and crew of a riverboat, all the customers in a given tavern, and the like.)

Druistadt uses its Karma Tap ability to wreak havoc on its victims from a distance. It may use this ability to influence the actions of fleeing victims who are aware of its existence or compel marked victims to commit unspeakable acts against their companions.

Druistadt attempts to use its Terror power at the beginning of every combat, immediately after it manifests in its true form. During combat the Horror uses Damage Shift as well, causing the blows of its enemies to harm other targets. Druistadt's formidable spells and physical gifts are enough to overwhelm most adversaries, but it can be defeated with a tremendous concentration of power. However, Druistadt is above all a survivor and can blend in well with its surroundings. It knows when to retreat to fight another day.

Additionally, Druistadt can use the Dream Shape power to enter the dreams of any victims it has previously marked (see **Game Information**, p. 100). The Horror uses this power to torment victims by causing them to dream of themselves dying, for example, impaled on the burning bill of a ferocious bird with glowing red eyes.

USING DRUISTADT

Player characters most likely encounter Druistadt while traveling on or near the Serpent River. In one intriguing option, the characters begin hearing of a number of victims—all found with their hearts ripped out of their bodies. Eventually the characters may realize the victims were all members of some group targeted by Druistadt. They may have all traveled or crewed on a particular riverboat trip or may frequent a particular tavern. The player characters may even realize that they are members of the targeted group as well. Soon, the characters begin to have nightmarish dreams, and eventually Druistadt tracks the characters down.

In another possible adventure, the characters hear rumors that the ghost of Szdanzo Rela'zar still haunts

Barsaive, doomed to walk the decks of his ship forever unless he can somehow reverse the terrible evil he committed four centuries ago. This rumor is true. The ghost of the t'skrang captain still haunts the wrecked hulk of his riverboat, the *Scaled Lady*, which lies at the bottom of the Serpent River. (The characters may learn of Rela'zar's story, his deal with Druistadt, and the approximate location of his riverboat from a variety of scholarly or popular works.) Rela'zar's ghost cannot leave the wreck of the *Scaled Lady*, but he remembers the ritual he used to bring Druistadt across the void. The ghost gladly communicates this information to the characters if they promise to defeat Druistadt. Reversing the ritual might enable the characters to drive the Horror out of Barsaive permanently. Unfortunately, the ritual can only be performed in the Horror's presence.

Alternatively, the characters may be hired to recover the cargo of a riverboat attacked by Druistadt. The characters do not know who attacked the vessel, and so they get a big surprise when they learn the true nature of their opponent. The quest to track down and defeat this powerful adversary could be a defining epic for the career of any hero!

DRUISTADT

Attributes

DEX: 23 STR: 19 TOU: 21
PER: 20 WIL: 26 CHA: 24

Initiative: 20

Number of Attacks: 2

Attack: 26

Damage: 28

Number of Spells: 2

Spellcasting: 22

Effect: See Powers

Death Rating: 150

Wound Threshold: 23

Unconsciousness Rating: 130

Karma Points: 35

Powers: Damage Shift 22, Dream Shape 30, Horror Mark 25, Karma Tap 28, Spells: Circle 8 Illusionist, Terror 20

Legend Points: 150,000

Equipment: None known

Loot: None known

Physical Defense: 23

Spell Defense: 22

Social Defense: 22

Armor: 21

Mystic Armor: 20

Knockdown: 19

Recovery Tests: 10

Combat Movement: 65

Full Movement: 130

Karma Step: 14





IN THE GRASP OF THE GIFTBRINGER

The following account was provided by a victim of the Horror known as the Giftbringer. Unfortunately, the author of the tale did not identify himself or his town. Though bothersome, these omissions do not seriously reduce the value of this text, as it is unlikely that this Horror would limit itself to a particular area of Barsaive.

—Marrlo Tendril, apprentice archivist, 1507

I'll never forget the day the man came to town. All bright eyes and riding atop a pulsing wagon filled with boxes. That's right, the wagon pulsed. You'd look at it and it'd be one size, then you could look away and a breath later it'd be a little bigger or smaller. Strange, but then we'd seen some illusionists come through not so long ago, and we figured this fellow might be one of the adepts we hear of from time to time. Truth be told, most of us just wanted to have this man around. Something about him just felt right, and he had all those boxes—all sizes and shapes, wrapped up in shiny ribbons and cloth all the colors of the rainbow. Never seen anything like it. Hope never to again.

The man looked a bit odd, but nothing out of the ordinary. He was tall, with great arms and legs and a body that didn't seem quite big or strong enough to warrant those limbs. And he was skinny. Not starving skinny, just sort of lanky and long. His face I guess some would call handsome, and he had a thick beard that he kept trimmed. His nose was fine and straight, perched over a mouth that seemed to stretch from ear to ear when he smiled. His eyes were like green fire, emeralds set into his skull to shine the light of his thoughts through.

Everyone was curious as soon as they saw him. He didn't say a word at first. But you could sense he had a sort of power you couldn't deny. It was like he knew everything about you. He would smile at you, all shining teeth and rosy lips, and you got the impression he was better than everyone else. You didn't get the feeling he was going to hurt you, though. Not until later.

He set up shop near the center of town. Bought out Gerry, the carpenter who'd called the place home for more than twenty years. The man just pulled right up, brought out one of his boxes and handed it right over. Old Gerry cleared right out after that, packed up his wife and kids and just took off. Never saw him again. Lucky bastard.

Not long after, the man opened his doors and people started to go in. Just one or two at first. It seemed like the

sort of dark and quiet place you didn't want to go rushing into, so people kind of crept in, almost like they were sneaking—like they knew what they were going to find in there. I'm ashamed to admit I was one of the first to go in. I can see by your face that you think you'd never have done it. But you don't know how it was. The place pulled at you, nagged at your mind, called to you in your sleep. You *had* to go there, you just had to.

That store had everything, and all of it was on display, sitting on glass stands and cluttering up the shelves. Toys, silverware, jewelry, swords, tools, books—everything. And when you came through the door, the man was waiting behind his counter like he'd been expecting you. He'd sit there sort of hunched over, perched on his stool like some damned vulture. And he'd smile, all teeth and shiny lips, and hold out his hand, pointing. And right behind you, you'd find just what you'd always wanted.

But once you'd left the dark little store, you'd start thinking and wondering. Maybe this wasn't quite what you'd thought you were going to get. And hadn't the man said something about someone else getting just the thing you were looking after? And surely they couldn't appreciate it as much as you would, and maybe they'd bring it back. And you'd go back, once or twice a week at first and then every day, looking to see if they'd brought it back. And every time he'd say the same thing: "No, they didn't bring it back. I can't believe how cruel they are, keeping something they don't want, just knowing how much you'd like to have it."

Anyway, things started to get bad soon after that. I can remember people starting to fight over little things. A mother would strike one of her babies for crying, a father would beat his son for having a shirt lace untied. Friends turned on each other like snakes crammed into a small hole, biting and tearing with words and blows. I'd never seen anything like it.

Then one night it all came loose. The man hadn't opened his store that day, and you could see people were getting mad. Some hadn't been into the place yet, and they were anxious that the store wouldn't open again, that they wouldn't get what they had coming. They were wrong. Everybody got what they had coming.

It was awful once it began. Seemed to start with Jerrik, the stout dwarf barkeep. He smashed his cousin's brains with a mug, then drank out of it with brains still dropping







off the bottom and his kin's blood splashed up the sides. Sydn went next. The little seamstress drove her scissors into her aunt's throat, cut out the poor woman's voicebox. Hell came to town after that.

Everywhere I looked, people were at each other screaming about thieves and getting what they deserved. Blood and brains and guts and bones filled the streets. Me, all I could think about was that snuffbox I'd seen old man Farlus tinkering with the day before. See, when I went to the store, I got this nice old pipe made out of some sort of bone (even though I don't smoke). All gold inlays and silver curlicues around. Quin the bellows-mender had tried to kill me for that pipe, so I smashed him with a hammer. Cracked him right between the eyes as hard as I could. I knew he was trying to trick me out of old man Farlus's snuffbox, too. I wanted that box, and I'd be damned if I wasn't going to get it.

And I did get that box, by the way. I remember Farlus was running from me, and I just kept getting madder and madder. That box was really mine, after all, and Farlus knew it. I caught the thief in the alley out behind the man's store. Grabbed him by the beard and started bouncing his head off the rough stone wall. When he didn't die fast enough, I put his skull to the pavement and kept pounding. I still remember that. Something snapped and popped and his face just sort of caved in. But I had that box, ripped it out of his pocket with my hand still slippery with his blood.

Right then a caravan pulled into town. The ashen-faced guards sitting on the caravan wagons immediately started felling people with crossbow bolts. I'd be dead myself if it

weren't for the man leaving. Came busting out of the roof of the store, timbers flying like busted splinters. I remember it too well, that shiny slick skin stretched out on the ends of arms turned to wings, big enough to blot out the moon as he flew over. I could see all his bones jutting up against his skin just as sharp as knives under parchment. His head had gotten all long and skinny too, and his nose and mouth had turned into a shiny black beak. His green eyes were huge, as big as my head, and they seemed about to burst out of their sockets. Those legs of his had been long before, but now they were thin and tapered almost half again as long, ending in clicking claws that could snap around a man's neck without even closing all the way. The guards sent flight after flight of bolts at the thing, but it just kept on flying, just kept going.

After that, I felt awful down. The snuffbox looked like nothing more than an old, worthless trinket. I started crying, tears mixing with the blood and running down into my mouth. That's what saved me from the guards and their damn bows, I think. I was crying, and they could see it wasn't my fault. They realized then what I know now—a Horror had been among us.

GAME INFORMATION

The Giftbringer is a dangerous Horror that feeds off aggression and violence, especially violence between two people who know and care for each other. It uses gifts to drive people at each other, to kindle their own latent jealousies into hatred, rage, and violence on which it can feast.

In its physical manifestation, the Horror appears as the creature described at the end of the preceding tale. When disguised, it often appears as a human male (though it can appear as males of other races as well). In Name-giver form, the Horror has a charismatic presence that it uses to entice victims into his shop.

The Giftbringer's astral forms differ, however. When physically disguised as a Name-giver, its astral form looks perfectly normal, masked to perfection. If the Horror is not physically disguised, its astral form becomes a mass of seething knots of energy, all screaming out at once. These knots are the life energy taken from those the Giftbringer causes to die.

The Giftbringer favors small, out-of-the-way towns because their residents offer the least resistance to its machinations. Larger towns contain more individuals for the Horror to deal with, which increases the chances that its true nature will be discovered.





The Giftbringer cannot change form, but uses illusions to mask its true appearance. Perceptive adepts may be able to see through these illusions and bring the Horror's dreadful ruse to an end, and so the Giftbringer does its best to avoid such individuals.

The Horror is fearsome when fighting and relishes physical combat almost as much as feeding on the pain and misery it causes. If pushed into a fight, the Giftbringer drops its illusory guise and uses illusionist spells to confuse and terrorize its opponents. If the Giftbringer believes it is losing a battle, it may use those same spells to cover its escape as it flies off to the next town to start all over again.

GIFTBRINGER'S POWERS

The Giftbringer usually rolls into town, using illusionist spells to make its wagon intriguing to the villagers, and sets up shop. Then the Horror uses such illusionist spells as Clarion Call to entice customers into his store. The first few customers are offered nothing, but the Giftbringer uses its Gifts power (see below) to create items they desire. The Horror gives these items to the next customers and uses its Gifts power on these individuals as well. Eventually, everyone in the town receives something that someone else wants.

At this point, Giftbringer uses its Horror Mark power on individuals and its Karma Tap power to convince them that they have the right to take what they believe is rightfully theirs. Very quickly, the town devolves into a madhouse as neighbor attacks neighbor and husband turns on wife. Once the town has destroyed itself, the Giftbringer moves on to the next town.

Gifts

This power allows the Giftbringer to create an exact duplicate of whatever his target desires by performing a successful Gifts Test against the Spell Defense of the target character. Items created with the Gifts power are real in every way. Such items are always small (less than 3' x 3' x 3'), and generally light (less than 50 pounds). Items created by this power do not disappear unless specifically destroyed, even if the Giftbringer is destroyed.

USING GIFTBRINGER

The Giftbringer always uses the same method of operation, which provides many opportunities for characters to become involved with the Horror. Most simply, the Giftbringer may set up shop in the town that the player characters call home. In this case, the characters may

become embroiled in the Horror's violent mind games, causing them to do terrible harm to themselves and those they love.

In another possible adventure, the characters are contacted by someone they know in a distant town, who tells them of strange events taking place there. When the characters arrive, they may find any variety of conditions in the town, from growing tension to murderous mayhem—all sparked by the Giftbringer. If the Giftbringer escapes, the characters may pursue it, if only to ensure that the madness spreads no further. This provides the characters yet another chance to become embroiled in the intrigues of the Giftbringer.

In yet another adventure, the characters find themselves passing through a village as it explodes in a fit of jealous violence brought on by the Giftbringer. In this case, they may well become the object of hatred by people they don't even know, and will have to choose between defending themselves and slaughtering innocents. This scenario may also lead the characters to pursue the Horror in an attempt to stop its destruction of another town.

GIFTBRINGER

Attributes

DEX: 18 STR: 20 TOU: 23
PER: 20 WIL: 23 CHA: 20

Initiative: 25
Number of Attacks: 2
Attack: 24
Damage: 25
Number of Spells: 7
Spellcasting: 21
Effect: 23

Physical Defense: 20
Spell Defense: 20
Social Defense: 19
Armor: 27
Mystic Armor: 30
Knockdown: 15
Recovery Tests: 12

Death Rating: 170
Wound Threshold: 40
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 125/170
Full Movement: 250/340

Karma Points: 65

Karma Step: 14

Powers: Damage Shift 14, Gifts 20, Horror Mark 15, Karma Tap 13, Spells: Circle 7 Illusionist, Terror 17

Legend Points: 105,000

Equipment: 2 horses, a wagon, numerous empty boxes

Loot: Usually none





ON THE MYSTERIOUS HORROR KNOWN AS JOIE

This disturbing account comes to us from Mystal Gentlehands, a humble bonesetter from the village of Circle Round in the hinterlands near Lake Ban. I have placed the date of its writing in 1489 TH, and so the actual incidents related herein likely occurred in 1479 TH or thereabouts. Some maps drawn before that date identify three villages within half a day of the forest's edge; maps of the region drawn after 1483 show no villages at all.

The available records on the being known as Joie have provoked some debate as to whether the creature is a Horror or something else. Most people unlucky enough to encounter Joie insist that she is a Horror; some scholars, however, have put forward the interesting theory that this being is actually a Horror-corrupted servant of the mad Passion Vestrial. Joie's apparent ability to shift between Name-giver and monstrous forms would seem to paint her as a Horror, however, the paucity of records that describe Joie's astral aspect might support the Vestrial theory.

—Kerrith Golden-Tongue, assistant scribe of the Great Library of Throal

We knew enough to be wary of strangers. The wandering minstrel, the tinsmith or peddler seeking a day's profit or a night's shelter—these we would have suspected and tested, to be sure they were what they appeared to be. Or like as not, we'd have driven them away. No sense taking risks in times like these, after all. But who can refuse an abandoned child? And she was such a pretty little thing ...

Couldn't have been more than six summers old, I thought when I first laid eyes on her. Lilla, she said her Name was—that's the elven word for gold, the color of the pretty curls that tumbled down her back. Her eyes

were as blue as the heart of a summer sky. I've seen blue eyes before, but never quite that shade.

A delicate little elf-maid, she was, though I daresay she'd have made herself any race needful to touch our hearts. I took her in, as I shared my house only with my apprentice, Cevas. Poor Cevas was a bit simple, and he'd sometimes get frustrated when he couldn't learn a skill—but once Joie came, he was happy all the time. Her very presence seemed to calm him.

At first folk said she brought us good fortune, and it was true—from the first day we took Lilla in, the weather was a blessing to us farmers. The sun shone when the land needed plowing and sowing, and gentle rains fell just often enough when the seed was in the ground. We were all so happy at the thought of the bumper crop we were finally going to get, after years of harvesting mostly stones and barren stalks fit only for feeding to mules.

Everything seemed to go right for everyone—no one came down sick, everyone's grackle hens laid large and beautiful eggs, vegetable gardens flourished, harnesses never needed mend-

ing. All manner of small annoyances vanished from our lives, and we felt truly blessed.

Things first went wrong on the midsummer night that Anaster's barn burned to the ground. Everyone said at the time how lucky Anaster was, himself included—one of his sons or someone had left the barn door unlatched, and all the stock had bolted when they first





smelled smoke. So all he'd lost was a building—and though it was a shame it happened, Anaster was glad it had been no worse. Indeed, he was positively gleeful about the prospect of a barn-raising. We'd not had a proper festival in Circle Round for years, because the hard grind of every day wore us out too much. But a barn-raising's a joyful thing—the work goes easy when all pull together, and afterward the whole village gathers for a feast and a night of song and dancing (for them young enough to have strength left). So Anaster just looked at the charred stubs of his barn and smiled, like the loss of it was a birthday present he'd always wanted.

At the barn-raising, Tarris the carpenter slipped off the roof-frame and fell, breaking her leg in three places. I set the bones, and from the way they'd splintered in one spot I knew Tarris would never walk quite straight again. When I told her this, she smiled and said, "Could have been worse. I could have broken something to cost me the use of my hands." And I found myself nodding my head, grinning like a fool with relief that she was taking it so well.

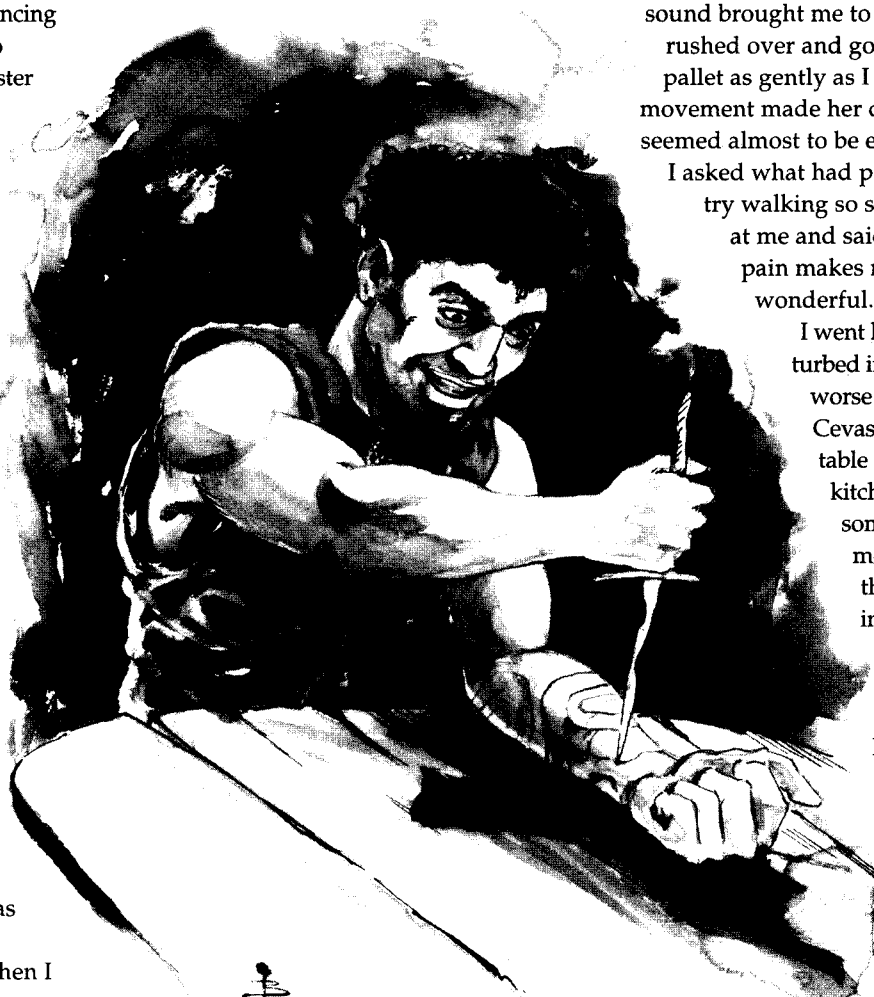
A few weeks later, when I stopped to see how Tarris was doing, I found her hobbling around on a makeshift crutch. Now only two weeks had passed, mind, and I knew the bones hadn't knit yet. To walk on them must have felt like stepping on knife-blades. Tarris should have been screaming in agony. But she wasn't. She was bathed in sweat and her eyes were glazed, so I knew she was feeling something—but when

she saw me, she smiled and told me to watch. And I did. Tarris should have been flat abed—I should have snatched her off that leg and laid her down quicker than I could say my own Name. But I stood still and watched my patient grinding the broken ends of her own bones together in a fair bid to cripple herself, and all I could think was how wonderfully brave she was. Finally she couldn't walk anymore, and she collapsed against the side of her pallet with a shriek. The sound brought me to my senses, and I rushed over and got her onto the pallet as gently as I could. Every movement made her cry out, but she seemed almost to be enjoying it. When I asked what had possessed her to try walking so soon, she grinned at me and said, "Because the pain makes me feel alive. It's wonderful."

I went home, much disturbed in mind. But worse was to come. Cevas was sitting at the table in the warm kitchen, working over something. When I moved closer, I saw that he was sawing away at his own arms with a fine-edged dagger I'd given him as a festival-day gift. He'd drawn waves and curlicues into his skin; blood welled up in the cuts like crimson lace. He saw me staring at

him in shock, held out one mutilated arm toward me and said, "Pretty, isn't it, Myskal? Pretty pattern?"

Before I could take a step toward him, he turned back to his grim work with a delighted smile and slashed the dagger's edge across his wrist. A deep cut, this one, much deeper than any of the others looked. His heart's blood came





sputtering out, and he watched in wonder even as the lifelight dimmed in his eyes.

"See the pattern!" he cried out to me, like a child might share the wonder of its first pony ride. "See the pretty rubies falling through the air!"

As Cevas's corpse collapsed over the table, I felt eyes on me. I turned, slowly, and saw Lilla standing in the doorway. She looked at Cevas, then at me, and her blue eyes glowed with joy. She smiled and then began to laugh. I've never before nor since heard a sound so beautiful—or so horrible. Silvery and sweet, like little bells, but with the howl of a storm wind underneath—and as I listened, the wind howled louder and louder until I could see and hear nothing else. Just for a moment, like a shadow across my mind, I saw a monster with huge claws and a wide mouth stretched in an evil smile. I could smell the stench of its rotting teeth. Then it vanished.

Some while later—I'm not sure how long—the wind went away. I came to myself, sitting on the kitchen floor and staring at Cevas's body. My lantern had fallen over and shattered, and flames were licking up one wall and toward me across the floorboards. I sat and watched the fire spread, enchanted by the dance of the red-gold flames with their blue hearts—as blue as Lilla's eyes. Only when the fire touched my sleeve did I move. I still don't know what happened. I only remember feeling as if I had awakened from a sleep and suddenly I felt afraid. I ran as if the mad Passion Raggok himself pursued me, past a circle of neighbors who were dancing and singing as they watched my house burn.

It's been ten years now, and I've heard nothing of anyone from Circle Round. Nothing of Lilla, either. I still don't know what she was, though I can guess. She was no elf-child, that's certain. She was nothing of this world.

GAME INFORMATION

Joie can alter its physical appearance and frequently manifests as a wandering minstrel, a village idiot, or a child with blond hair and blue eyes. The Horror appears in these forms to the isolated villages that are its preferred prey, seeking aid, shelter, or any other plausible need suited to the form it has taken. Though it prefers to remain disguised

whenever possible, Joie's true shape is that of a lithe, man-sized beast of terrible strength, with athick hide and wicked claws.

The beast has a particularly evil smile; its mouth appears wider than physically possible, and is filled with rows of cracked, yellow teeth. Its tongue, the size and texture of the liver of a small animal, plays constantly across these teeth.

Over a number of days, Joie makes itself wholly welcome in its target community, all the while observing the citizens for weaknesses upon which to prey. After a short time, Joie begins to pervert the emotions of the local folk, usually starting with one or two minor incidents. The Horror gradually spreads its influence until most of the community is firmly under its control and begins drawing nourishment from the

warped psyches of its victims. The Horror stays in a given village or town until its dreadful doings are discovered. Once unmasked, Joie departs in search of new victims. Often, though not always, Joie slays the villagers before leaving.

Joie rarely engages in combat, preferring to manipulate its victims from the shadows. However, Joie can be formidable in battle. The Horror can use its huge, toothy jaws to bite an opponent or rake enemies with its powerful





claws. Joie's claws inflict Step 12 damage; its bite causes Step 16 damage.

JOIE'S POWERS

In Name-giver guise, Joie can use its Corrupt Karma, Horror Mark, and Karma Tap powers, as well as its unique Pervert Emotion power (see below). In its monstrous true form, Joie adds the Terror power to its arsenal.

Many powerful Horrors feed on negative emotions such as hatred, anger, fear, and jealousy. Once people realize that these emotions are controlling their actions, they will resist these feelings, thereby starving the Horror. The Pervert Emotion power, unique to Joie, allows the Horror to subvert such resistance by warping its victims' minds so that painful and evil things become a source of happiness to them.

Pervert Emotion allows Joie to change a victim's interpretation of emotions, causing him to act in ways that he normally would not because he no longer sees his actions as wrong or inappropriate. For example, a character who feels joy rather than disgust at physical violence may express his affection for his neighbor by nailing the individual's cap to his head. While under the influence of this horrible power, people can commit truly terrifying acts without realizing it.

To use this power, Joie makes a Pervert Emotion Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, Joie can pervert the target's emotions in a manner that the victim finds pleasing, and that is also appetizing to the Horror. The level of success achieved determines the ease with which Joie can pervert the victim's feelings. Altering strong anger into simple affection requires an Average success level; turning bitter jealousy into euphoria requires an Extraordinary success. The gamemaster determines the power's effectiveness, based on the circumstance of the given situation.

A victim under the influence of this power may realize that his emotions are being manipulated if he makes a successful Perception Test against the result of the Pervert Emotion Test. The gamemaster should make this test for the character. If the test is successful, the character realizes that his emotions are somehow inappropriate, though he cannot control them. To break free of the Pervert Emotion power, the character must make a successful Willpower Test against the result of the Pervert Emotion Test.

USING JOIE

Typically, player characters encounter Joie by coming into contact with the population of a small town or village that has come under the influence of the Horror's Pervert Emotion power. Alternatively, Joie may simply try to use its powers directly against the characters or even attack them outright.

In one possible adventure, player characters on a long journey stop at a village for the night. Soon after their arrival, they notice that the local people are behaving strangely—laughing uproariously when they or others hurt themselves, acting joyful at things that ought to make them angry or sad, and so on. Once the characters realize that a Horror might be causing these bizarre emotional shifts, they may attempt to find and destroy Joie. However, the citizens of the town are less than willing to give up their newfound, constant pleasure; and Joie is unwilling to leave her latest meal unfinished.

JOIE

Attributes

DEX: 16 STR: 10 TOU: 17
PER: 20 WIL: 18 CHA: 20

Initiative: 15

Number of Attacks: 2

Attack: 16

Damage

Bite: 16

Claws: 12

Number of Spells: 2

Spellcasting: 20

Effect: See Powers

Physical Defense: 15

Spell Defense: 20

Social Defense: 22

Armor: 16

Mystic Armor: 20

Knockdown: 12

Recovery Tests: 7

Death Rating: 100

Wound Threshold: 20

Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 40

Full Movement: 100

Karma Points: 25

Karma Step: 10

Powers: Corrupt Karma 20, Horror Mark 20, Karma Tap 20, Pervert Emotion 20, Terror 20

Legend Points: 30,000

Equipment: None

Loot: Usually none





ON THE ENTITY KNOWN AS NEBIS

Enwid Deltern, Third Assistant Librarian of the Hall of Records, diligently compiled and humbly submitted this report, with the stated hope that its scrupulous attention to accuracy, thoroughness, and vivid detail would aid in the battle against Horrors everywhere. We print this final work by assistant Deltern unaltered, as a testimonial to his long, though sadly heretofore undistinguished, career at the library.

—Ardiv Fasha, apprentice archivist, 1507 TH

Reports of the entity called Nebis have surfaced only since the end of the Scourge. Many adepts have encountered the Horror, and happily, almost all the stronger adventuring parties have come away with survivors. One adept who has tangled with Nebis—Manterlinck the Enchanter, chronicler of the Seven Learned Fellows—speculates that Nebis could not compete with the more powerful Horrors in Barsaive during the Scourge. This theory might account for Nebis's relatively recent appearance.

"The high level of magic may have distressed it, or the entity may have feared rival Horrors," writes Manterlinck, one of three surviving Fellows. "Now that the magic has declined somewhat, Nebis finds our milieu better suited to his lesser strength."

Here follows a comprehensive list of Nebis's known manifestations, compiled through strenuous effort by your humble scribe:

- Destruction of Kaer Mornwood (1423 TH, first documented appearance of N.) and Kaer Lanhold Deere (1445), both located in the Tylon Mountains. Some folklore implicates N. in the loss of Kaer Dunholden (1456) in the Caucaviks, but N.'s involvement seems doubtful, as N. has not been observed so far northeast.

- Destruction of Merchad, village south of Kratas (1438), by provoking residents to murder one another.
- Destruction of central Barsaivian villages Cabo (1466), Dairen (1478), Numaovasi (1488), and Nea Manolas (1492), means unknown. Maddened survivors in some cases.
- Failed destruction attempts: Samatirula, southwest of Kratas (1450), stopped by Seven Learned Fellows. Village of Cut Off (1463), foiled by Order of Danbury. Repeated

attempts to enter

Bartertown (1496, 1501, 1503, 1504), foiled at great cost by various bands of adepts.

- Implicated in assassination of Olan

Urzicenyi, mayor of Bartertown (1495–96).

Implicated in deaths of 26 Bartertown children (1501).

Implicated in the deaths of Logen Olaria, leader of Bartertown's primary

Garlen shrine (1503), and of numerous officials, questors, and caregivers in many small villages. N. also linked to hundreds of cases of incurable insanity.

- Widespread agreement among writers that N. aids various Living Legend cults, Hand of Corruption, questors of Vestrial, and other agents of chaos. No concrete evidence to support these speculations, however.



Many readers may wonder why Nebis has been grouped with the Named Horrors, considering its relatively minor record of devastation. True, Nebis poses little





physical threat. The Horror is fat, slow, and lazy of manner, and even inexperienced adepts have defeated him in physical combat. But the principal differences between common Horrors and Named Horrors are the methods and ambitions of these vile entities, and Nebis appears much more intelligent and crafty than most unnamed Horrors. It possesses a shiftier disposition and employs more devious tactics than common Horrors, and Nebis's opponents report that the entity possesses many insidious abilities often attributed to Named Horrors. Nebis also entertains the ambitions of a Named Horror. In notes left in the ruins of Merchad village, apparently dictated by Nebis, the entity vows to bring madness on every Name-giver in Barsaive.

Many survivors of battles with Nebis describe its revolting appearance in detail. According to these accounts, Nebis possesses a body shaped like a tun cask of wine, covered with short tawny or white fur. Normally, the entity walks on all four of its limbs, but has been observed standing upright. Nebis's arms resemble those of the gorillas of the Liaj jungle. The Horror possesses two short, hind limbs like those of a lion, and four-digit clawed hands and feet. Bone spikes cover Nebis's long reptilian tail, but the Horror's most terrible feature is its face. An elongated triangular visage of trollish aspect, Nebis's face lacks a forehead, contains a single central nostril, and sports overgrown tusks set in a protuberant jaw.

The only astral description of Nebis comes from Lannonder the Gray Wizard. Lannonder describes the form as a "slowly roiling concatenation of what seemed a dozen patterns, much larger than the physical body and jarring and ugly in their clashes."

According to all accounts, Nebis persistently manipulates a victim's sense of reality using dreams, Name-givers under its control, and telepathic suggestion. He slowly subverts the tormented victim's every belief, then the victim's perception of his or her surroundings, and finally the individual's sense of self. The unfortunate lunatic becomes one more pawn Nebis can use in its insidious plots against Barsaive. More than one adept group has run afoul of these plots and has taken steps to foil them. Imagine their astonishment and alarm when they discover that Nebis has merely assimilated them into its plans!

Extracts from an account by Dandeer of Lowfen, human weaponsmith of the Bright Spear Fellowship, offer a telling example of Nebis's machinations.

"We first met it in a nameless village three days' walk southwest of Kratas. Everyone there had died or gone mad.

We tracked it to the village headman's home, where it had set the last two living people—a mother and child—upon each other, so that it might feed on their pain.

"We fought it well and bravely, though it crushed Theona's skull and ripped off Caedmon's leg. I gave the killing stroke myself. We chopped up its body and burned the pieces. Not until months later did we notice disturbing signs.

"Two nights after that first battle, each of us received a dream that we took to be from the Passion Thystonius. Words cannot convey the marvelous, solemn authority in those visions. The Passion told us of grave danger in a nearby village. When we arrived at the place, we found a demented troll slaughtering villagers at random. We killed him and gained the surviving villagers' acclaim. Thereafter, Thystonius directed us to several other dangers, and we acquitted ourselves with honor. So we grew to trust the dreams implicitly.

"One night Thystonius told us that a Horror had possessed the mayor of the nearby village of Solile. The Passion instructed us to kill the mayor for the good of the village. The next morning some of us voiced suspicions of this dream's message, but on the way to Solile we met a villager who confirmed the Passion's claim with vivid accounts of the possessed mayor's awful deeds.

"Convinced by this, we entered Solile by stealth. Nothing appeared wrong, but mindful of Thystonius' warning we ambushed the mayor in her bed and slew her, then fled. In our dreams that night Thystonius promised to reward us. When we awoke, each of us bore a golden tattoo. Mine was on my right leg, and thereafter I found I could run faster and leap higher. Landy Born, our warrior, had one on his sword arm, which had become stronger. We later found that Candia's chest tattoo made her more resistant to injury, and Adjunius had a forehead tattoo that improved his vision. Poor Adjunius! He was my dearest friend.

"Soon thereafter, we met a traveling questor of Thystonius—or so he seemed—who identified the marks as blessings of the Passion. 'Now you belong to the Brothers of Thystonius,' he said, as he showed us his own tattoo.

"So encouraged, we pursued our travels. Then one night, we received a dream message of quite another kind than we had grown accustomed to. The Horror, its own repulsive person undisguised, manifested in a terrifying nightmare that we all shared. 'I have a body again,' it said, sniggering and drooling horribly. 'I can come to you now. Prepare for your imminent doom!' It seems obvious now that this Horror-sent dream should have inspired us to re-examine the dreams from Thystonius, but the thought did not cross our minds.





"These nightmares continued for several nights. In desperation we began investigating ways to destroy the Horror. In Kratas, apparently by accident, we met a fellow Brother of Thystonius, a nethermancer who told us of a blood ritual that she insisted would drive the Horror out of this realm for a year and a day. We had no better choice, and so we resolved to try it.

"After much labor we assembled the required orichalchum and other elements. In so doing we met other Brothers of Thystonius embarked on the same mission, and they joined us. At midnight, with all of us present, Adjunius cast the spell."

Here the narrative grows less coherent. "We lost poor Adjunius right away, his head separated and changed. Landy's arm grew like a gorillas, then suddenly ripped from his torso and flew across the circle, trailing blood everywhere. A stranger there lost his arm too, or maybe he lost the leg—I don't remember, for just then my own leg tore loose. All the bloody parts flew together overhead, melded together, and suddenly the Horror stood before us. It could do anything it wanted to us, but it let us live. I don't know why except I'm always afraid, I don't even want to write his Name because he'll find me again ..."

Dandeer's account ends here. Her attendants at a local shrine to Garlen add a note that Dandeer can now walk well on her wooden leg.

Dandeer and other writers accept implicitly that Nebis can notice and manipulate unwary Name-givers who invoke its Name too often. Your humble scribe finds this unlikely, for Nebis Nebis

has not demonstrated clairvoyant powers of this Nebis description, certainly not on those Nebis whom Nebis has not Nebis already marked. Assuming such Nebis were true, the effects of Nebis's Nebis's NEBIS'S manipulation would become evident to an NEBIS observer. NEBIS To date no such NEBIS has surfaced, despite the NEBIS diligent inquiry of one NEBIS who only desires to NEBIS the NEBIS of the NEBIS Library of NEBIS, and hopes that NEBIS superiors will NEBIS him with NEBIS and NEBIS NEBIS NEBIS.

Enwid Deltern, 1445-1507. Lochost preserve his memory.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records





GAME INFORMATION

Nebis presents a slight threat in combat compared to other Named Horrors. The Horror defends its lair primarily with prepared defenses such as the illusionist spells Alarm, Impossible Lock, and Nobody Here. Though Nebis is physically weak, the destruction of the Horror's physical body does not kill it. Instead, physical destruction of the Horror forces Nebis to retreat to astral space for a year and a day or until it can manifest a new body using its unique Tattoo Claim power (see **Tattoo Claim**, below).

To kill Nebis, characters must destroy both its physical and astral forms. Each form has a separate Death Rating of 110. Physical damage is subtracted only from the physical Death Rating. Damage from attacks that work against Mystic Armor is subtracted from both ratings.

While on the astral plane, Nebis can use powers that cause Strain or require the Horror to take permanent damage. When Nebis acquires a new body, this Strain and damage are transferred to its new physical form.

Though slow to react to new information, Nebis is profoundly intelligent and deeply vindictive. The Horror develops personal grudges against adepts who slay its physical body or interfere with its plans. Nebis uses its actions in combat to Horror mark its opponents, then plants Thought Worms and Karma Taps. Once it marks all opponents, Nebis makes physical attacks against them until its body dies.

Nebis is the subject of more than one of the so-called Horror cults, and the Horror often uses the members of these cults as pawns in its plans.

NEBIS'S POWERS

By spending 1 point of Strain per round, Nebis can clairvoyantly sense anything of which a previously marked character is aware. The marked character does not sense Nebis's eavesdropping.

Nebis's Thought Worm power enables the Horror to manipulate the dreams of any sleeping character it has previously marked. By making a successful Spellcasting Test against the dreaming target's Spell Defense, Nebis can convincingly impersonate a benevolent Passion, ghost, fictitious spirit, and so on. (These beings need

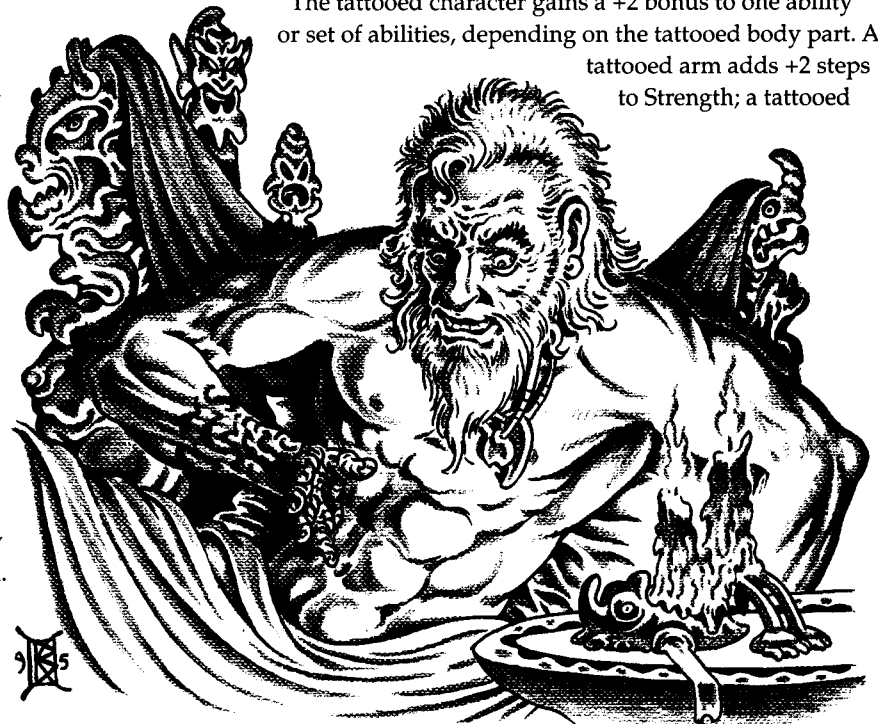
not really exist in Barsaive, as long as Nebis persuades his victim that they do.) The target may experience deep emotions during the dream and always remembers it on waking. After one successful test, Nebis can impersonate the same figure in the character's later dreams without making another test. This use of the Thought Worm power causes the victim no pain or damage.

Nebis must spend 1 point of Strain per round to send a dream message. The Horror can send the same dream to a group of marked characters simultaneously, as long as all the targeted characters are sleeping.

Tattoo Claim

The Tattoo Claim power enables Nebis to place special tattoos on characters it has previously marked and later retrieve the tattooed body parts for its own use. To use the power, Nebis makes a Tattoo Claim Test against the Spell Defense of any sleeping targeted character. If the test succeeds, the target character receives a tattoo on one body part chosen by the gamemaster: arm, leg, chest, head, and so on. The tattoo is recognizably magical and especially visible on the astral plane. A character cannot receive more than one Tattoo Claim, and Nebis must take 1 point of permanent damage for each Tattoo Claim Test it makes.

The tattooed character gains a +2 bonus to one ability or set of abilities, depending on the tattooed body part. A tattooed arm adds +2 steps to Strength; a tattooed





leg, +2 steps to Dexterity; chest, +2 to the character's Armor Rating; and a tattooed head, +2 steps to Perception. The tattoo and the bonus last for a year and a day, or until Nebis's Horror mark lapses. Nebis can renew the tattoo by making another Tattoo Claim Test whenever the target character is within 100 miles of the Horror.

Dispel Magic and similar effects may remove a character's tattoo by overcoming the Horror's Spell Defense of 12. The tattoo does not confer this Spell Defense on the character.

If six or more characters bear Nebis's Tattoo Claim, Nebis can manifest a new physical body by persuading its victims to perform the Tattoo Ritual spell.

Tattoo Ritual (Circle 4 Nethermancer Spell)

Threads: 3 **Weaving Difficulty:** 7/18
Range: 10 yards **Duration:** See below
Effect: Gives Nebis body parts from tattooed victims
Casting Difficulty: 5

Nebis teaches this spell to its agents and/or victims, usually under the false pretext that the ritual accomplishes something else, such as driving the Horror from the world or destroying Nebis forever. Members of Horror cults devoted to Nebis and others among Nebis's corrupt servitors often teach the spell as well. The Tattoo Ritual spell is learned and cast as a Circle 4 nethermancer spell and requires at least six characters with Tattoo Claims, one for each body part (head, chest, left and right arms, left and right legs).

The ritual requires no particular location, materials, or preparation, though Nebis often invents these to lull characters' suspicions. Casting the ritual takes ten minutes. If the Spellcasting Test is successful, Nebis then makes a single Tattoo Ritual Test against a difficulty number equal to the highest Spell Defense of any tattooed character present, increased by 1 for each additional character. If the Tattoo Ritual Test succeeds, all the characters tattooed by Nebis are affected by the spell.

Characters with a head or chest tattoo die immediately. Those with limb tattoos take 1 Wound and Step 16 damage, as the tattooed limb tears away. They suffer extreme pain, with effects similar to the Circle 3 nethermancer Pain spell, though these characters incur no further damage. The character also loses the step bonus granted by the Tattoo Claim.

If Nebis receives more body parts than it needs (an extra arm or head, for instance), the parts are incorporated into its new body. Add 10 to Nebis's Death Rating for each extra body part beyond six. Nebis also receives a +4 step

bonus on all tests it makes against any character who has lost a body part to the Horror.

If Nebis's Tattoo Ritual Test fails, the ritual has no effect. Nebis takes 10 points of Strain damage and cannot make another Tattoo Ritual Test for 24 hours. Nebis cannot use any of these powers on characters it has not personally marked, nor can Nebis sense or use other Horrors' marks.

The fictional entry on Nebis mentions its ability to sense the mention or thought of its Name. The gamemaster should decide whether this is true according to the needs of his or her adventure.

USING NEBIS

Nebis seeks out adepts to battle, for it cares little if its physical form is destroyed. If player characters kill its body, the Horror stalks the characters in astral space. Nebis uses its powers to mark its victims and eventually tricks them into performing its Tattoo Ritual.

NEBIS

Attributes

DEX: 8 **STR:** 10 **TOU:** 18
PER: 20 **WIL:** 20 **CHA:** 25

Initiative: 9
Number of Attacks: (2)
Attack: 10
Damage: 13
Number of Spells: 2
Spellcasting: 22
Effect: See Powers

Physical Defense: 9
Spell Defense: 12
Social Defense: 25
Armor: 8
Mystic Armor: 20
Knockdown: 9
Recovery Tests: 7

Death Rating: 110 (physical)
 110 (astral)
Wound Threshold: 25
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 20
Full Movement: 40

Karma Points: 30

Karma Step: 12

Powers: Cursed Luck 12, Horror Mark 18, Karma Tap 14,
Spells: Circle 3 Illusionist, Tattoo Claim 14 (see above),
 Tattoo Ritual 14 (see above), Thought Worm 14

Legend Points: 30,000
Equipment: None
Loot: None





CONCERNING THE HORROR NEMESIS

The information we have regarding the Horror Nemesis comes to us from one Veran Tuul, a scholar from the area near Urupa. As Tuul's account attests, Nemesis has involved itself in slave trade and other acts usually the sole domain of Name-givers. Nemesis is a particularly dangerous entity, as it has been known to deceive even the most clear-headed and virtuous heroes.

—Voilha Mystral, apprentice archivist, Great Library of Throal, 1507

I can offer no better example of the insidious danger the Horror called Nemesis poses than the following letter. I took this missive from the hand of a dead comrade, who had succumbed to Nemesis's wiles. Until the last day of his life, he maintained that the Horror had sent it to him.

Enlightened Being,

I have watched your peoples for many decades now, counting the years as you do days. I have witnessed your vain attempts to hide from those beings that you call Horrors and have watched with great interest the power that you and others like you have learned to wield.

Nevertheless, you are nothing compared to those you fight. Hiding in the earth did not save you, for they were patient and merely awaited your return. And now they crouch all around you, hiding in shadows and riding beneath the very skins of those you may call friends. You know I speak the truth, for you have learned to sense them, to see the way they warp astral space and rip at the very fabric of the magic you hold so dear. But still you are powerless to destroy them.

It does not have to be so, however. I have knowledge that you might use to your advantage, powerful insights into the ways of the Horrors you seek to destroy. You know of Patterns and Pattern Items, and you know the power of Knowledge. I can give you these and much, much more. You have but to place around your neck the amulet you will find in this package, and it will guide you to me.

Your destiny awaits, for surely you will be known as the greatest of the Horror hunters.

—The Knowing One

None should be misled by the frail appearance of many of Nemesis's physical forms. This entity's truly powerful weapons are its mastery of metamorphoses and deception. It is impossible to say for certain how Nemesis will appear at any given time, though the Horror's physical aspects contain certain distinguishing features.

First, Nemesis always takes the form of a male or female human, never of one of the other Name-giver races. Second, it almost always has blue-white eyes that shine with the brilliance of lightning. Often Nemesis explains this strange gleam as the mark of a wizard, and the Horror has the abilities needed to convince others that it is indeed competent in the magical arts. Third, the Horror dresses in light clothing, eschewing armor in favor of flowing silks and brightly colored sashes. It delights in drawing attention to itself and is often quite attractive. I doubt that Nemesis has what could be called a True Form. I know of two individuals who have seen Nemesis near to death; both said the Horror's form began to shift from one human guise to the next, but never to anything inhuman.

The Horror's astral appearance, however, is quite striking. It remains human-looking, but glowing lines of force emanate from its body. The lines pulse between black and purple and seem to extend outward forever. I have come to believe that these lines are Nemesis's magical connections to adepts across Barsaive, and I shudder for us all if I am correct. Hundreds, if not thousands, of these glowing lines shoot from Nemesis's body, and if each of these represents a corrupted adept, then surely we are all doomed.

The Horror we call Nemesis is old, though not as old as many others. I have traced hundreds of reports of the being, including many letters written shortly after the end of the Scourge, and I believe that this dread entity arrived in our world not long after the opening of the first kaers. Whether or not it was present before that time is uncertain, but it seems to have made no contact with Name-givers until the kaers opened.

Since the end of the Scourge, Nemesis has contacted many, many adepts. In each case, Nemesis has offered them the knowledge or weapons, or both, necessary to destroy other Horrors. In every case I know of, Nemesis has destroyed these adepts in mind, spirit, and body, consuming every tortured emotion from their dying husks. I believe that Nemesis originally took control of its victims to reduce its own competition. By providing adepts with the means to destroy other Horrors, Nemesis ensured that fewer Horrors could contend with it for the emotional energy it needs to maintain its physical form.

The letters and accounts tell us that Nemesis does not bestow its knowledge and weapons freely. It tainted each gift





with its terrible essence, and through these it manipulated the adepts it had chosen. Nemesis allowed these adepts to destroy a Horror and then turned them against one another at the height of their celebrations. Journal entries tell of petty arguments that exploded into fights with drawn weapons, disagreements that became bitter feuds. Nemesis became quite skilled at wringing terrible emotions from his pawns, exhausting them of all their strength before forcing them to kill themselves. The Horror would then give its tainted gifts to new victims, beginning its terrible game all over again.

Nemesis's voracious appetite continued to grow, however, and soon the Horror realized that it needed a more constant supply of nourishment. And so Nemesis began to sell its knowledge. The Horror traveled to various towns and cities, offering knowledge of other Horrors in exchange for large sums of silver. With the Scourge and years of hiding still fresh in their minds, nearly all the Name-givers it approached agreed to its bargain. Nemesis took its profits and traveled south, entering the shattered remnants of the Theran Empire where the foul practice of slavery still exists. Nemesis offered premium prices for slaves, often paying in information as well as silver.

Soon, Nemesis established itself as a slaver. The money it gained from selling information about Horrors allowed Nemesis to build numerous strongholds near Iopos and Jerris, one in the depths of the Liaj Junge, another beneath the Twilight Peaks, two secreted in the depths of the Servos Jungle, one near Urupa, and a final one hidden in the Caucavik Mountains near Parlainth. More may exist, but these are reportedly the largest. Slaves pour into these strongholds regularly, supplied by the Therans and the many individuals Nemesis has corrupted throughout Barsaive. Nemesis's caravan travels by night to collect the poor souls and transport them to the nearest of the strongholds. It is said that great numbers of cadaver men guard these caravans, that wizards guide them, and that to look upon them is death.

Many accounts say that at the new moon, these accursed strongholds become arenas for gladiatorial matches. Slaves are armed with savage weapons and thrown into pits to fight one another. Often wild beasts join the battles, driven mad by the power of Nemesis. Certain wealthy Barsaivians have been seen traveling to these events, and I can only assume that Nemesis is corrupting them for its nefarious schemes. I suspect Nemesis feeds off the suffering of those in the pits and also from the roiling emotions of the spectators.

As far as I can tell, the Horror still seeks adepts. Its pawns seem to lurk everywhere, looking for those with hot

blood and little sense, those who can be easily corrupted. On behalf of their Horror master, Nemesis's minions offer those unfortunate individuals information about Horrors and speak of the glory to be won by destroying these terrifying creatures. Of course, those who accept information and assistance from these minions or their awful patron are damned from that moment on. As time passes they become more and more hostile, urged on by the power of Nemesis, until eventually they destroy themselves and everything they love. Throughout, Nemesis swallows every tasty morsel of Name-giver pain and rage.

I regret to say I have no idea how Nemesis travels. Whether it can move through astral space or uses some form of magic to transport itself, I do not know. I have heard reports of the entity appearing at opposite ends of Barsaive within days; if these reports are true, I can only surmise that the Horror can move itself almost instantaneously if the need arises.

GAME INFORMATION

Nemesis usually uses human agents to contact player characters it wishes to mark. These agents offer the characters the knowledge and weapons they need to destroy a nearby Horror. Nemesis then uses its Horror Lore power (see **Horror Lore**, following) to provide these weapons. Nemesis also tells the characters the Horror's Name and other information about its weaknesses.

Nemesis also tries to mark at least one of the player characters, more if the adventuring group appears particularly weak or overconfident. Once a player character is Horror marked, Nemesis tries to implant a thought worm in the individual, slowly turning the character against friends and family and finally forcing the individual to destroy all he holds dear.

Nemesis hates standup fights and uses its spells to kill as many attackers as quickly as it can if things become violent. If it appears that the Horror cannot win, Nemesis uses its Transport power to flee the scene, vowing to return and slay the player characters another day.

NEMESIS'S POWERS

Nemesis's Horror Mark power only works against player characters who have accepted gifts from the Horror. If a character accepts such a gift, Nemesis may then attempt to mark the character at any time, as long as the character keeps the gift. These gifts are usually the weapons Nemesis gives player characters to destroy other Horrors, but any other item will work as well.







Horror Lore

Nemesis's unique Horror Lore power is the source of the entity's knowledge concerning Horrors. To use this power, Nemesis makes a Horror Lore Test against the Spell Defense of the Horror in question. If the test is successful, Nemesis may spend 1 Karma Point to discover the weaknesses (if any) of a particular Horror. A successful test also enables Nemesis to empower a weapon so that it causes extra damage to the targeted Horror. Nemesis may spend up to 5 Karma Points to do this. Each Karma Point increases the Damage step of the weapon by +2 when used against the targeted Horror. When used against any other target, the weapon functions normally.

Transport

Nemesis's Transport power enables the Horror to move from one of its strongholds to the next through astral space. To use this power, Nemesis makes a Transport Test against its own Spell Defense. If the test is successful the Horror shifts into astral space and transports to a new location. However, each time the Horror uses this power, it takes Step 10 damage (reduced by 1 point for each success level achieved on the Transport Test). Though it is unlikely to happen, Nemesis can die from overusing this power.

When using its Transport power, Nemesis may travel from stronghold to stronghold in one Combat Round.

USING NEMESIS

Nemesis is an intelligent, cultivated Horror that moves among circles most Horrors do not. Rather than a grotesque monstrosity to be feared on sight, Nemesis is a beautiful, cunning entity that prefers to manipulate its foes and victims into destroying themselves rather than lay hands on them itself.

In one possible adventure, the characters arrive in a small town to find that the streets are nearly deserted and that the remaining townspeople are half-mad with fear. It seems a wormskull Horror has taken up residence nearby and is systematically destroying the town. The survivors tell the characters that they have heard of a wizard not far from the town who might know how to destroy the Horror, but none of them are strong or brave enough to make the trip. The wizard, of course, is really Nemesis, who is more than happy to provide the characters with the information and weapons they need to destroy the wormskull.

Alternatively, the characters may be hired by a city official to find out what is happening in the city government. Many officials have begun taking extended vacations

and returning with some interesting new thoughts. As a result the city is becoming a crueler place, with heavier taxes and harsher penalties for crimes.

The player characters must involve themselves in the politics of the city to discover that during these extended vacations, city officials have been attending gladiatorial games hosted by someone they refuse to identify. If the characters can wangle themselves an invitation to one of these events or convince someone of import that the characters should serve as guards, they witness a scene of senseless cruelty and barbarism. Provide subtle clues that the host of the event is a Horror. If the characters try to attack Nemesis, the Horror does its best to calm them and offers information about other Horrors, trying to persuade them to enter its service. Depending on how the characters handle the situation, it ends in a bloody fight or becomes the beginning of a sinister and uneasy alliance.

NEMESIS

Attributes

DEX: 5	STR: 5	TOU: 19
PER: 21	WIL: 25	CHA: 20

Initiative: 10

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 10

Damage: 5

Number of Spells: 10

Spellcasting: 24

Effect: 25

Physical Defense: 7

Spell Defense: 25

Social Defense: 20

Armor: 20

Mystic Armor: 25

Knockdown: 15

Recovery Tests: 5

Death Rating: 50

Wound Threshold: 10

Unconsciousness Rating: 40

Combat Movement: 100

Full Movement: 200

Karma Points: 60

Karma Step: 20

Powers: Animate Dead 20, Damage Shift 15, Horror Lore 20, Horror Mark 20, Spells: Circle 9 Wizard, Thought Worm 23, Transport 25

Legend Points: 125,000

Equipment: Loose robes, personal items befitting a noble

Loot: Usually none, though several thousand silver pieces can be found at each of Nemesis's strongholds.





CONCERNING THE DREAD HORROR RISTUL

This text is the work of one Cymric the Wizard. Though Cymric is not well known in Throal, the endorsement he has received from Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, provides more than adequate reason to include his dissertation in this tome. Merrox's endorsement, along with the fact that Cymric confronted the Horror he describes and yet was not corrupted, lends credence to Cymric's authority and suggests the inestimable value his work holds for those who would study the ways of the Horrors.

—Reelo Pasha, apprentice scribe, Great Library of Throal, 1507 TH

I wish to thank Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, for the opportunity to add my meager tidbit to the great storehouse of knowledge that is the Library of Throal. I hear the librarians so fear this book that they have ordered scribes to simply ensure that the pages of each section are in order and to read no more than the first sentence of each entry. Now, I would be less than the wizard I am if I passed by this chance to pull the nose hairs of so prestigious a dwarf as Master Merrox. But we must keep up appearances, so if you could just blanch as if reading the most terrible thing, mutter direly under your breath and then look wildly about the room, that should clear away any nosy bystanders. My thanks in absentia.

Now, imagine that we sit in a tavern specializing in rude help, stale breads and watery ales. You try to ply me with enough drink to loosen my tongue about Ristul, I try not to lose my tongue to drink. My gestures grow grander with each swallow.

I flop forward, elbow catching the edge of the table as I try to settle myself. You hunch forward to hear what I am saying. Through a lopsided smile I ask, "Why are you in such a hurry to die?"

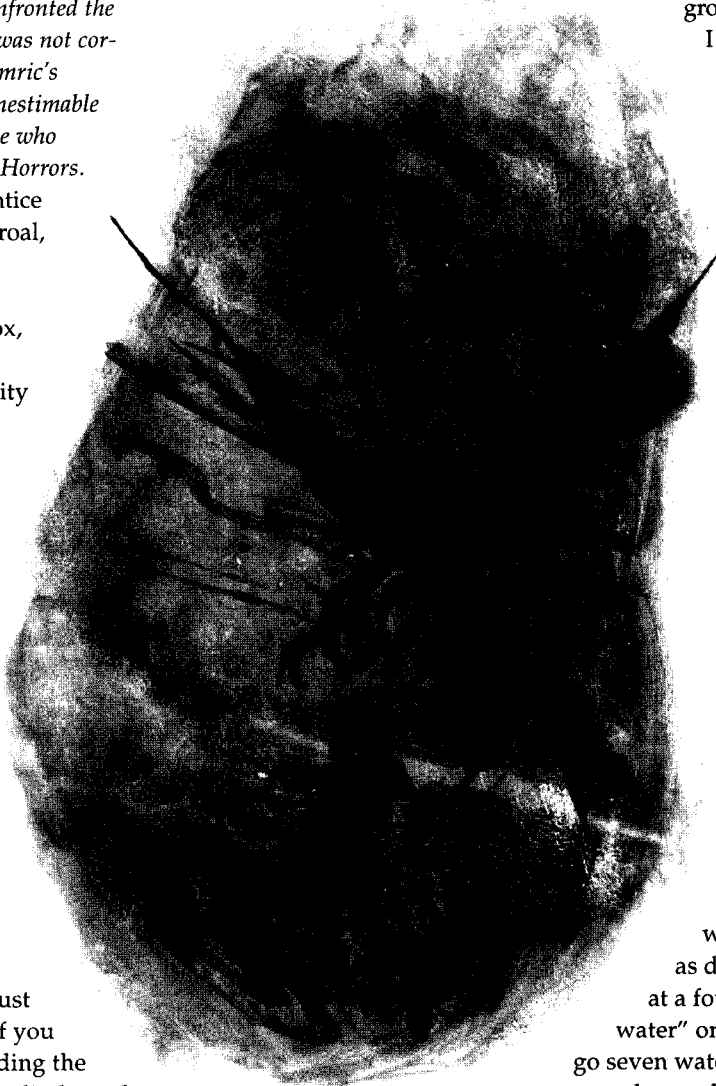
If you cannot answer that question to your satisfaction, close this book now.

Good, you are still reading; I hate going on an imaginary drunk alone. So order me another ale and I will tell you what I know of Ristul. Let me start by saying that Ristul is not what most people think of as a Horror. This entity is not an individual being with a body, a mind, a distinct identity.

Think of it this way. You are a person, as am I, as is the bartender who keeps watering this swill. We are three distinct entities. But consider water. A fountain holds water, as does a lake. But we do not look at a fountain and say, "oh look, a water" or at a lake and say, "Gads, there go seven water." Certainly we measure

water, a cup here, a barrel there, but those measures are arbitrary standards we place on water.

In this way Ristul is like water. In fact, the Horror's Name is a bastardized contraction of the phrase, "*riyah istu leev aertin*" which loosely translates to "action





eternally corrupting." So Ristul is far more frightening than water; for we can see water in a glass, in a lake, burbling over rocks during a mountain thaw. But how can we see action eternally corrupting? We cannot, save for the results of this corruption in our world. And so the Abyss of Aras Nehem is Ristul, as are nightwists and the Ristular. And so, if certain legends hold truth, are the Mad Passions.

Ristul corrupts all, and is all that Ristul corrupts. What Ristul corrupts, Ristul absorbs. To be corrupted by Ristul is to become part of Ristul, as though by drinking a glass of water you became water and were poured into the barrel with all the rest. Once corrupted, a victim loses his individual identity, just as every cup of water from a barrel is much like every other. He does not, however, lose awareness (as had originally been thought).

At one time, a nethermancer named Maeumis (whose work I have read) performed extensive research on Ristul and concluded that individuals might be extracted from the Horror. Maeumis believed that all sentience is not lost in Ristul, and that a Name-giver might be reconstructed by gathering all of his scattered soul back together. Maeumis's magical theories seem sound, but I reckon the chances of gathering a scattered soul are no better than tossing a barrel in a stormy sea in hopes of retrieving a flagon of water emptied into the surf months before. Magical practice lags far behind theory in this area.

Ristul is Hell. This statement was scrawled again and again in large, loose letters across hundreds of pages in Maeumis's grimoire. At first I assumed the notes were a product of his madness. Maeumis was a nethermancer, after all, and you know how they get. But as I continued my research, I came to understand what that ugly little dwarf meant. Ristul is action eternally corrupting, and sentience is *not* lost upon absorption by Ristul. The Horror's victims remain aware of the atomizing of their souls, the bending of their thoughts, the perversion of their memories, the destruction of their selves. And as a victim blends and mixes with other souls trapped in Ristul, he shares their pain and loss. And so the victim of Ristul continually experiences terror and pain as his soul is fragmented, recombined, and fragmented over and over again. I am certain our universe holds many Hells, but undoubtedly Ristul is one of them.

As I said before, Ristul is not an individual being. The Horror can take many forms in our world, all of which are corrupt—and all of which may threaten the soul of a

Name-giver. Ristul most often assumes the form of nightwists. These things are literally the stuff of nightmares. Ristul shapes these constructs from itself, forging them from the dark shapes that haunt our dreams. These twisted bits of darkness travel the world, seeking the owners of the dreams that spawned them. Of course, most often the dreamers are long dead, leaving the nightwists to prey on the living.

Ristul also manifests itself in the Ristular, those who embrace the corruption that is Ristul. Ristular are Name-givers, corrupt to the last, who offer themselves to serve Ristul and in turn are served by Ristul. The Ristular can be found in virtually any area of Barsaive, working to further the corruption that is Ristul.

But perhaps I can best impress on you the power of Ristul by recounting the tale of Aras Nehem.

THE ABYSS OF ARAS NEHEM

Ten or twelve days walking along the jagged coastline southwest of Urupa will bring you to the caverns of Aras Nehem. The caverns are now known as the prime source of those disgusting flying worms some magicians favor as companions. But around Urupa the caverns are still known for the richness of the enchanted and elemental life that exists within them. Scholars, gossips, and storytellers also know the site as the home of Kaer Otsok, once the largest troll haven in southern Barsaive.

Kaer Otsok was a rambling, disjointed cavern city in comparison to dwarf or Theran kaers. For protection, Kaer Otsok depended on enchantments provided by three significant sites arranged in a perfect triangle, which in turn formed a pyramid-shaped safe area above the Nehem Liferock located several hundred feet below the surface. On each site a temple had been built years before the kaer was started. The temples were devoted to Dis, Raggok and Vestrial.

Local legends recall the fall of Kaer Otsok as the Betrayal, when the Passions went mad and directed their followers to abandon the protections. This allowed an abyss to open near the Liferock, through which Horrors poured to swarm through Otsok unimpeded. They razed the city, desecrated the temples, and befouled and consumed Kaer Otsok's doomed inhabitants. Some claim the Liferock still remains, covered by clinging obsidimen locked in the Dreaming by the swirling spiritual putrescence that spills from the abyss.







I have pieced together a different version of the fall of Kaer Otsk. I believe the fall was not a betrayal, but a sacrifice—a grand sacrifice. True, the abyss is a breach into astral space through which Ristul could pass. And given enough time, Ristul could have consumed all of Barsaive and beyond, for Ristul is insatiable. I believe the Passions and their questors sensed the abyss and Ristul's approach. And I believe the questors and their Passions chose to sacrifice themselves, to be corrupted and absorbed by Ristul. The three Passions went mad because they surrendered themselves to Ristul. But even action eternally corrupting cannot consume three Passions—not all of them, not all at once. The mad Passions, therefore, prevented Ristul from consuming the world in its vile corruption ... at least, thus far. The mad Passions remain, twisted and shrunken versions of themselves. If Ristul is Hell, it is no wonder the three Passions went mad.

GAME INFORMATION

Ristul has no single form that can be seen either astrally or physically. It has no shape that can be attacked or destroyed, and so Ristul will remain until all corruption is driven from Barsaive.

Ristul most often manifests as the black, inky substance that pollutes much of astral space. As this pollution is more common in certain areas of Barsaive than in others, so too is Ristul more likely to be an influence in these places. Nightwists and corrupted Name-givers are additional manifestations of this Horror, as is the Abyss of Aras Nehem. The Abyss is the only manifestation of Ristul that remains stationary. Through this gaping hole between the physical and astral worlds Ristul spills into the realm of Name-givers.

RISTUL'S POWERS

Though Ristul has no single form, it possesses powers and abilities that aid it in its endless corruption. However, Ristul's powers and abilities also suffer from a number of significant restrictions that limit how and when the Horror may use them. In general, Ristul can only use its powers in areas where it has manifested—regions classified as either Tainted or Corrupt (see **Casting Raw Magic**, p. 155–6, ED). However, Ristular in any type of region can act as a conduit for Ristul to use its powers.

Ristul's most potent power, Horror Thread, enables it to spread its corruption among Name-givers. (See **Game Information**, p. 101). However, Ristul can only use this power in places where it has manifested.

USING RISTUL

Nightwist constructs and the Ristular are the most likely way player characters will encounter Ristul. A confrontation with either of these Horror minions will likely result in one or more of the characters being Horror marked and eventually falling victim to Ristul's Horror Thread power.

For example, the player characters may enter a small town and discover the bodies of several townspeople who have been ritually slain, the corpses left to serve as a warning to the survivors of what might happen to them. As the characters investigate the deaths, they learn that each of the victims had been seen talking with a group of mysterious men the night before the slayings. As the characters follow up on these leads, they eventually catch up to the Ristular, only to come upon them as they are enacting their ritual. Though the ritual is doomed to failure, it has attracted the attention of Ristul, which marks the players characters in short order. The characters must seek a way to rid themselves of the Horror's mark.

RISTUL

Attributes

DEX: NA STR: NA TOU: NA
PER: NA WIL: NA CHA: NA

Initiative: NA

Number of Attacks: NA

Attack: NA

Damage: NA

Number of Spells: 2

Spellcasting: 18

Effect: See Powers

Physical Defense: NA

Spell Defense: 25

Social Defense: NA

Armor: NA

Mystic Armor: 20

Recovery Tests: NA

Knockdown: NA

Death Rating: NA

Wound Threshold: NA

Unconsciousness Rating: NA

Combat Movement: NA

Full Movement: NA

Karma Points: 40

Karma Steps: 18

Powers: Corrupt Karma 18, Horror Mark 18, Horror Thread 18 (see text), Karma Tap 18

Legend Points: 25,000

Equipment: None

Loot: None





A DISCOURSE ON TAINT

The following text came to the Great Library of Throal as part of the manuscript for Creatures of Barsaive, a most valuable tome dictated by the Great Dragon Vasdenjas and scribed by Tiabdjinn the Knower, First Scholar of the Khavro'am. After long consultation with Tiabdjinn and subsequent correspondence with Vasdenjas, I chose to place this text in this tome on the Horrors. Our thanks go to Vasdenjas for allowing this work to appear here.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, 1507 TH

Though not a creature in the same sense as the skeorx or cave crab [as Vasdenjas said this, I heard his stomach growl], Taint is an entity of which all Barsaive should be made aware. I have encountered Taint on more than one occasion—much to my misfortune—and only my superior magical ability protected me from the mark of this Horror. Of course, every Horror is a fearsome thing to Name-givers, particularly to you small folk. Taint, however, is a being of particular evil whose attack is most greatly to be feared. Those of you who have become adepts often think of yourselves as better able than common folk to challenge the Horrors, and many a time you are right. But in the case of Taint, adepts are more at risk than the common Name-giver. Adepts of the spellcasting Disciplines face the greatest danger of all.

This increased danger results from the nature of this accursed Horror, for Taint marks its prey by tainting the flow of magic to an adept. Almost all Horrors possess this ability in one form or another, but Taint can conceal the use of its dreadful power, even as it marks its victims. This

Horror marks victims gradually, by subtly tainting the flow of magic from astral space to the adept until, over time, this taint grows into a Horror mark.

Unlike most other Horrors, Taint is bound to the astral plane and cannot take physical form in our world. But Taint has learned every secret of the powerful realm in which it dwells. Therefore, it knows exactly how to corrupt the flow of magic so that its tampering goes entirely unnoticed. Let us say that

you are a wizard, weaving threads for some magical purpose (I assume all my readers know that all magic use involves gathering threads of astral energy).

If Taint is lurking in astral space near you when you weave your thread, it carefully taints the thread, making certain that the amount of corrupted magic is low enough to avoid detection. Taint continues to do this, lingering near its chosen victim and subtly corrupting every thread the adept weaves until—days, weeks, or even months later—the victim becomes Horror-marked. Once this happens, the Horror can corrupt any use of magic by the victim.

The Horror may cause the adept's own magic to turn against him or may pervert the magic's intent in some horrible way.

The most famous example of Taint's terrible work is the tragic destruction of Kaer Orinthall. I see by your face that you know the Name, but I daresay the full story is unknown to you. The denizens of this kaer had created their defenses carefully enough to have weathered the Scourge well, but they knew nothing of Taint and could not guard against its subtle guile. All the elaborate traps, all the





stalwart defenders made no difference. Taint placed itself outside the kaer and slowly, over the course of twenty years, corrupted its first victim inside the kaer: an adept responsible for growing the kaer's food. Through this first victim, Taint made every soul in the kaer its unwilling servant. Within fifty years after this insidious Horror began its terrible work, the entire kaer was in its grip. It kept the people of Orinthall alive for a time—until it ceased to find their anguish diverting, I doubt not. And then it turned them against each other in a blood bath of dreadful proportions. No one from doomed Orinthall survived.

Noble Master, how does one defend against such a fiend?

Not easily, friend Tiabdjinn, not easily. Taint exists only in the astral plane, and so no physical act can touch it. The only way to destroy this horrible entity is to cast powerful magic at it or to confront it on the astral plane. Both methods force one to combat the Horror in its natural element, both are extremely dangerous. In the former case, Taint can turn the spells you cast back against you. In the latter case, you end up battling Taint on a battleground it has spent its entire existence learning to understand, and of which you know almost nothing by comparison.

GAME INFORMATION

Taint exists solely on the astral plane, where it appears as a huge bodiless head, floating amid swirls of polluted astral energy. Taint's face (if it can be called that) has four huge dark eyes, a pair on either side, that stare lifelessly into the depths of astral space. Its mouth can stretch to impossibly large dimensions, enabling it to swallow almost any astral prey. A pair of talon-tipped tendrils float at the top and bottom of Taint's body; the Horror uses these tendrils to draw astral victims into its gaping maw.

Taint roams astral space, searching for potential victims to mark. Though the Horror can mark adepts of any Discipline, Taint most often attacks magicians because their use of magic is much more obvious and easier to corrupt.

Taint favors areas that suffered worst during the Scourge and shows up most often in regions designated as Tainted or Corrupt (see **Casting Raw Magic**, p. 155, ED). Taint occasionally wanders through Open regions as well, but enters Safe regions only in rare circumstances, as these areas expose the Horror to adepts' astral sensing abilities.

TAINT'S POWERS

In addition to a few unique abilities discussed below, Taint possesses several common Horror powers, including

ASTRAL POLLUTION CAMOUFLAGE TABLE

Region	Spell Defense Bonus
Safe	+ 0
Open	+ 4
Tainted	+ 12
Corrupt	+ 20

Corrupt Karma and Spellcasting. Taint's affinity for corrupted magical energies makes the Horror comfortable in polluted regions of astral space. When in these areas, Taint is more difficult to detect than normal, as the astral pollution functions as magical camouflage. To reflect this, Taint gains a bonus to its Spell Defense when it lurks in polluted areas of astral space, as shown on the Astral Pollution Camouflage Table. This bonus is added to Taint's Spell Defense for all purposes. The effect is the same as for the Netherwalk talent (p. 34, **Earthdawn Companion**).

Taint can also draw strength from the corrupt astral energy. This enables the Horror to recover from damage and regenerate spent or lost Karma without making tests. However, Taint cannot engage in other activities while drawing on corrupt astral energy for this purpose. In Open regions, each hour that Taint draws energy gains the Horror 1 additional Recovery Test or 1 point of Karma. In Tainted regions it gains 2 Recovery Tests or 2 points of Karma per hour. In Corrupt regions it gains 3 Recovery Tests or 4 points of Karma. Note that Taint can accumulate more Karma than the listed 40 in this manner.

Taint's Horror Mark power works a little differently than the standard version of this power. When Taint chooses to Horror-mark a victim, the Horror must use its power over and over again until enough corruption has collected in the adept's pattern to Horror-mark him or her. Unlike normal versions of this power, Taint can only make a Horror Mark Test against a target who is manipulating magical energy in some way: weaving spell threads, casting a spell, using thread magic, or improving talent ranks. Magicians are Taint's favored targets because the use of their spellcasting abilities makes them easy prey.

Each time Taint attempts to use its Horror Mark power, it makes a Horror Mark Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, 1 point of the target's magic has become tainted. As soon as the number of tainted points is equal to the target's Perception step number, the victim is







Horror marked. For example, if Taint attempts to pervert the flow of magic to a wizard with Perception step 7, the Horror must make seven successful Horror Mark Tests. On the seventh successful test, the victim is Horror-marked. If a test fails, however, the target may make a Perception Test against the result of the failed Horror Mark Test. If the Perception Test succeeds, the character realizes that some outside force has interfered with his or her use of magic.

Through its Horror Mark, Taint can corrupt a marked victim's use of magic. Victims of Taint's Horror Mark can also serve as conduits through which the Horror can use its other powers against targets in the physical world. For example, it can cast its spells at other targets near the marked victim.

Corrupt Magic

The Corrupt Magic power enables Taint to corrupt any use of magic by a Horror-marked target, such as casting spells and using talents. This corruption can take many forms, ranging from damage to the Horror-marked character to a perversion of the magic's intent. To use this power, Taint makes a Corrupt Magic Test against the target's Spell Defense. If this test succeeds, the Horror can influence the outcome of the target's use of magic. The gamemaster determines the exact effects of this power. The following examples illustrate possible effects.

If a tainted spell causes damage to the marked character, the effect is similar to that of casting raw magic (p. 155, ED). The target takes damage based on the success level of Taint's Corrupt Magic Test. An Average success causes damage as if the character had cast raw magic in a Safe region. A Good success damages the target as if he had cast magic in an Open region. An Excellent success, as if he had cast in a Tainted region; and an Extraordinary success, as if he had cast in a Corrupt region. When Taint uses this power to damage a character using a talent, the talent rank substitutes for the spell Circle when calculating the damage taken by the target.

Taint can also cause the effects of a talent or spell to go wrong. For example, a spell that heals a target may do harm, or a talent that improves an object or target character (i.e. Forge Blade) may damage the object or character. Alternatively, the spell or talent may affect the wrong target. For example, a Bone Shatter spell aimed at an enemy may instead strike a companion.

USING TAIN

Taint's method of attack makes it a particularly insidious danger. It prefers to target the most powerful of adepts,

as these offer the greatest opportunities for it to use its corrupting powers. Once the Horror has marked such a victim, it can use its Corrupt Magic power to cause the victim to spread pain, fear, and terror throughout Barsaive. And any adept once marked by Taint will never be able to fully trust his own abilities again.

Taint is a particularly good choice of Horror for a group that has been adventuring together for quite some time, whose members are beginning to think they've seen everything Barsaive can throw at them. During an appropriate adventure, one of the characters (whichever could most do with a little paranoia) begins to sense something wrong with his or her magic. Each time this character uses a talent, he or she feels a terrible drain on his soul. If the characters dig around for information, they will most likely determine the source of the problem. Once they realize that Taint is responsible, the tainted character has some difficult decisions ahead of him. Does he stop using his talents altogether? Does he keep using them until he is under Taint's control? Or does he confront the creature astrally and attempt to destroy it?

TAIN

Attributes

DEX: 12	STR: 16	TOU: 13
PER: 20	WIL: 16	CHA: 13

Initiative: 15

Number of Attacks: 4

Attack: 13

Damage: 17

Number of Spells: 3

Spellcasting: 18

Effect: See below

Death Rating: 75

Wound Threshold: 10

Unconsciousness Rating: 70

Karma Points: 40

Physical Defense: 15

Spell Defense: 20

Social Defense: 15

Armor: 10

Mystic Armor: 10

Knockdown: NA

Recovery Tests: 8

Combat Movement: 50

Full Movement: 100

Karma Step: 16

Powers: Corrupt Karma 20, Corrupt Magic 20, Horror Mark 20, Karma Tap 15, Spells: Circle 10 Wizard

Legend Points: 25,000

Equipment: None

Loot: None





THE CONFESSION OF ELBERG THE YOUNGER

Seldom does a librarian bemoan the authenticity of a document she is researching. But I find myself doing so with this text, an epistle to the Master of the Hall of Records by the traveled scholar Elberg the Younger. Elberg served as my master when I was initiated into the Discipline, and no dwarf could ask for a gentler and wiser teacher. Though he was in ill health even when I knew him, his wisdom and generosity shone through like the finest of light crystals. Upon my return to the library after my latest series of inquiries in Barsaive, I was asked to study this document and determine its authenticity. I must sadly attest that the letter's familiar style is indeed Elberg's. As to its veracity, I cannot say for certain, for the Horrors are not my field of expertise. Instead, I shall merely state that Elberg, even under the terrible pressures described in the text below, would die before allowing falsehood to contaminate the body of dwarf knowledge.

—Carina
Featherhood, traveled scholar, 1505

Dear Merrox,

Pardon the curtness of this letter, for the sands in my hourglass are dwindling and I have little time for academic formalities. I had hoped to bequeath to you an entire volume of careful notes on the phenomena I am about to describe. But last night I was not myself, and I awoke to see my notes torn to shreds and strewn about my room. I write to you from Kratas, from the most disreputable of inns—the only place that will accept my patronage in my current condition. The notes, the notes were all destroyed, as the other half of me—

But my thoughts run away with me. Let me begin at the beginning. As you might have discerned when I last visited

the library, disease has been slowly pressing the life from my body for nigh on two years now. I have consulted healer after healer, from the royal physicians to the sisters of the elusive Order of Garlen, and none could offer me any hope.

I am dying, Merrox, have been dying for months, and nothing can be done. The healers inform me that the disease I have—the Inner Wastes—was curable before the Scourge, but no longer. Not for me, at least.

I decided to do something useful with my few remaining months.

Long have we struggled to understand the ways of the Horrors and the experience of being marked, so as to better combat these monsters. We have had many fragments presented to us, many clues, but never a comprehensive study. I sought to remedy this situation with a volume I spent the past months laboring over. But my final legacy is now a heap of tatters—ruined! Ruined!

Yes, Merrox, I did the unthinkable. I sought out the mark. I sought the mark of a Horror, so that I might study its effects firsthand, carefully monitor the progress of my condition and leave behind something that could be used to—but the time for noble pronouncements is past.

I shall tell you what I can of the Horror called the Tempter.

The Tempter is a tiny thing, scarcely what one would speak of in the same breath as Verjigorm or Chantrel's Horror. But make no mistake, its malignity is vast. I have held the vile thing in my hands. It has flown from my fingers, flitted about the room, tormented me. It resembles a seed of the azalvine or hainthorn bushes, a burr with small





hooks it uses to catch onto clothing or—yes, Merrox, I know you think I am mad, but this Horror takes the shape of a simple seed! Why is it that we believe easily in the Horror with a hundred tentacles, or the slime-covered mass of flesh that towers above the landscape, yet we doubt the evil that takes the form of a common, mundane object? It seems so absurd now, even as I write this, even with the thing still in my—

It whispers to you at night, Merrox, whispers. It speaks softly in the mind's ear. Not at all the terrifying, wretched voice I expected. No, the Tempter sounded like my mother as she sang me lullabies during my childhood. It was not dishonest with me. It told me it was a Horror, that it called itself the Tempter. It assured me it would not do anything to me that I did not wish for. It assured me that it was patient, that it could wait—that it would only destroy me if I requested destruction. It is a seed, indeed, the seed of all the vainglory, self-deception, and self-destruction a Name-giver hides within his own heart.

Undoubtedly you will ask, Merrox, how I acquired the mark of this great Horror? In the villages outside Urupa I heard rumors that the revered purifier Onac had been behaving erratically and had committed foul and remorseless crimes. Reportedly, he had slaughtered many in a particular village. I traveled to the cursed hamlet and heard the tale. I heard how they had given Onac hospitality. They told me he had looked changed, more troll than obsidiman—but something else horrible added to the mix as well. They told me he had he cried in his sleep and screamed the Name of the Tempter.

I knew the Name from many texts. But these tomes always contained vague references, couched in fear and too unreliable to be of any use. And so I followed the trail of destruction left by Onac until I found his corpse. A determined trio of young adepts had run him to ground and, after a great struggle, hastened him to his grave. His form had been appallingly corrupted; he looked more like a gargoyle than a great obsidiman hero. I had hoped to question Onac as to where one might find this Tempter, and thought my plans at a dead end. However, the Tempter was waiting for me in a fold of Onac's cape—

Oh, Merrox, the thing wishes to dictate to you, wishes me to let it write to you directly. It says it welcomes fools like me, welcomes those who seek its mark. It usually spends many weeks or months between victims, looking for those sufficiently heroic to attach itself to, those with goals, ideals, things that must be done, things for which its help is required. It says nothing thrills it more than to take a Name-giver with a cause—a cause such as mine. I cannot drive it from my mind,

Merrox, the temptation is so—to feel its power run through your veins. I had thought myself a calm and rational dwarf, not one given to flights of—in all my pain, my mental and physical agony, there is still the memory of those moments when the Tempter's essence roared through my veins, and I had twice the strength of my youth. My mind grew and took in new vistas of understanding. I became bigger, better! Join it! Seek it out and join it! I have promised it an empire, an empire of servants, if only it will spare me its insistent promises, its seductive offers. IF ONLY IT WILL LEAVE ME ALONE, I WILL GIVE IT OTHERS, COUNTLESS OTHERS, JUST TO SPARE ME AND ME ALONE—

Forgive me, Merrox, I am mad. No, I *was* mad, engorged with an old man's pride. To think any good could have come from my plan! I thought I had the strength to offer myself up as a sacrifice, that my weakness could become power through a redemptive act of—but now I am beyond redemption. I have fallen, I have killed that which a dwarf was not meant to kill, tasted the meat no Name-giver was meant to taste, all because I accepted its offer once. Once. I did so even when all my instincts howled in my being and warned me not to. But the child was about to be crushed, Merrox, crushed, and it promised me the strength to hold the wall long enough, just long enough to. ... After the first time, the second acceptance was easier, and the third easier still.

Whether the Tempter engineered the collapse of the wall or not, I cannot guess. I have not plumbed the limits of its powers. I have learned little about it, and it has learned everything about me—the fundamental weakness in my soul, the softness, the pride.

Every time I gave into its offers—each offer sensible, calm, without coercion; each cause just, worthy—the foul entity drew a little more of my soul into its hooks. Now I am changing, my gross and corrupt inner self hardening my skin into a chitinous shell and lengthening my nails into claws. I am no longer a Name-giver, Merrox! My pattern is warped and twisted, twisted from the inside, with my help—my blind, benighted, arrogant help!

My tears stain the page, and my strength fails me. Yes, I have an offer of help, a boost of potency with which to continue this letter, all day and all night if need be. But it is an offer I dare not accept. I have a messenger standing by to forward it to you. With luck I shall be dead by the time you read it.

—Elberg





GAME INFORMATION

The Tempter specializes in the corruption of the most righteous of Barsaivians: it concentrates on questors, light-bearers, members of warrior bands, liberators, and others who live according to vows or strict principles of honor. It derives sustenance from fear, pain, and doubt as most Horrors do, but it gains extra power from the despair that results from self-betrayal. It exists to steer unfortunate souls to betray all they stand for. Once its victims are at their lowest ebb, it enjoys the additional cruelty of transforming them into Horror constructs.

Physically, the Tempter appears as a burr, a thorny seed case no more than half an inch in diameter. The Tempter uses its tiny spikes to latch onto a victim's cloak, boots, or leggings. It may also hide in the hair of a victim's mount. What, if anything, is contained inside the seed case is unknown. It is unlikely that anyone has opened the case and lived to report on its contents. According to legend, however, an ork liberator once opened the Tempter's case in the early years after the Scourge. She found inside it an oozing, half-formed, miniature replica of herself.

Despite the Tempter's small size, harming the Horror physically is extremely difficult. Though the Tempter cannot harm opponents in direct physical combat (it is particularly fond of the Illusory Missiles spell) it typically flees when discovered, for it derives no mystic energy from slaying victims directly. It has no means of ground locomotion, but can fly through the air at high speeds. If it remains interested in a victim from whom it has fled, the Tempter returns later. It uses its illusion spells cleverly to disguise its presence if need be.

THE TEMPTER'S POWERS

After the Tempter has latched onto a victim, it immediately uses its Horror Mark power. Marking its victim allows the Tempter to form a mental link with the unfortunate individual, through which it offers assistance in various situations. The Horror's first suggestions do not violate any principles the victim believes in. In fact, the Tempter offers aid in the form of its Karma Boost power (see **Game Information**, p. 102), in moments when the character truly needs help. It whispers praise for the victim's code of honor and claims to be a benign entity cruelly slandered in legend. If the victim refuses its aid, the Tempter merely sniffs its regret. It is a patient Horror and will wait for its victims to betray themselves by asking for that extra surge of karma when times get rough. After the victim has accepted its help

a few times, the Tempter's whispering becomes more frequent and it offers Karma Boosts for increasingly trivial matters. It aims to make the victim completely dependent upon it. Eventually the victim accepts the Tempter's aid one time too many and begins to turn into a Horror construct.

USING TEMPTER

Player characters can encounter the Tempter without meeting the Horror directly. They may fight the Horror constructs it leaves in its wake or try to bring one of its victims to a wizard powerful enough to dispel the effects of its Karma Boost power.

However, if you want a player character to be marked by a major Horror, the Tempter makes an interesting choice. Because it provides boosts when the character most wants them, the character might well be tempted to draw upon those 15 extra steps again and again, until it is too late—which leaves the character's doom or salvation in the player character's hands.

THE TEMPTER

Attributes

DEX: 22	STR: 4	TOU: 10
PER: 25	WIL: 23	CHA: 23

Initiative: 22

Number of Attacks: 0

Attack: NA

Damage: NA

Number of Spells: 5

Spellcasting: 30

Effect: See Powers

Physical Defense: 25

Spell Defense: 25

Social Defense: 23

Armor: 8

Mystic Armor: 20

Knockdown: 6

Recovery Tests: 10

Death Rating: 80

Wound Threshold: 18

Unconsciousness Rating: 60

Combat Movement: 240

Full Movement: 480

Karma Points: 60

Karma Step: 15

Powers: Horror Mark 20, Karma Boost 15, Spells: Circle 6 Illusionist

Legend Points: 200,000

Equipment: None

Loot: None





AN ENCOUNTER WITH UBYR

The following account of Ubyr, Horror of the Serpent River, was provided by the t'skrang weaponsmith Leahr, who recounted his experience of the Horror to Damorpin the scribe in the year 1075 TH. This fascinating document has only recently come to light.

—Lasher Smallfast, apprentice, 1507 TH

In the final days before the closing of the kaers, many riverboat crews grew wealthy by braving the ever-growing threat of the Horrors to bring supplies to those villages and riverside communities whose kaers remained open. So it happened that I, inspired by a youthful craving for adventure that gnawed at my belly and an unwillingness to seal myself away prematurely, signed onto the river galley *Aetritris* under the command of Captain Ladarrak. My task was to see that the crew was armed with weapons of sufficient virtue to withstand the assaults of the myriad Horrors abroad at that time. And indeed, in several confrontations with marauding entities of the lesser sort, the valiant t'skrang of the *Aetritris* proved equal to the task set them.

Ladarrak's plan called for the galley to make a single trip from Kaer Chivitus to Kaer Agalit and back, a voyage of some three weeks. During the upriver voyage, we planned to purchase surplus items from anyone who might remain in any covenant we passed by (and to take anything of value found abandoned). On the downriver voyage we would sell these items to the needy people of Agalit, Dirirmir, Javukk and Chivitus, the four communities that lay along our route. This single voyage of three weeks was to bring us as much profit as five good years of regular river trade.

The upriver voyage passed profitably, though not without danger, and we did good business at Agalit and Dirirmir. In good spirits we approached Javukk, a mere three days from Chivitus, wealth, and safety. Javukk was the smallest community along that part of the Serpent, but many thought its kaer the most secure. Dwarf engineers and their crews had carved the structure out of a single gigantic, unbroken protrusion of volcanic rock. Indeed, many of the wealthiest merchants and nobles in that area of Barsaive planned to make their homes in the kaer. We had intended to make our greatest single profit thereby, selling luxury items abandoned by refugees. When we reached Javukk, we found the place so quiet that we thought the folk had sealed their kaer early. Upon inspection, however, we found the great granite door pulled tightly shut but the final seals and

bars not yet in place. Intent on making some profit, the captain determined we should enter.

Now I have walked on battlefields strewn with the fallen and have swum amid slain covenants where the shredded flesh of Horror victims floated, so corrupt that even the small fishes would not touch it. I tell you that these sights were nothing compared to the strange tableau we found within Kaer Javukk. Countless dead people lay where they had fallen, their bodies unmarked by violence or sign of illness. Their expressions showed neither fear nor despair, but only a profound weariness, like the faces of t'skrang who, having labored on the docks for a day and a night and a day, finally fall into painful slumber. The bodies showed little evidence of swelling or natural putrefaction, as though the very agents of corruption had been slain along with the inhabitants of Javukk.

Some of the residents of the kaer seemed to have arisen in the last minutes of their lives and set forth as though to try to reach their own homes, or at least the side of a loved one. From the evidence of their movements, we came to believe that the people of the kaer had known they were doomed, and that their dying had taken no more than one hour—most certainly an hour of fear and dread.

When we emerged from that accursed place, we discovered more evidence illuminating the kaer's final fate. The surrounding rocks showed tracks and impressions unmistakably made by a huge, serpentine body. Judging from the impressions, the beast was as wide around as a t'skrang is tall, and its length was staggering—several hundreds of yards. It seemed to have been long enough, at any rate, to have stretched itself entirely around the upper portion of Kaer Javukk. The creature had clearly come up out of the water to wrap itself around the kaer. And though we found no clear evidence of an attack, it seemed obvious that the monster had somehow drained the life from the victims of Javukk.

I do not know what beneficent Passion touched me that day, but to that Passion I pledge my undying devotion. For when the captain ordered the crew aboard to resume the voyage to Chivitus, an overwhelming terror possessed me. Though in my mind I knew that the land was as perilous as the river, no force could compel my heart to return to the riverboat. Instead, I determined to strike out alone and return to Chivitus overland. My desertion enraged the captain, but she could conceive of no threat more terrible to







me than the prospect of returning to the riverboat. And so in the end I was left behind—to my certain doom, as most of the crew thought, myself included.

From the dome of rock above the tomb that Javukk had become, I watched the *Aetritris* move away. The doomed vessel had barely moved from shore when disaster struck. The terrible serpent sprang out of the river like a bow of iron and snatched the bosun from the deck. Its body was scaled like an eel's, but its head was flat and featureless, merely a tooth-lined circular maw like that of a leech. It hoisted the bosun high above the deck of the ship and shook him about for less than a minute before throwing his bloodless body ashore, a distance of more than 100 feet. In shock, I realized that I had heard of this monster—a fearsome tale told by a troubadour had spoken of it as the Horror Named Ubyr.

The captain, seeing that flight was futile, ordered the *Aetritris* about. She attacked Ubyr with the sword Aetrin, perhaps the finest blade ever to emerge from my forge. I watched her give Ubyr three great wounds with the blade, until the water boiled with the ichor that flowed from the creature's flesh. In the end it availed her naught, for the monster was not slowed. The valiant captain suffered the same fate as her helpless bosun, and the noble blade Aetrin was lost beneath the boiling river.

At the captain's death the crew fell into panic, and I watched in terror as they were slain to the last t'skrang. Those who did not become part of Ubyr's repast were broken by its thrashing coils or else succumbed to the boiling acid of the creature's blood. As I watched, Ubyr smashed the *Aetritris* to splinters. Only after the terrible thing had devoured the last crew member and reduced the riverboat to wreckage did I realize how exposed my position was, and so I hastened inland.

I remember little of the next five days and nights. I know that I either hid from or fought wild beasts, bandits and lesser Horrors. I arrived at Chivitus in the late morning, and at sunset that evening the kaer was sealed. So disheveled and incoherent was I that they almost refused to let me in, fearing I might be Horror-touched. After some days I recovered my senses and my strength, but it was not until now that I have felt able to speak of the last voyage of the doomed *Aetritris* and the Horror called Ubyr.

GAME INFORMATION

Ubyr is a unique, gargantuan Horror that haunted the Serpent River during the Scourge, preying on the crew covenants of the t'skrang and on coastal villages of other

racess. A leechlike creature of staggering size, it seems to feed both on blood and on the pure vital energy of its victims. In addition to using its fantastic size and strength to simply smash a victim or object, Ubyr can also completely drain the blood of a human-sized victim caught in its jaws within seconds. Ubyr also has a far stranger and more devastating ability. After encircling a building or other inhabited enclosure, it can drain the vital energy from every living creature inside that structure by using its Siphon Will power (see **Siphon Will**, following).

Ubyr is usually about 400 yards long, but can stretch its body to a maximum length of 700 yards. This stretching allows it to encircle a square building as long as 500 feet to a side. Ubyr is blind, but can sense any living being that passes within 30 yards of any part of its body, unless a solid object lies between the being and the Horror. If Ubyr senses a victim about to escape its coils, it usually breaks off its Siphon Will attack and simply crushes or devours the structure and everyone inside. Implacable in its pursuit of escaped prey, Ubyr can unerringly track a victim once it has the target's "scent." Nonetheless, intended victims may escape from Ubyr's coils by using underground tunnels, for example, or swimming beyond the Horror's reach.

The ichor that courses through Ubyr's veins is corrosive. Direct contact with it causes Step 15 damage. When the ichor comes into contact with water it turns even more acidic, causing Step 20 damage to any who touch it. Neither clothing nor armor provide any protection against the damage. If Ubyr is wounded in the water (it spends almost all of its time in the water, though it can move just as fast on land) the ichor spreads out from the wound at a rate of one cubic yard per round, to a maximum radius equal to the total damage taken by Ubyr (maximum radius is measured in cubic yards).

UBYR'S POWERS

Ubyr possesses the Horror Mark and Terror powers, as well as the unique power Siphon Will.

Ubyr can only use its Horror Mark power to track a victim that has escaped its coils. Whenever a victim manages to free himself from Ubyr, the Horror makes a Perception Test. If the result equals or exceeds the target's Spell Defense, Ubyr has sensed the target and immediately attempts to Horror-mark him or her. If the Horror Mark Test succeeds, Ubyr can track the target at a range of up to 100 miles. This tracking is automatic and does not require any further tests. Few who confront Ubyr ever survive to tell the tale.





Siphon Will

The Siphon Will power allows Ubyr to drain the life force from victims trapped within a structure encircled by the Horror. Once Ubyr has completely encircled the structure, it makes a Siphon Will Test against the highest Spell Defense of any of the targets within the structure. If the test is successful, each individual inside the encircled building loses 1 point from every Attribute value each minute, with an appropriate reduction to all step numbers. This loss cannot be resisted and only stops when Ubyr uncoils. The loss stops for individual targets who escape the circle of Ubyr's body as well. Whenever any Attribute value reaches 0, the character is dead. Any character who somehow escapes Ubyr before losing all his or her vital energy regains 1 point of each affected Attribute with every successful Recovery Test.

Ubyr uses the life energy drained by this power to replenish its Karma Points, as well as heal damage. For every victim Ubyr kills with this power, the Horror can take 1 Karma Point or heal 5 Damage Points it has previously taken. (See **Energy Drain**, p. 103 in the **Game Information** section, for more information.)

Ubyr can use its Siphon Will power against any structure with four solid walls and a roof. The gamemaster determines whether walled compounds, tents, and other reasonably solid enclosures constitute such structures. If Ubyr completely encircles a portion of a much larger structure or complex, its power only affects those in the encircled area. For example, if Ubyr climbed up the wall of a fort and draped itself around one of the towers, its power would affect everyone in the tower, but nobody in the other parts of the fort.

USING UBYR

In one possible adventure involving Ubyr, a riverboat is found adrift on the Serpent River with all of its crew struck dead where they stood. No marks of violence or sickness appear anywhere on them, and the ship and its cargo are untouched. At first the authorities assume that the crew fell prey to some new form of magical attack launched by river pirates or business rivals of the ship's owners. Then an elder t'skrang remembers childhood tales he or she has heard of Ubyr, the giant river-leech. This tale prompts others to come forward and tell of a great serpentine body glimpsed in the river at midnight, or friends of friends mysteriously and recently lost on parts of the river thought to be safe from monsters and pirates. The player

characters are hired to retrace the drifting ship's last voyage and discover its true fate. The gamemaster determines whether the river killer is some mundane menace or actually Ubyr, awakened from a long sleep at the bottom of the Serpent River.

In another possible adventure, the crews of riverboats begin telling strange stories of shadowy figures seen at night on the rocky dome above the long-abandoned shell of Kaer Javukk, or of mysterious lights flickering in the river below. Some who have passed near the lost kaer report dreams of silent t'skrang coming to them and demanding some sort of unknown service. Because of these manifestations, the river communities decide to re-open Javukk to ensure that the kaer's dead still lie undisturbed. The characters are commissioned to investigate, spending a full night exploring the rooms of Kaer Javukk. The gamemaster determines whether the manifestations are really restless spirits, some lingering and belated manifestation of Ubyr, or some more mundane threat that has come to lair in the necropolis of Javukk.

UBYR

Attributes

DEX: 22 STR: 30 TOU: 21
PER: 15 WIL: 21 CHA: 15

Initiative: 20

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 24

Damage: 25

Number of Spells: 1

Spellcasting: 18

Effect: See Powers

Physical Defense: 25

Spell Defense: 22

Social Defense: 27

Armor: 29

Mystic Armor: 24

Knockdown: 24

Recovery Tests: 10

Death Rating: 180

Wound Threshold: 25

Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 100

Full Movement: 150

Karma Points: 40

Karma Step: 15

Powers: Horror Mark 14, Siphon Will 21, Terror 17

Legend Points: 120,000

Equipment: None

Loot: None known





REGARDING VERJIGORM

The following account was graciously provided by the Great Dragon Icewing. The Library of Throal, and indeed all the Name-givers of Barsaive, owe this generous dragon a debt of undying gratitude for the information he has provided on this entity. Scholars throughout the land agree that Verjigorm is the most powerful Horror that has ever existed—a terrible, vile abomination whose strength towers above that of all other Horrors. May the Passions protect us all against the curse of the Horror called Verjigorm and its unnatural spawn, for its unmatched power and malevolent intelligence may yet spell the end of all that we know.

—Leranto Myrn, apprentice scholar, Library of Throal, 1507

Generations of Name-givers throughout Barsaive and the lands beyond have learned to fear the great dragons. Even your most powerful magicians are but bumbling children in things magical when compared to us, and your most celebrated heroes cringe like frightened old women at the thought of facing the sword-like teeth and scythe-like claws of a dragon in battle. There is no shame in this fear. Beings of much greater power than you little folk have learned to fear us, for we great dragons are ancient and powerful beyond imagining. We walked these lands and rode the wind thousands of years before the first t'skrang tasted the waters of the Serpent or the first windling unfurled its wings in the cool morning air.

But one being exists that even great dragons fear, a being that existed long before my ancient race appeared in Barsaive. Some call it the Horror of a Thousand Faces, or the Corruptor. Others know it as the Horror That Is Worshiped as a Passion, or the Great Hunter. Even today, dragons speak its cursed Name only in whispers, for it is said to have ears that hear all and eyes that never close. It is the Horror that always was, the Horror that is, the Horror that ever shall be. It is Verjigorm.

The words of Name-givers cannot describe this Horror's all-encompassing evil, but I will try to do so in the hope that some day the monster might be banished forever from our world. Perhaps the following story, which I heard often as a hatchling, may help you understand.

Long before the first dragon soared through the sky, the world was darkness, a never-ending moonless night that even the sun and stars could not penetrate. Thick, black clouds choked the sky and spawned cold, biting rains that

scoured the barren land like a plague of hungry locusts. The seas and rivers were foul, bubbling cesspools teeming with plague and death.

This was the age of the Dark One. One thousand and seven eyes sprang from its head, so that it might watch forever its cursed kingdom. Its terrible ears never shut, so that it might always hear the gnashing of teeth and the wailing and moaning of all living things. From its mouth flowed countless foul poisons into the waters and the winds. Its decaying flesh gave birth to countless abominations—creeping, sightless many-legged things that crawled and slithered across the land; black-winged, cloven-hoofed creatures that swarmed in the storm-filled skies; powerful, many-toothed beasts that ruled the dark waters.

As the ages passed the Dark One grew bored with its foul minions, for they were mindless entities. And so it spawned others in its own image. Soon the children of the Dark One, the *horoi*, began to birth their own foul spawn into the world. Each tried to outdo the others by creating the foulest creature to impress the Dark One, and soon the *horoi* grew insanely jealous of one another. Then the Dark One's children began to attack one other, directing their terrible spawn as a general commands troops against an enemy. Their vile blood filled the oceans, and their minions fed on the putrid corpses that littered the land. The Dark One rejoiced at the carnage and spawned new *horoi* to replace those devoured by their brothers.

Some time during the world's endless night, the Dark One bore a *horoi* that was not like the others. At first it seemed little different from its vile brethren. But as time passed, the *horoi* slowly changed. First, it withdrew from the terrible battle that consumed all the others. It stretched its dark, webbed wings and soared into the sky. The grotesque minions of its brethren pursued it, clawing at its skin and pecking at its eyes, but it paid them no heed. It continued to climb higher and higher, until it passed the dark storm clouds and its tormentors could no longer follow it. It soared on the winds until it reached the other side of the world, a place the Dark One had not yet corrupted. Exhausted by its journey, it set down and fell into a deep, deep sleep.

For ages it slumbered, as the carnage and suffering continued unabated in the domain of the Dark One. Then one day a break appeared in the ever-present clouds







overhead, letting in a stream of sunlight that warmed the horoi and wakened it. As it looked about, it noticed that its slimy, pockmarked, blackened skin had turned into gleaming white scales. The formless hulk of its body had been replaced with four strong legs, a slender tail and neck, and a pair of graceful wings, all connected to a stout and powerful middle. As the horoi gazed at itself in wonder, it realized that the air was silent—free of the cries of pain and fear that filled the Dark One's domain. As it surveyed its surroundings, the horoi realized that it was alone. Nothing crawled underfoot or slithered through the seas or swarmed in the sky. For a moment, the horoi felt a great relief. Then the horoi closed its great eyes for a moment and felt something else. For the first time in its life, the horoi knew it was lonely.

As the thought entered its mind, a wonderful thing happened. Beneath its feet, it felt grass burst through the earth: then bushes and trees and entire forests. Suddenly, the sound of waves crashing against the shore reached its ears, and the horoi knew that an ocean lay over the horizon. Next came the sound of running rivers and waterfalls, then the sounds of animals in the forests. As the horoi surveyed what its loneliness had called forth, its heart grew full of something it had never known—joy. At that moment, nine large tears formed in its eyes and fell to the ground. At the spot where the first drop struck, a handsome winged creature resembling the horoi appeared. This creature, it called Dragon. The second and third drops yielded creatures the horoi Named Elf and Human. The fourth and fifth drops created Obsidiman and T'skrang. The sixth and seventh formed Dwarf and Windling; and the eighth and ninth, Troll and Ork.

These new creatures traveled across the new land, swiftly producing others of their kind. Their voices were like music to the horoi's ears, and their settlements were like jewels set upon a giant tapestry. As the days passed the horoi taught its children all it knew. It taught them how to harvest food from the forests and rivers, how to sing and write and paint. And with great sadness, it taught them how to forge and wield the sword and shield. The weapons puzzled the horoi's inquisitive children, for they knew not war; but the horoi told them that one day a darkness would descend on them and they must be ready to fight.

Meanwhile, the Dark One's domain grew until its spawn reached the edge of the untouched lands. When the foul things saw the wonders that their transformed brother had wrought, they hurried back to their dark

master and told it what they had seen. When the Dark One heard their news, it vowed to destroy the horoi and its children, and gathered its minions together into a terrible army.

The Dark One's army filled the sky like a storm cloud and teemed across the untouched land like a giant shadow. From all sides the Dark One's minions attacked the horoi and its children, spewing venom and gnashing teeth, cutting and burning and striking and killing all in their path. For seven days and nights the battle raged, as the horoi's children fought with sword and shield against the overwhelming foe. Finally, only the horoi and its nine firstborn children remained standing against the Dark One and its legion of abominations.

At that moment, the horoi reared up on its hind legs, spread its wings and shouted in a voice that echoed like thunder across the plains. "I am Nightslayer, Mother of Beauty and Father of Good, Protector of All That Is Light! I command you to leave this place! Be gone!"

As the horoi's children watched, a strange thing happened—the land itself, the waters, and the sky rose up against the Dark One and its spawn. Terrified before a power greater than their own, the wretched creatures fled, flying higher and higher until they disappeared from view. The Dark One watched helplessly, shouting at its minions to remain and fight, but it could not stop them. Enraged, the Dark One turned toward the horoi.

"Ungrateful horoi, you know not what you do," the Dark One said. "But you will pay for your insolence. I, Verjigorm, will hunt your children for the rest of time. I will slay every last one of them, and my minions will feed on their pain and terror. But I will not give the mercy of death to your favorite—the Dragon, the one you created in your image. The Dragon will know eternal pain. As you betrayed me, the children of the Dragon's line will betray you. I will corrupt them, twist their souls and make them my own. Then I will return to reign over all the world."

With that the Dark One fled after its minions, throwing an enormous ball of fire at Nightslayer as it did so. As the glowing orb approached, the horoi gathered its children under its wings. When the ball struck Nightslayer, it exploded like a thousand thunderclaps. The earth and sky rumbled, and a vast cloud filled the sky. After a time, the great rumbling stopped and the sun shone once again. Nightslayer's children then gathered near the horoi's head, but the great creature had died. They were left alone to await the return of the Dark One called Verjigorm.



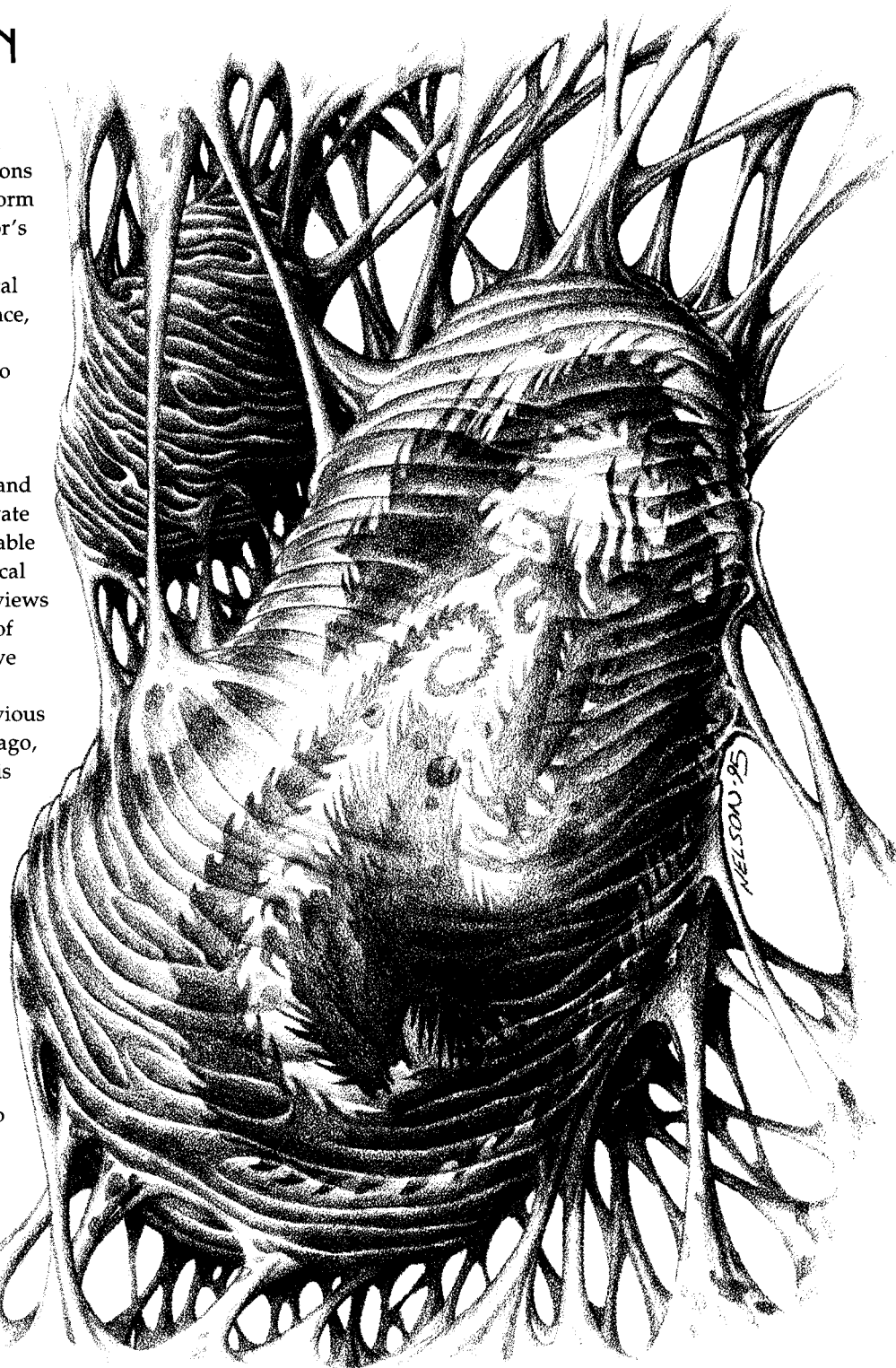


GAME INFORMATION

Verjigorm, the Great Hunter, is perhaps the most powerful and feared Horror in the **Earthdawn** universe. Dragons especially fear and hate Verjigorm because dragons are the Horror's preferred prey. However, Verjigorm's unmatched physical and magical powers, intelligence, and plans for ruling over the whole world make it a threat to all Name-givers.

Unlike most Horrors, Verjigorm is driven by more than the need to feed on pain and despair. Two obsessions motivate this ancient Horror—an insatiable hunger for power and a fanatical hatred of dragons. Verjigorm views dragons as the “creator race” of Barsaive and believes they have usurped its rightful place as Barsaive's ruler. During a previous Scourge roughly 10,000 years ago, the Horror aimed to rectify this perceived wrong by hunting down and capturing several hundred dragons, among them a number of great dragons. It then placed the astral forms of its victims in astral cocoons. Some of these cocoons are located near dragon lairs, kaers, or whatever places Verjigorm found convenient. Verjigorm has used its various powers to corrupt the True Patterns of these cocooned victims in various ways and transform them into powerful, Horror-like creatures.

Ultimately, Verjigorm intends to create a new race of powerful Name-givers that





can re-Name, and thus redefine, the world and its denizens according to Verjigorm's tastes. In this new world, all life forms would become corrupted. Orks would become more savage, obsidimen violent and impatient, t'skrang ill-tempered and venomous, and so on.

Most of Barsaive's Name-givers who are not dragons remain almost indifferent to tales of Verjigorm because the Horror remained largely inactive during the most recent Scourge (apparently to avoid drawing the attention of Barsaive's great dragons). However, the "incubation" periods for Verjigorm's cocooned victims are drawing to a close and many scholars fear these corrupted Name-givers will soon begin wreaking havoc in Barsaive. Some even believe that a few leaders of the so-called Cult of the Great Hunter are corrupted dragons that have emerged from the cocoons. The greatest fear of Horror scholars, however, is that Verjigorm itself will soon reappear in this world.

Verjigorm can manifest in many different forms, though it most often takes on a single physical appearance of horrifying proportions. In its most common manifestation, Verjigorm stands fifteen feet tall at the shoulder. The face of this hideous creature sports six eyes, a wide mouth with three-inch fangs, and spiked horns. Its horrifying head is connected to its torso by a flexible, ten-foot neck. Its skin gleams like metal and razor-sharp spikes protrude from its body. Each of the creature's four legs ends in three sharp talons. The Horror can stand on its rear legs to fight; when it does so, its height rises to a towering forty-five feet. In astral space Verjigorm adopts many different appearances, ranging from an astral duplicate of its physical form to a huge face, surrounded by spiked horns and dozens of staring eyes.

VERJIGORM'S POWERS

The most fearsome of Verjigorm's powers is its Horror Thread power (see **Game Information**, p. 101), which links Verjigorm to its captured dragons and enables the Horror to use its other powers against the dragons while they are metamorphosing. By combining the effects of its Corrupt Karma, Horror Mark, Thought Worm and Unnatural Life powers through its Horror Threads, Verjigorm alters the True Patterns of the dragons it has captured to place them completely under its control.

USING VERJIGORM

Verjigorm is perhaps the most powerful of Horrors, and direct confrontations with the Horror will almost cer-

tainly result in the death of most, if not all, the player characters in a group. However, characters may oppose the Horror indirectly by confronting members of the Cult of the Great Hunter. The **Earthdawn** adventure **Shattered Pattern** is an example of one such story. In that adventure, one of the cult's leaders, an elven nethermancer, attempts to transform a number of dragon eggs into Horror constructs—mimicking Verjigorm's transformations of captured dragons.

By becoming involved with Verjigorm's schemes, player characters have an opportunity to make some very powerful enemies—the cultists or even the Horror itself. On the other hand, opposing Verjigorm may make the characters some very powerful friends or allies among the dragons of Barsaive.

VERJIGORM

Attributes

DEX: 31 STR: 33 TOU: 28
PER: 35 WIL: 40 CHA: 29

Initiative: 35
Number of Attacks: 3
Attack: 38
Damage: 40
Number of Spells: 3
Spellcasting: 40
Effect: See text

Physical Defense: 34
Spell Defense: 36
Social Defense: 30
Armor: 40
Mystic Armor: 40
Knockdown: 33
Recovery Tests: 20

Death Rating: 400
Wound Threshold: 30
Unconsciousness Rating: 375

Combat Movement: 150
Full Movement: 300

Karma Points: 50

Karma Step: 20

Powers: Animate Dead 40, Corrupt Karma 40, Cursed Luck 40, Damage Shift 40, Horror Mark 25, Horror Thread 25, Thought Worm 20
Spells: Circle 8 Wizard, Unnatural Life 20,

Legend Points: 2,000,000

Equipment: None

Loot: None known





WITHIN THE MIND OF YSRTHGRATHE

The following account was excerpted from the journal of Noleta of Iopos. Most scholars believe Noleta was possessed by the Horror called Ysrthgrathe at the time she wrote these words, and that they represent the thoughts of the Horror itself. If this is true, then these passages are a truly invaluable record of the consciousness of a powerful and deadly Horror. Noleta killed herself shortly after committing these words to paper.

—Elko Mar, apprentice scholar, Library of Throal, 1507 TH

I had forgotten what the world felt like to a Name-giver form. It is a pity that this body is all but used up, for I have had such enjoyment with it. But it has been all too short, far too short. Yes, in this body I can remember why Name-givers are always in such a hurry. Their fragile bodies are decaying as they live in them! Each breath they take leads them closer to the grave. What a constant worry that must be to them.

This one foolishly asked for immortality. I gave it to her, of course. Don't I always oblige the requests made of me? But she didn't ask for eternal youth. What an unfortunate oversight.

As I write these words using her withered hands, I bask in the memory of her despair when she realized what she had done. Such wailing and tearful pleadings. But that's always the way of it. These Name-givers are so eager to grasp at what they cannot understand. And then they despair when they realize how they have been misled. Ah, but their cries provide such solace to my soul.

I have known the universe for far longer than I can recall. My memory spans this world, and worlds from long times before; times when we came to the world and took from it sweet life and caused such beautiful pain. Like now.

True, they were more prepared for us this time. But that only made my work all the more challenging. Their foolish beliefs in their runes and wardings, their childish illusions of safety and security—how delightful it was to tear their meager protections apart! Not all at once, of course. Granted, such crudity is the hallmark of some of my kind, and in younger times I too took my pleasure quickly and crudely. But age has given me an appreciation of subtlety. I no longer rush to destroy, but rather linger and take what I will slowly.

My honesty no doubt horrifies you Name-givers, for you like to think yourselves better than my kind. But you do not know how we are made in your image. The longer we spend with you, the more like you we become. For do we

not feel pain when we are cut? Do we not bleed from our wounds? Do we not take pleasure in our work? Do we not experience what you call the finer emotions?

Without us, you Name-givers would be at each other's throats. Even with the Scourge over, you still battle one another. Over what? Property? We give you something you can look down upon, a dark foil to contrast with your imagined superiority. Without us, you would have to look into your souls and face the ugliness there.

You are greedy and vain, petty and opportunistic. You covet that which is not yours. And sometimes, when coveting is not enough, you take without permission. You trample over each other like elephants—for emotions, money, land. It doesn't matter. We are not the evil ones. *You* are.

But that is neither here nor there.

Personally, I find it most annoying that Name-givers provide such limited vehicles for my pleasures. Oh, I have certainly found more than enough willing to dance with me. But few have fulfilled my deepest needs. True, the occasional human or dwarf has withstood years of torment, but they all die unexpectedly and deprive me of my amusement. Once I managed to trap an obsidiman, but even that experience disappointed me in the end.

I have amused myself from time to time with these others, but for me the fullest satisfaction came from one source. For years, decades, centuries, I waited for her to come. Our union was a banquet of suffering. All the others were but a preparation for this one, for the wedding of need and longing. I have tried to find solace with others, but I shall always return to her—my most constant desire, my faithful victim.

When I rip the love from new prey, does it give me pleasure? A bit, perhaps, but never nearly as much as I took from her. When I steal the self-respect from another, does it please me as well? No. I confess that everything palls before the happiness she gave me. And I shall punish all of them for it. Punish them for not giving me enough of what I need, for not being her.

GAME INFORMATION

Ysrthgrathe can disguise its appearance masterfully. When Ysrthgrathe first shows itself to one of its victims, the victim often sees only the Horror's long velvet robes. The





hood of its robe constantly shadows its face, which often leads an anxious victim to conjure up terrible ideas of what Ysrthgrathe might look like. Other victims may perceive Ysrthgrathe as beautiful, with a melodic and hypnotic voice and robes richly embroidered with gold and precious stones. Everyone who experiences Ysrthgrathe sees the Horror differently. In general, the physical form the victim perceives depends on whatever nasty trick Ysrthgrathe has in mind, and any desire the Horror may elicit in the victim.

A few characteristics appear in all of Ysrthgrathe's manifestations, however. The most prominent recurring characteristic is the long robe of brown velvet the Horror wears. Often something appears to be writhing underneath the garment. The Horror's long, thin, spidery hands and razor-sharp nails also appear in each manifestation, though Ysrthgrathe usually keeps them hidden within the folds of its robe.

In its most "true" physical form, the upper part of the Horror's body resembles a well-muscled human torso. The lower half of Ysrthgrathe's body is a snakelike tail covered with yellow-green, iridescent scales. Thick, hard ridges stick out at irregular intervals along the length of its body. Ysrthgrathe's face appears as an elongated skull with black eyes, and long yellow teeth line its mouth.

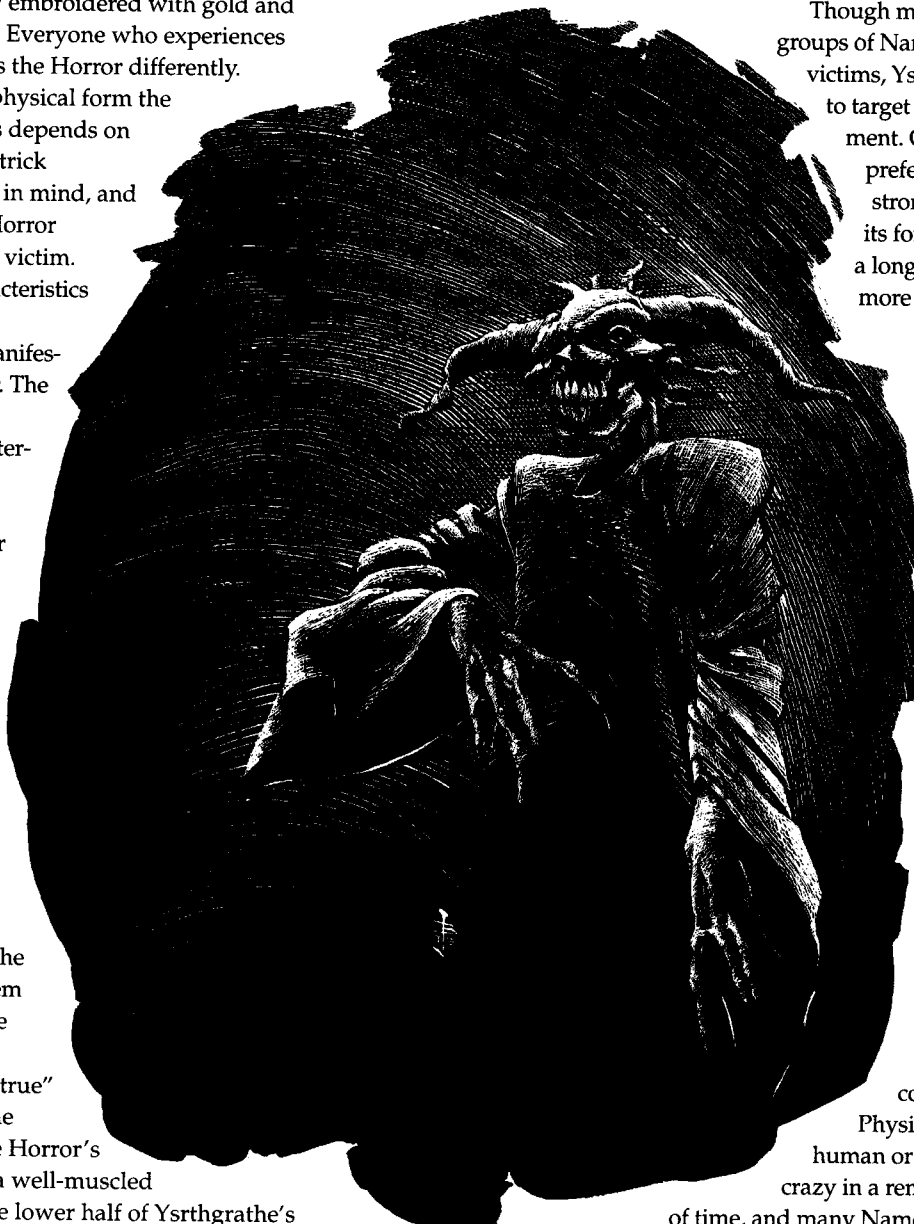
On the astral planes, the Horror appears as an amorphous black form. Alternatively, Ysrthgrathe may appear astrally in the shape of a physical manifestation it has taken in front of a player.

Though many Horrors seek out groups of Name-givers as their victims, Ysrthgrathe much prefers to target individuals for torment. Generally, Ysrthgrathe prefers characters who are strong enough to withstand its form of punishment over a long period of time. The more powerful a character becomes, the more likely he is to attract Ysrthgrathe's attention. The Horror does not waste its time with low-Circle characters because they are too easily destroyed. Give it a seasoned warrior, a high-Circle magician, or a devoted questor, and the Horror is in its element.

Ysrthgrathe is unimaginably ancient. Long ago the Horror realized that the relatively short life spans and weakness of most Name-givers severely limited the pleasure it could extract from them.

Physical pain will drive a human or a dwarf or a t'skrang crazy in a remarkably short amount of time, and many Name-givers are killed easily. For these reasons, Ysrthgrathe seeks longer living Name-givers, such as elves and obsidimen. These Name-givers can provide centuries-long banquets for the Horror.

Many scholars who have studied the Horrors theorize that the longer the Horrors are exposed to Name-givers, the





more like Name-givers the Horrors become. For example, Horrors begin to experience more “human” emotions. Though this theory may not hold true for all Horrors, it applies to Ysrthgrathe. Like Name-givers, Ysrthgrathe experiences intense fits of jealousy and anger and can become obsessed with its victims at times. The Horror hates the idea of anyone else hurting one of its victims and becomes quite possessive of them. The Horror will even go so far as to protect its Horror-marked victims from any other that tries to harm them. Ysrthgrathe also prefers victims who have some sort of conscience, because such victims are more likely to feel guilty if the Horror kills someone else because of them.

This intense, humanlike bond that Ysrthgrathe builds between itself and its victims has led more than one victim to believe the Horror is actually helpful rather than harmful to their cause. Whenever the Horror senses such beliefs in its victims, it offers its victims aid of some sort: power, protection, anything to assuage the victim’s fears for the moment. This truce of sorts never lasts long, however, because Ysrthgrathe eventually yearns to rekindle the torment that only it can deliver.

Often, Ysrthgrathe’s victims try to divert the Horror’s attention from themselves by offering it another victim. Ysrthgrathe usually allows the victim to believe it might work before claiming both unfortunate targets. Ysrthgrathe never willingly lets a victim escape and the Horror adores trickery.

Ysrthgrathe may be encountered in almost any part of Barsaive, with the notable exception of Blood Wood. Like most Horrors, Ysrthgrathe finds the Wood distasteful, though it can travel there under special circumstances. Otherwise, Ysrthgrathe goes wherever it can find potential victims.

YSRTHGRATHE’S POWERS

Most of Ysrthgrathe’s powers function normally. However, Ysrthgrathe always seeks to use them in the most destructive manner possible. The Horror can cast all of the spells of all the spellcasting Disciplines practiced in Barsaive, but harbors a particular affinity for combat spells.

Ysrthgrathe possesses the Disrupt Magic power as well (see **Game Information**, p. 99). This power enables the Horror to disrupt any form of magical force or pattern.

USING YSRTHGRATHE

Gamemasters can introduce Ysrthgrathe into campaigns by enticing player characters to accept favors from the

Horror. Ysrthgrathe appears quite beneficial, but the Horror always exploits some psychological tic already present in the targeted character. For example, a character might long to be the most powerful warrior in Barsaive. Ysrthgrathe might approach such a character and offer to give him the power to achieve this goal. If the player accepts the gift, the gamemaster would then increase the character’s powers accordingly.

However, the warrior character will soon find himself winning a string of impressive—but empty—victories. For example, he will kill a monster only to discover that the person he meant to rescue is already dead. Nobody doubts his prowess or abilities, of course; things just never seem to turn out as planned. Naturally, Ysrthgrathe shows up at appropriate moments to enjoy the character’s mounting frustration and eventual despair.

Additionally, Ysrthgrathe provides an excellent tool for adjusting the balance of a game, forcing a player to grow in roleplaying, or simply shaking things up when they become too rigid.

YSRTHGRATHE

DEX: 13	STR: 15	TOU: 13
PER: 17	WIL: 21	CHA: 16

Initiative: 15	Physical Defense: 17
Number of Attacks: 3	Spell Defense: 25
Attack: 15	Social Defense: 23
Damage: 18	Armor: 8
Number of Spells: 5	Mystic Armor: 15
Spellcasting: 23	Knockdown: 15
Effect: See Powers	Recovery Tests: 10

Death Rating: 120	Combat Movement: 25
Wound Threshold: 19	Full Movement: 50
Unconsciousness Rating: 110	

Karma Points: 30	Karma Step: 18
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Powers: Corrupt Karma 12, Cursed Luck 13, Disrupt Magic 23, Horror Mark 23, Karma Tap 21, Thought Worm 27,
Spells: Circle 10 Elementalist, Illusionist, Nethermancer, and Wizard

Legend Points: 95,000
Equipment: None
Loot: None





MINOR HORRORS, CONSTRUCTS AND HORROR-CURSED ITEMS

The following passages were compiled from various sources by T'rel Aurelieu, one of the most promising apprentice scholars of the Great Library. Before embarking on her present course of work, T'rel traveled the lands of Barsaive as a member of numerous adventuring expeditions. During that time, she gained first-hand knowledge of many of the entities and items described here, which provides these passages an accuracy seldom found in discussions of such subjects. And so on behalf of all the peoples of Barsaive, I extend my generous gratitude to her.

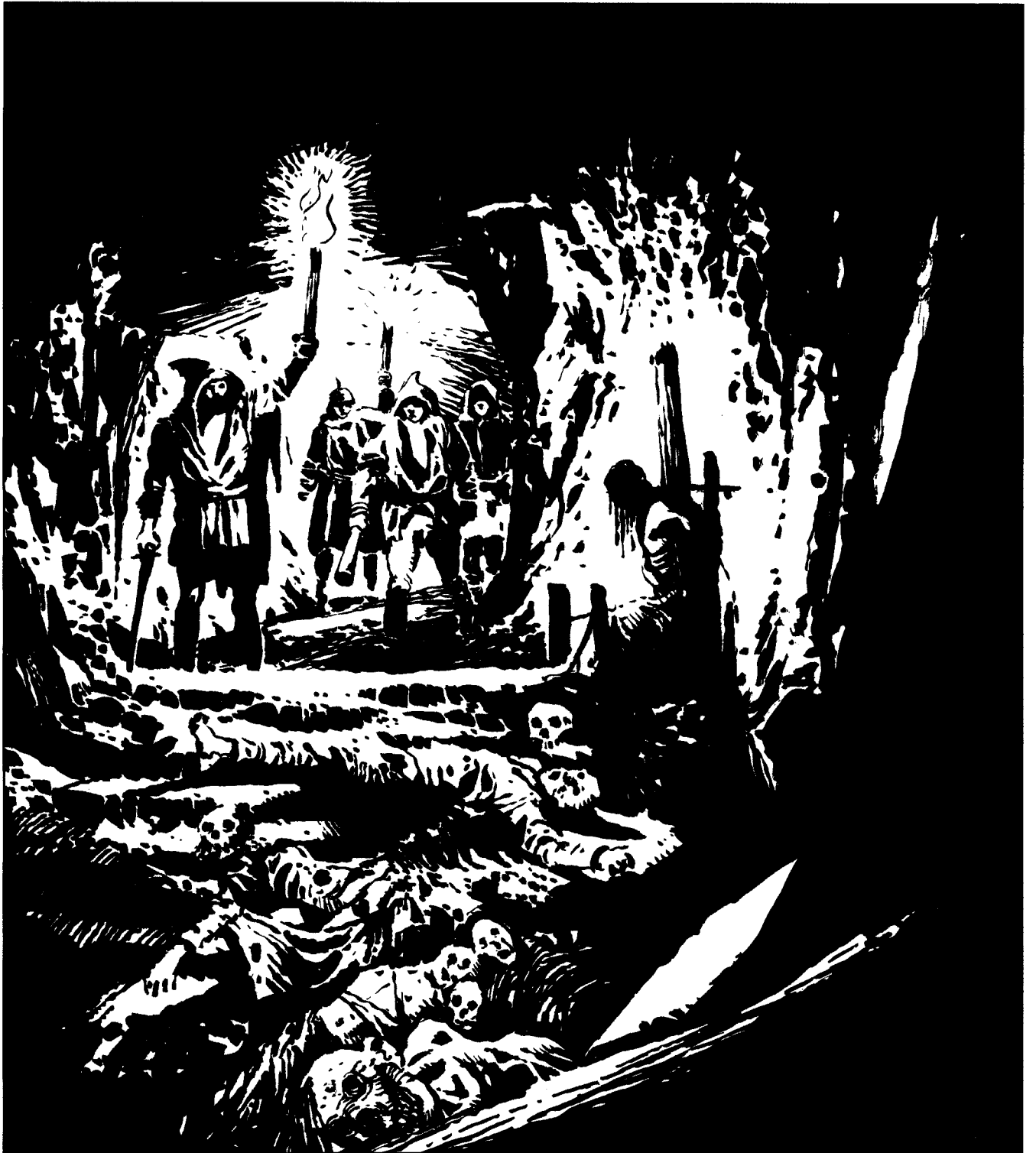
—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, 1507 TH

CONCERNING MINOR HORRORS

The term "minor Horrors" is somewhat misleading. The danger these entities pose is minor only when compared to the threat of the so-called major, or greater Horrors. Indeed, many so-called minor Horrors possess Names and True Patterns, and most of these entities are more than a match for even the most skilled hero—a fact that any would-be Horror hunter overlooks at his own peril. And because these Horrors are much more common than their more well-known brethren, they may actually present greater danger to Name-givers.

The minor Horrors may be classified into several general types, such as bloatforms, wormskulls, plagues, gnashers and so on. This tome endeavors to describe but a few of these types. Adventurers would do well to assume that many other, unclassified minor Horrors still roam the lands of Barsaive and be wary always.







BAGGI

Attributes

DEX: 17 STR: 22 TOU: 21
PER: 15 WIL: 17 CHA: 11

Initiative: 17

Number of Attacks: 2

Attack: 21

Damage: 22

Number of Spells: NA

Spellcasting: NA

Effect: NA

Death Rating: 95

Wound Threshold: 30

Unconsciousness Rating: 50

Karma Points: 15

Powers: See text

Legend Points: 3,000

Equipment: None

Loot: Usually none

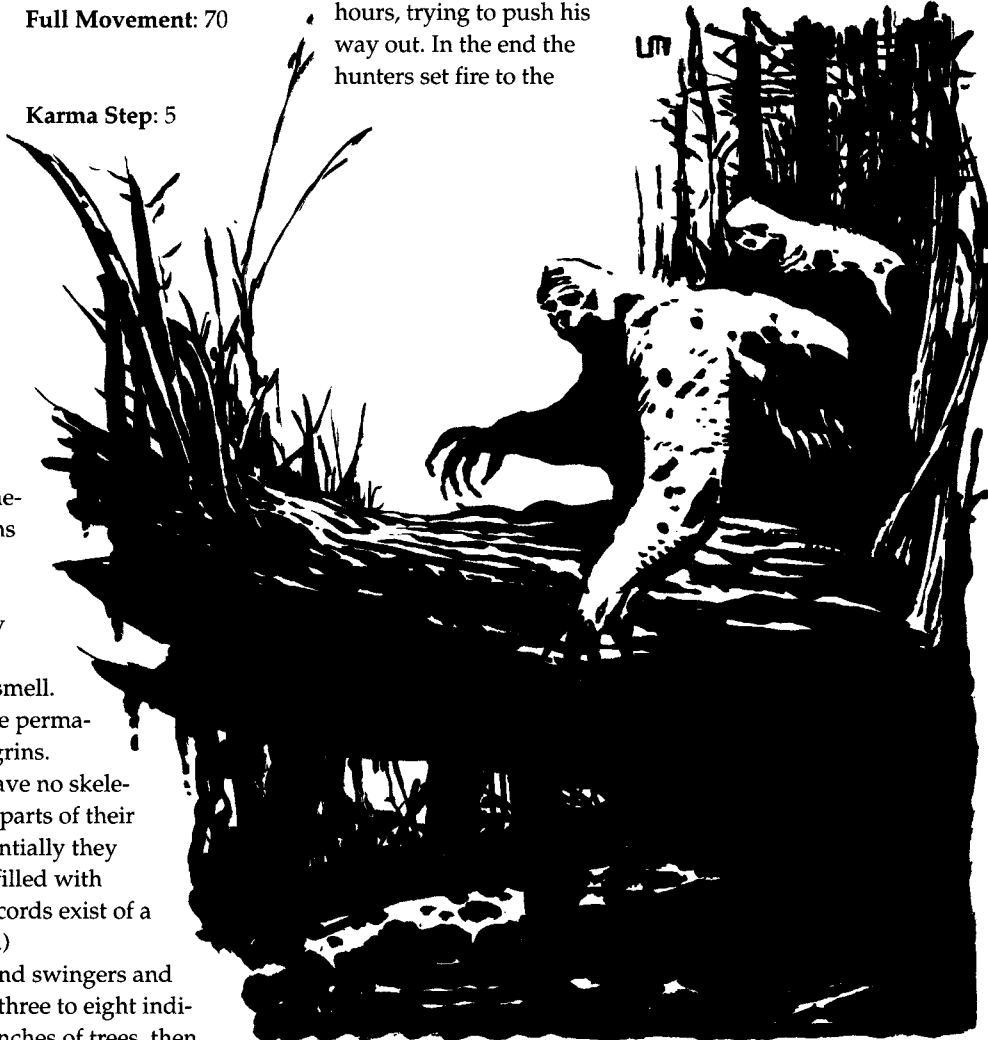
Commentary

Baggi are arboreal Horrors most often sighted in the outer fringes of the Blood Wood. These Horrors resemble obese apes, somewhat like hairless black orangutans with long arms, flabby bodies, bullet-shaped heads and terrible claws. Their large eyes are a sickly pale pink, and their skins have an unpleasant oily texture and rank smell. Baggi's slack, toothless mouths are permanently twisted into vicious, idiot grins. Unlike true apes, baggi seem to have no skeletons whatsoever. They can stiffen parts of their bodies to move or attack, but essentially they are quasi-humanoid bags of skin filled with some unknown substance. (No records exist of a baggi corpse ever being dissected.)

Baggi are superior climbers and swingers and generally travel in small packs of three to eight individuals. They lurk in the high branches of trees, then

swoop down on any unsuspecting prey that passes beneath them. Usually, baggi tear their victims apart with their claws, but these Horrors can also widen their mouths enough to swallow a human-sized victim whole. In fact, one legend tells of a party of hunters from Blood Wood who were attacked by a pair of baggi in the early days of the Scourge. One young elf had fallen behind the group, and a baggi seized and devoured him. The other baggi attacked the rest of the hunters, who slew it. The hunters then chased the surviving baggi to a clearing, where the Horror climbed a tree. After expending all their arrows, they tried to climb the tree after the monster but were thrown back down repeatedly.

Afterward the hunters stated they could clearly see their devoured companion struggling inside the baggi's body for hours, trying to push his way out. In the end the hunters set fire to the





tree to put their friend out of his misery. Rather than flee, the baggi sat on a high branch as the flames enveloped the tree, making a sound something like a horrible barking laugh.

Baggi are intelligent enough not to try to swallow an obviously armed victim, and victims who are swallowed generally are too constrained by the creature's body to effectively attack with bare hands. However, if a devoured adventurer is carrying a small, concealed blade or similar weapon, he can attack the baggi from the inside. The baggi's interior has an Armor Rating of 1. A devoured character takes Step 5 damage from the baggi's digestive processes every 15 minutes he remains within the Horror. Armor does not protect against this damage. Baggi must achieve Excellent or better results on their Attack Tests to devour a victim.

The malleable physical nature of baggi enables them to squeeze through any hole or crack through which a grown man can insert his fist. Of course, this does not apply if the baggi is currently digesting a large victim.

DOPPLERS

Attributes

DEX: 11 STR: 10 TOU: 12
PER: 11 WIL: 12 CHA: 10

Initiative: 12

Number of Attacks: 2

Attack: 12

Damage: 11

Number of Spells: 1

Spellcasting: 10

Effect: See text

Physical Defense: 14

Spell Defense: 15

Social Defense: 13

Armor: Varies

Mystic Armor: 10

Knockdown: 10

Recovery Tests: 5

Death Rating: 44

Wound Threshold: 13

Unconsciousness Rating: 36

Combat Movement: 27

Full Movement: 54

Karma Points: 12

Karma Step: 9

Powers: Corrupt Karma 15, Doppler Sting 20 (see text),
Spells (see text), Talents (see text)

Legend Points: 3,000; 9,000 bonus for destroying all bodies.

Equipment: Varies by victim

Loot: Varies by victim

Commentary

These bizarre Horrors consist of one or more humanoid bodies. Each doppler appears to be a normal humanoid save for the flexible, two-foot stinger that grows from the entity's upper arm or hip. The only other clue to a doppler's true nature is the slightly disconnected aura that surrounds the entity's body when viewed in astral space. On careful observation, a doppler's body appears to have shrunk away from its aura. No theorist can satisfactorily explain why doppler bodies emit this oversized aura.

Dopplers grow in strength by increasing their numbers. Whenever a doppler kills a Name-giver, it uses its stinger to draw blood from the corpse, then detaches the blood-filled stinger and plants it in some hidden spot. Over the course of the following month, the planted stinger grows into a new doppler that is an exact replica of the slain Name-giver. The original "parent" doppler grows a new stinger within a few days after planting the old stinger.

Mystery shrouds the origin of dopplers. Legends describe the original doppler as a large, blighted tree or other plant, and the various dopplers now in Barsaive as its astral "seeds." Other legends insist that present-day dopplers originate from more than one parent. The parent doppler or dopplers are said to know everything ever known by every doppler victim. Various tales place the original doppler tree in the Liaj Jungle or Blood Wøod. Those who claim the doppler tree is located in Blood Wood also murmur that Queen Alachia knows of it and may even have made a pact with the Horror. If this is true, even destroying all the known dopplers in Barsaive will not end their existence; only the destruction of the doppler tree would stop their insidious propagation.

Each doppler possesses the same Attributes and statistics. However, each doppler is unique in that it possesses the abilities of the Name-giver it was created from. Additionally, each doppler possesses all the knowledge and skills of any other dopplers created by the same "parent" doppler. Note that these related dopplers do not possess each other's talents.

Most of the time, dopplers attack with the talents and skills of their Name-giver form. In addition, dopplers that have been unmasked use their stingers to slash at opponents. When a doppler attacks with its stinger, it uses its normal Attack step number for the Attack Test, and its Doppler Sting step number (20) for the Damage Test.

Dopplers seek to expand their power by creating more dopplers. Related dopplers can serve as cannon fodder, or they can infiltrate an existing community and corrupt it,





particularly if the victim was someone of sufficient power to influence other Name-givers. Dopplers are particularly interested in manipulating events on a large scale by taking the place of key persons and so provide an excellent way to introduce conspiracies and intrigue into **Earthdawn** campaigns.

DREAD IOTAS

Attributes

DEX: NA STR: NA TOU: NA
PER: 8 WIL: 8 CHA: 3

Initiative: NA Physical Defense: NA
Number of Attacks: NA Spell Defense: 10
Attack: NA Social Defense: 10
Damage: NA Armor: NA
Number of Spells: 2 Mystic Armor: NA
Spellcasting: 15 Knockdown: 8
Effect: See text Recovery Tests: NA

Death Rating: NA Combat Movement: NA
Wound Threshold: NA Full Movement: NA
Unconsciousness Rating: NA

Karma Points: 10 Karma Step: 8

Powers: Animate Dead 15, Karma Tap 15, Spells: Circle 3
Nethermancer

Legend Points: 875
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

The smallest type of Horror known, a single dread iota is invisible to the naked eye and may be found in water, as well as in many plants and animals. Dread iotas are fully intelligent Horrors that exercise a cruel influence over any creature unfortunate enough to ingest them, including Name-givers. When these parasites group together, they resemble an intelligent, directed disease.

Masses of dread iotas infest streams, ponds, springs, lakes, and even rain clouds in parts of Barsaive that still bear the worst scars of the Scourge. Dread iotas can enter a Name-giver's body if the Name-giver drinks water or eats a plant or animal infected by iotas. Questors have been able to

cast iotas out of victims in some cases, but in general, infected Name-givers slowly waste away and die.

One scholar, the late Yamonis IV of Throal, created a device that combined a number of magnifying lenses. Using this device, Yamonis successfully observed dread iotas. His sketches depict them as humanoid in structure, with scaly hides and grinning, malevolent faces.

Once a dread iota has entered a Name-giver, that Name-giver is Horror marked. The dread iota's primary goal is to reproduce and infect other intelligent victims. One way it may accomplish this goal is to reveal itself to the victim and use its Karma Tap ability to reward hosts who help it infect others (Name-givers may become infected by the exchange of the bodily fluids with an infected victim). Dread iotas are also fond of using the Bone Dance spell to temporarily control the movements of their hosts. If a host dies, the dread iotas often animate the corpse and seek out a new host before the old one rots away.

The presence of this parasitic Horror causes tissue degeneration and eventual death. Infected victims must make a Toughness Test each week against a difficulty number equal to the number of weeks they have been infected. Each time the test fails, the victim loses 1 point from each Attribute. The victim dies when any Attribute other than Charisma reaches 0. The Attribute loss is permanent, barring the direct intercession of one of the Passions or perhaps the use of legendary healing magical treasures, such as the Butterspider Box (see **Parlaint** and **Parlaint Adventures**.)

Dread iotas are difficult to kill. The Circle 1 Elementalist spell Purify Water (p. 159, ED) will kill dread iotas in water samples, but once a victim has been infected, only the questor power Heal (p. 97, **Earthdawn Companion**) is known to be effective against the parasites. Avoiding infection in the first place remains the best way to deal with dread iotas. Fortunately, anyone who successfully uses any sort of astral sensing can spot the distinct astral signature of dread iotas by making an appropriate test against the dread iota's Spell Defense. Any material, animal, or Name-giver infected with dread iotas glows faintly under such observation.

Sometimes entire villages become infected by dread iotas. The victims act much like foul folk, though the infection will leave many of them weakened. In one possible adventure, the neighbors of an infected settlement may hire the players to accompany questors of Garlen into the hamlet to heal as many as can be saved—and slay the rest.





GNASHERS

Attributes

DEX: 5 STR: 8 TOU: 4
PER: 2 WIL: 8 CHA: 3

Initiative: 5

Number of Attacks: 1

Attack: 10

Damage: 20

Number of Spells: 0

Spellcasting: NA

Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 7

Spell Defense: 7

Social Defense: 15

Armor: 2

Mystic Armor: 2

Knockdown: 8

Recovery Tests: 2

Death Rating: 40

Wound Threshold: 10

Unconsciousness Rating: 30

Combat Movement: 27

Full Movement: 54

Karma Points: 15

Karma Step: 5

Powers: NA

Legend Points: 660

Equipment: None

Loot: None

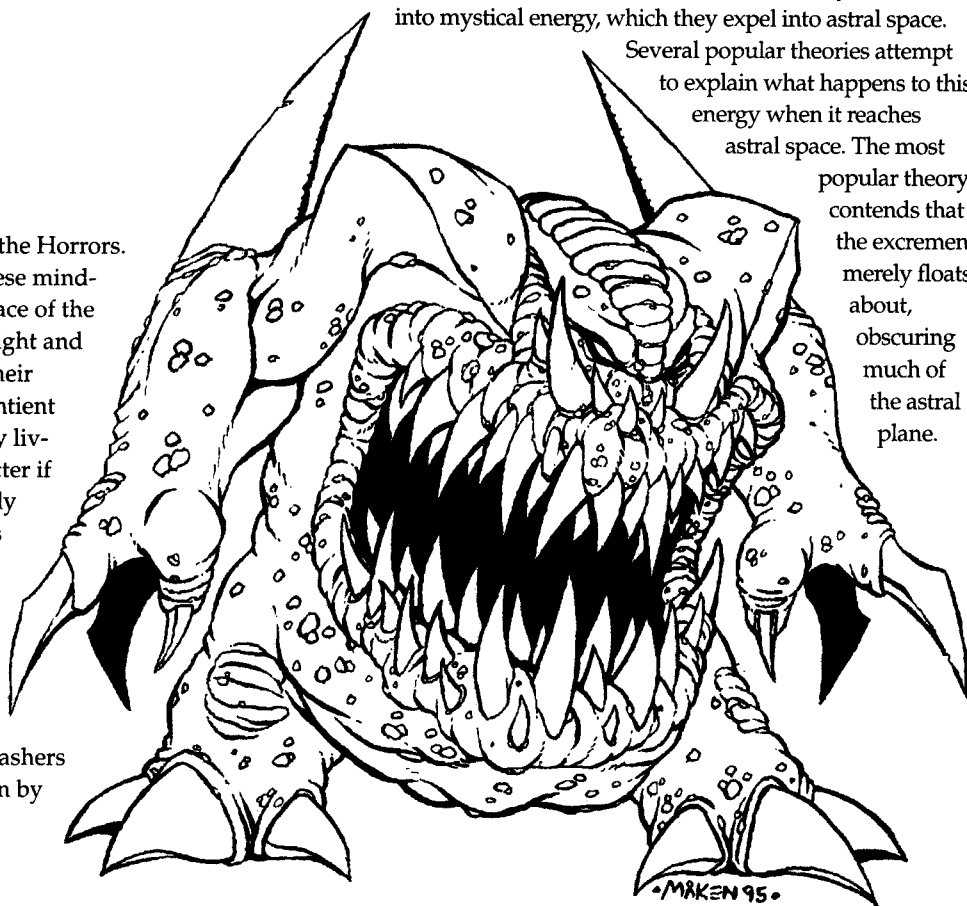
Commentary

Gnashers are the simplest of the Horrors. During the Scourge, legions of these mindless entities swarmed across the face of the world, devouring everything in sight and leaving poisoned wastelands in their wake. Though gnashers prefer sentient victims, these Horrors will eat any living thing and even inanimate matter if no other food is available. The only thing they do not attempt to eat is each other. Unlike most other Horrors, gnashers show no signs of higher intelligence and are indifferent to the pain and suffering they cause. They possess none of the dread powers associated with most Horrors. Gnashers are simply killing machines driven by a blind, insatiable impulse to devour.

Gnashers typically travel in swarms of several dozen. They eat constantly, and their gobbling and snarling sounds are usually audible from a considerable distance. Gnashers try to eat anything they can sense, and their acute sense of smell enables them to detect prey within a quarter of a mile. These Horrors have no sense of self-preservation and continue to attack no matter how effectively their prey fights back. They never flee, even when large numbers of them are slain.

Gnashers vary widely in appearance. Some are reptilian, others toadlike or mammalian. Some possess features of several different animals, and still others are utterly alien or formless in structure. Most are the size of a large dog. The one feature all gnashers possess is a massive set of jaws, lined with dozens of razor-sharp teeth. The jaws of most gnashers represent more than 50 percent of the monster's body mass. These terrible jaws enable gnashers to devour the equivalent of their own weight many times over in mere minutes. Examination of slain gnashers has revealed that they possess no standard means of excreting waste matter from their bodies. This has led scholars to speculate that gnashers transform the matter they consume into mystical energy, which they expel into astral space.

Several popular theories attempt to explain what happens to this energy when it reaches astral space. The most popular theory contends that the excrement merely floats about, obscuring much of the astral plane.

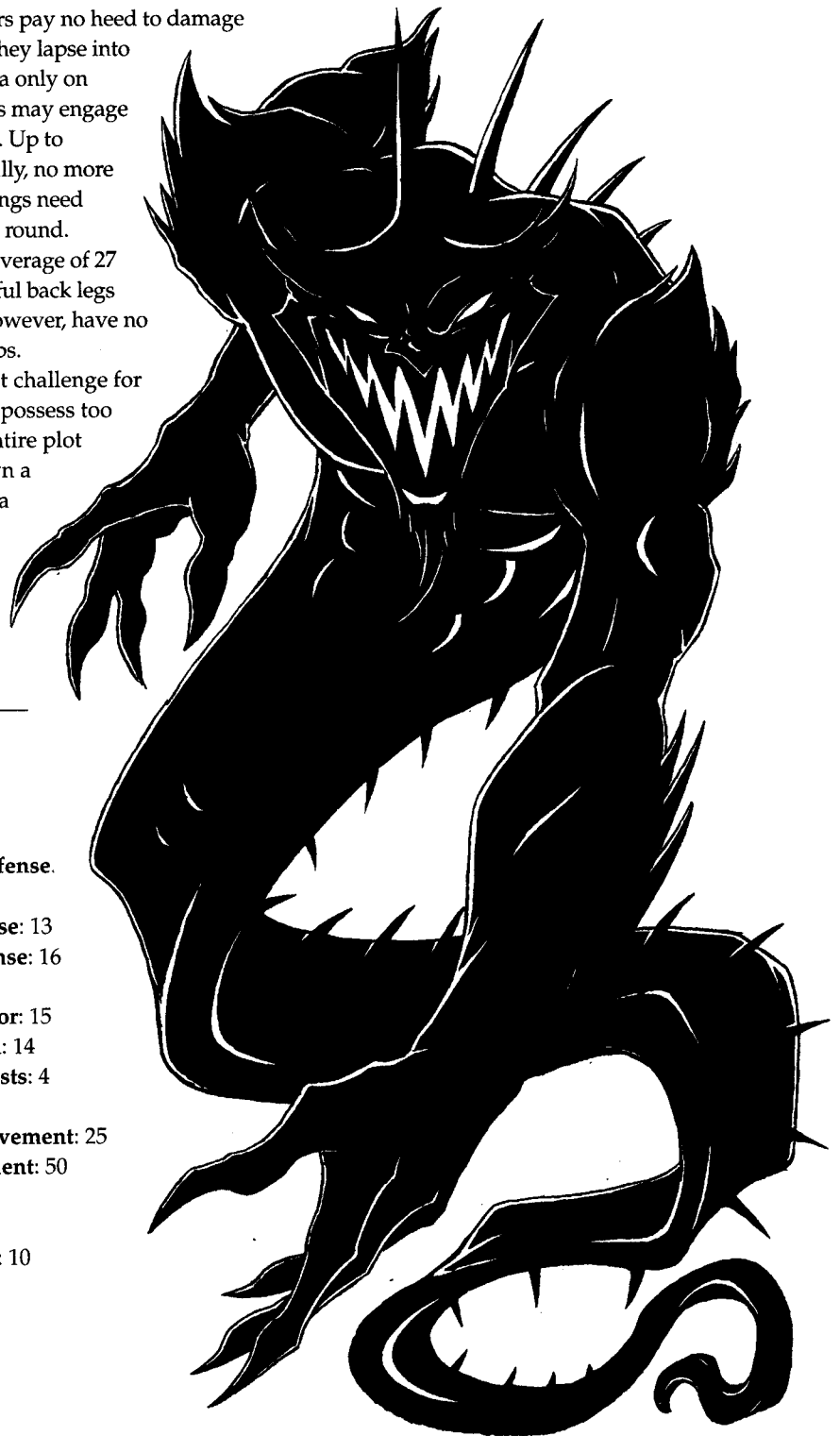




Though less robust than most Horrors, gnashers pay no heed to damage inflicted on them and continue to attack until they lapse into unconsciousness or die. Gnashers spend Karma only on Attack and Damage Tests. Up to eight gnashers may engage a single human, elf, ork or t'skrang at one time. Up to twelve may attack a troll or obsidiman. Generally, no more than five will attack the average dwarf. Windlings need worry about only a single gnasher attacker per round.

Gnashers travel by leaping and can hop an average of 27 feet in one bound. Some gnashers have powerful back legs that they clearly use for locomotion. Others, however, have no apparent physical means of making these jumps.

These Horrors provide an excellent combat challenge for intermediate or advanced adventurers. They possess too little personality to form the linchpin of an entire plot line but may be quite useful for wearing down a party or emphasizing the inherent danger of a Horror-infested area. Because gnashers are virtually mindless, the action-lovers in your group can enjoy a guilt-free, high old time bashing away at them.



SLIPSHADES

Attributes

DEX: 11 STR: 8 TOU: 11
PER: 12 WIL: 14 CHA: 13

Initiative: 13

14

Number of Attacks: 2

Attack: 13

Damage: 10

Number of Spells: NA

Spellcasting: NA

Effect: NA

Physical Defense:

Spell Defense: 13

Social Defense: 16

Armor: 12

Mystic Armor: 15

Knockdown: 14

Recovery Tests: 4

Death Rating: 75

Wound Threshold: 20

Unconsciousness Rating: 50

Combat Movement: 25

Full Movement: 50

Karma Points: 15

Karma Step: 10

Powers: Terror 14

Legend Points: 1,350

Equipment: None

Loot: None



HORRORS



Illustration by Nick Smith

The Unnamed



—J MIRACOLA 25

Illustration by Jeff Miracola

Aazhvat Many-Eyes

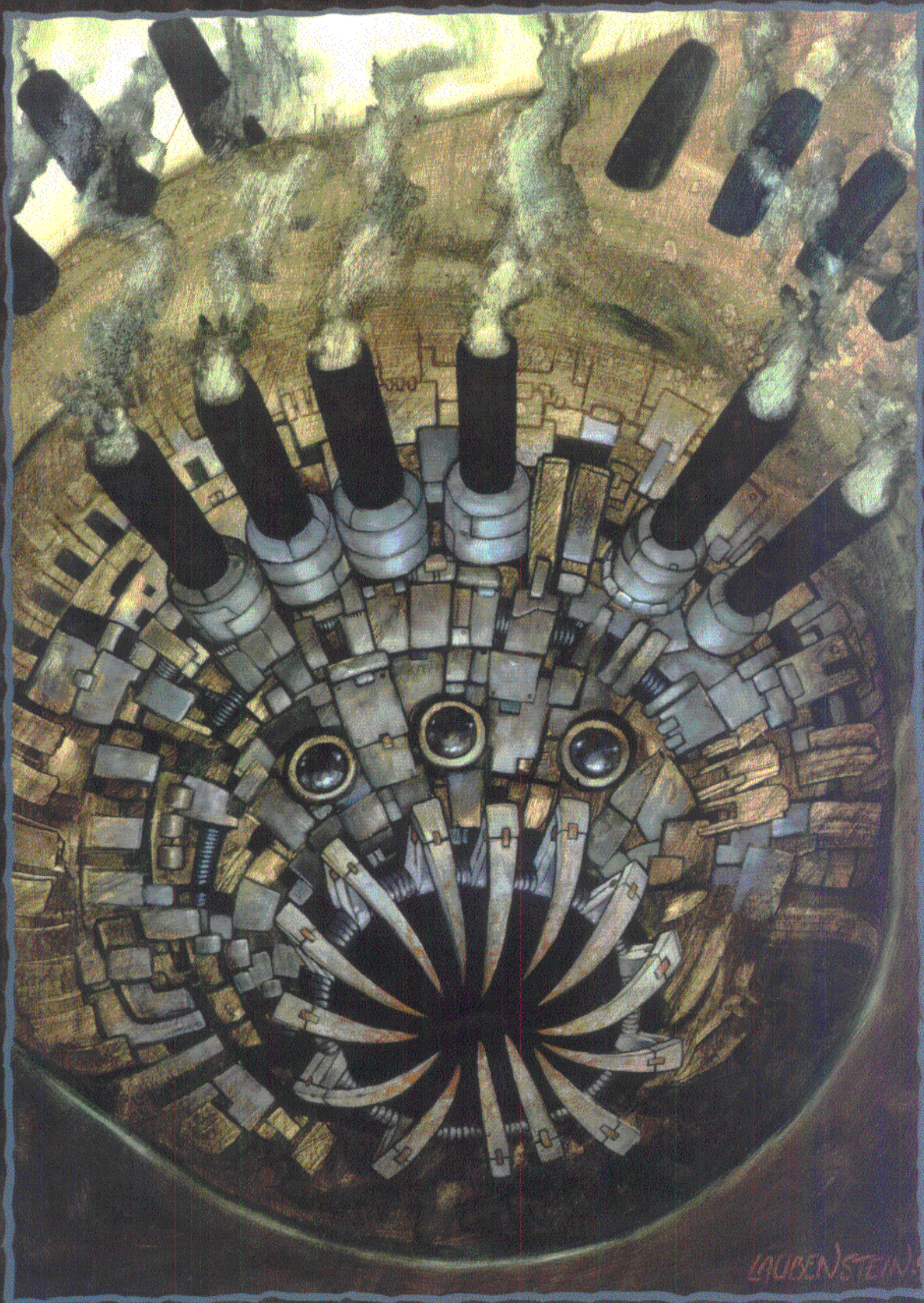


Illustration by Jeff Laubenstein

Artíficer



Illustration by Jeff Miracola

Bone Crown



Illustration by Tom Baxa

Chantrel's Horror



Illustration by Tom Baxa

Druistadt



LAUBENSTEIN '95

Illustration by Jeff Laubenstein

Giftbringer



Illustration by Jeff Miracula

Ioé



Illustration by Jeff Miracola

Nemesis



Illustration by Jeff Miracola

Nebís



Illustration by Jeff Miracola

Ristul



Illustration by Nick Smith

Taint



J. Miracola

Illustration by Jeff Miracola

Tempter



Illustration by Tom Baxa

Ubyr



NICK
SMITH

Illustration by Nick Smith

Verigorm



Illustration by Jeff Laubenstein

Yrsgrathe



Commentary

Slipshades are a greatly feared, but thankfully rare type of minor Horror. Slipshades resemble humanoid shapes of absolute blackness, anywhere from four to six feet tall, and can transform themselves into a flat form no thicker than a sheet of parchment. When in this form, these dangerous entities can slide along a floor, ground, even across walls or ceilings. Slipshades attack with their bare hands, leaving gaping, tearing wounds much like the bite of a carnivore.

Fortunately, these entities are quite rare, not particularly aggressive (for Horrors), and generally do not cooperate with greater Horrors. Otherwise, few kaers would have been able to withstand the slipshades' powers of infiltration.

Apparently, slipshades do not seek out intelligent prey but will destroy mercilessly any sentient creature that wanders into their territories. Some slipshades have been known to establish permanent lairs, usually in caves or grottos in deep wilderness, and grow fiercely protective of these areas. Though these strange Horrors do not love precious stones or metals for their own sake, they seem to appreciate fine workmanship and do not wantonly destroy intricate things of beauty. Occasionally slipshades even hoard treasure, particularly magical objects and finely worked craft pieces. Rumors also tell of certain exceptional slipshades that are spellcasters of potent ability.

Slipshades' goals are mysterious. These Horrors do not appear to devour or otherwise derive nourishment from their victims, and their means of sustenance remains unknown. No slipshade has been reliably reported in Barsaive in more than 75 years, but some may still lurk hidden away in the deep wilderness.

Slipshades can switch from three to two-dimensional form or vice versa instantaneously, as often as they wish. In two-dimensional form, the slipshade can elongate itself and pass through a crack of any width whatsoever, as long as the opening is at least six inches long. The slipshade can move normally by sliding along a wall, floor, ceiling or the ground. If moving upright across an open area while in two-dimensional form, the slipshade's speed is reduced by half and its movement acquires an eerie, unsteady, undulating quality. Slipshades cannot attack while in two-dimensional form, but take damage normally.

In three-dimensional form, slipshades can move normally across open territory but cannot slide up walls or across ceilings.

Slipshades usually attack in groups of two to five. Because they are dim and shadowy, two-dimensional slipshades gain a +4 bonus and three-dimensional slipshades

gain a +2 bonus to their Physical and Spell Defense Ratings in dim and shadowy conditions. Two-dimensional slipshades are virtually impossible to see when viewed in profile.

WINGFLAYERS

Attributes

DEX: 21 STR: 16 TOU: 14
PER: 14 WIL: 13 CHA: 16

Initiative: 16

Number of Attacks: 6

Attack: 22

Damage: 17

Number of Spells: NA

Spellcasting: NA

Effect: NA

Death Rating: 80

Wound Threshold: 24

Unconsciousness Rating: 72

Karma Points: 25

Powers: See text

Legend Points: 20,000

Equipment: None

Loot: Usually none

Physical Defense: 20

Spell Defense: 12

Social Defense: 17

Armor: 25

Mystic Armor: 10

Knockdown: 25

Recovery Tests: 6

Combat Movement: 40

Full Movement: 75

Karma Step: 10

Commentary

Wingflayers are among the strangest of the minor Horrors to plague Barsaive. The unique physical properties of these Horrors have led some authorities to claim that wingflayers never really existed except in the minds of overly imaginative windlings. Those who have studied the matter deeply, however, point to several reliable accounts that seem to establish that wingflayers did exist during the Scourge—and may still live.

Wingflayers appear as swirling clouds of hundreds of tiny airborne slivers, each about half an inch to two inches long, made of some unknown metallic substance. Usually the cloud resembles a rough cylinder about one yard wide and two high, but wingflayers have been known to take other shapes, including crude parodies of the human form. Wingflayers can also expand themselves. Some evidence suggests that wingflayers can expand to four times their normal size before they begin to lose shape. Also, a





wingflayer can insert itself through pinhole-sized openings by sending its slivers through one at a time.

At rest, wingflayers settle into piles of slivers about a foot in diameter and barely an inch high. Resting wingflayers appear to need a certain amount of open area to re-animate themselves; they have been successfully captured inside fragile glass vessels and even in light leather sacks that a fully animated wingflayer could shred in seconds. Wingflayers do not appear to be particularly social Horrors and never form groups of more than two.

The slivers that make up a wingflayer are remarkably light, and an entire wingflayer normally weighs less than five pounds. Although this would seem to suggest these entities are insubstantial and weak, wingflayer attacks usually leave their victims little more than unidentifiable piles of raw meat. Indeed, a particularly intensive or prolonged attack can reduce a victim to a small scattering of bone splinters.

Wingflayers seem to be creatures of almost pure magic. They possess nothing that even remotely resembles sensory, digestive, or reproductive organs, yet they seem to see and hear, take in nourishment, and even reproduce. Some scholars theorize that wingflayers take the vital energy of

their victims and convert it directly into mass for their constituent splinters. When the splinters reach a certain size, they divide into two or more smaller splinters.

Surprisingly, physical attacks harm wingflayers. Theorists contend that blows from solid objects disrupt the matrices of the unknown energies that give wingflayers their form. However, streamlined missiles such as arrows, darts, and thrown spears are curiously ineffective against wingflayers. When attacking with such weapons, subtract 3 steps from the weapon's damage.

Armor is ineffective against wingflayers unless it covers the target's entire body. Armor that leaves certain body parts entirely uncovered or contains significant gaps in its structure—such as blood pebble armor or ring mail, which offers only the protection of the leather underlayer—is ineffective. Furthermore, most armor made from organic materials (including leather, hide and fernweave, but not obsidian skin) can be scoured away by persistent attacks from a wingflayer at a rate of 1 Armor Rating Point every three Combat Rounds. However, some enchantments may make organic armor impervious to wingflayer attacks. Eye protection is particularly crucial when arming against wingflayers.





CONCERNING HORROR CONSTRUCTS

Horror constructs are the living tools of the Horrors, created from the flesh of the Horrors' dead and living victims. These abominations vary in form as widely as do the Horrors themselves. Among the most commonly reported Horror constructs are cadaver men, shadows, jehuthras, and the dreaded plagues. The following passages represent a mere handful of the Horror constructs that likely infest Barsaive.

NIGHTWISTS

DEX: 13 STR: 5 TOU: 9
PER: 15 WIL: 6 CHA: 7

Initiative: 15
Number of Attacks: 3
Attack: 17
Damage: 9
Number of Spells: (2)
Spellcasting: 20
Effect: See text

Physical Defense: 16
Spell Defense: 19
Social Defense: 19
Armor: 16
Mystic Armor: 5
Recovery Tests: 4
Knockdown: 5

Death Rating: 100
Wound Threshold: 20
Unconsciousness Rating: 25

Combat Movement: 50
Full Movement: 100

Karma Points: 25

Karma Step: 10

Powers: Corrupt Karma 16, Horror Mark 16, Karma Tap 13, Terror 12

Legend Points: 7,000

Equipment: None

Loot: A captured nightwist is worth $(10 + D8) \times 100$ silver pieces and is treasure worth Legend Points.

Commentary

Nightwists are the most commonly encountered manifestations of the Horror called Ristul (see **Ristul**, p. 51). These Horror constructs appear as twisted strands of darkness, bending and distorting the night air as they pass through it. They may be as small as a windling or as large as a thundra beast, and they may assume any shape imagined in nightmare.

Nightwists appear only in corrupted areas, around astral breaches, or in the proximity of Horror-marked characters.



Because nightwists are made from the corrupt essence of dreams, they may serve as components for blood charms that corrupt karma, creating an effect similar to the Corrupt Karma power. Only containers that can hold astral or magical material, such as orichalcum jars, can hold nightwists.

In a pinch, a spell matrix can be used to capture and contain a nightwist. To do so, the character makes a Thread Weaving Test (similar to a Matrix Attunement Test) against the Spell Defense of the nightwist. A successful result places the nightwist in the matrix. To release the nightwist, the character must make another Spellcasting Test against the nightwists's Spell Defense. However, using a spell matrix in this manner corrupts the matrix beyond repair. Any attempt to cast a spell using the corrupted matrix results in the same effect produced by a spell cast with raw magic.





PLAGUES

DEX: 12 STR: 8 TOU: 15
PER: 12 WIL: 15 CHA: 3

Initiative: 12 Physical Defense: 17
Number of Attacks: 1 Spell Defense: 17
Attack: 13 Social Defense: 15
Damage: 8 Armor: 10
Number of Spells: 1 Mystic Armor: 10
Spellcasting: 15 Recovery Tests: 2
Effect: See text

Death Rating: 60 Combat Movement: 100
Wound Threshold: 12 Full Movement: 200
Unconsciousness Rating: 50

Karma Points: 10 Karma Step: 12

Powers: Cause Plague 20, Spells: Circle 4 Illusionist

Legend Points: 4,500
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

Though the heroes of the Scourge documented many Horrors and Horror constructs, few seem as fearsome or as insidious as the Horror constructs known as plagues. These vile things first appeared in southwest Barsaive just prior to the Scourge. According to legend, plagues spread through the vicinity of the ancient Kingdom of Landis, and only severe quarantine measures prevented them from spreading illness and death throughout the province of Barsaive. However, various accounts describe plagues in regions as far from Landis as the city of Parlainth.

Plagues most often appear as tall, gaunt men with thin, splotchy hair and discolored blisters covering their skin. They often wear filthy rags and reek of decay and mold. Surprisingly limber, plagues can move very quickly when necessary.

Despite their grotesque appearance, plagues shy away from physical combat and use illusion spells to escape any potential fights. However, all plagues possess the Horror power known as Cause Plague.

The Cause Plague power enables a plague to infect Name-givers with a plaguelike disease. The plague can

infect any Name-giver who approaches within 50 yards of it by making a successful Cause Plague Test against the target's Spell Defense. Within the first few days of infection, victims experience red speckles or rashes on their throats and chests. A few days later the victim suffers dizziness, nausea, body aches, and a relentless dry cough. Within two weeks, fever leaves the victim bedridden and death becomes inevitable. The game effects of this disease are similar to those of a Debilitating Poison (p. 207–8, *Earthdawn* rulebook).

The disease also creates a bond between the plague and its victim, similar to the bond created by a Horror mark. This bond enables the plague to monitor the victim's location, as well as his or her physical and emotional states.

A Name-giver infected with the disease may infect others through skin-to-skin contact, and the highly contagious disease remains alive in a victim's corpse long after the victim has died. This latter characteristic led to the spread of plague throughout Barsaive and the decimation of entire kaers and towns in past times. This characteristic also led to the practice of burning corpses, a common precaution still employed by Name-givers throughout Barsaive to prevent the creation of disease-carrying cadaver men.

Few proven cures for the disease exist. An Excellent success or better on a Dispel Magic Test against the result of the Cause Plague Test can cure a victim. Additionally, victims recover from the disease if the plague that caused the disease dies. No other known cures exist, however.

Plagues can be introduced into adventures by simply having the players stumble across an outbreak of a plague-caused epidemic, or the players might be persuaded to help save a town surrounded by plague-ridden hot spots. Keep in mind that contracting the disease practically guarantees death, so make sure the players know enough about the disease to protect themselves.

Plagues can also be used to inject urgency into a game. If a player becomes infected and no magical healing services are available, the players will have to slay the plague that caused the disease within mere weeks in order to save their comrade.

In another possible adventure, villagers may hire the players to hunt down and kill a plague. Though the Horror construct may not seem like a formidable opponent at first, keep in mind that as a general rule, players cannot retreat from combat with one and escape with their lives.





QURAL'LOTECTICA

DEX: 12 STR: 9 TOU: 12
PER: 8 WIL: 9 CHA: 3

Initiative: 14	Physical Defense: 13
Number of Attacks: 4	Spell Defense: 16
Attack: 13	Social Defense: 8
Damage: 15	Armor: 2
Number of Spells: 1	Mystic Armor: 4
Spellcasting: 18	Knockdown: 14
Effect: 20 (Paralysis)	Recovery Tests: 3
Death Rating: 60	Combat Movement: 40
Wound Threshold: 12	Full Movement: 80
Unconsciousness Rating: 48	
Karma Points: 5	Karma Step: 5

Powers: None
Legend Points: 1,400
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

The terrible creature known as the qural'lotectica is one of the most feared Horror constructs known to Name-givers. The qural'lotectica, or "qural," consists of a small, bulbous body from which numerous tentacles emerge. These creatures hide themselves in trees along forest pathways or along alleyways in cities and towns. They drape their thin tentacles across the passage. As a victim walks by, the qural's tendrils pierce the individual's skin. Then the entity swiftly draws the blood from its victim, its transparent tendrils and body taking on a deep crimson color. The qural consumes only the blood of its victims, leaving drained, emaciated corpses as a sign of its presence.

According to the stories of Cathan elders, qurals infested the Servos Jungles during the Scourge, preying on the beasts of the jungle as well as the Cathan and other tribes. Apparently, qurals would lie in wait in the subterranean tunnels where the jungle people took refuge during that dark time, feeding in the dark and narrow passageways.

The qural's tentacles are each tipped with a sharp hollow claw. The base of each claw contains a gland that secretes a paralytic toxin, which the qural injects into the victim. The poison swiftly immobilizes the victim so that the



Horror will not be damaged by the struggles of its meal while it attaches more of its bloodsucking tentacles. The qural's tentacles are also hollow and carry blood from the thing's luckless prey to its stomach (which comprises most of its bulbous body).

The qural is vulnerable to fire, and its tentacles can be broken or severed by a strong hand or a sharp blade—if the adventurer who runs across one is lucky enough to see it before it sinks its tentacles into him. To reflect the creature's vulnerability to flames, add +5 steps to the attacker's Damage Test for any fire-based attacks against a qural. Attacking one of the creature's tentacles requires a Called Shot (see p. 200, *Earthdawn* rulebook). Each of the qural's tentacles has a Death Rating of 15; if a single tentacle suffers damage equal to its Death Rating, the tentacle is destroyed.

Though most of these Horror constructs live in Barsaive's jungles and forests, they may inhabit cities and towns as well.





REGARDING HORROR-CURSED ITEMS

Just as the Horrors can mark individuals with their fearsome powers, so too can they mark places and objects. These so-called Horror-cursed locations and items provide channels that Horrors can use to influence the physical world. Almost all Horrors can channel their Horror-mark power through such things, and many Horrors, such as Artificer and Aazhvat Many-Eyes, can use all manner of dreadful powers through cursed items and places.

Horror-cursed items come in as many shapes and sizes as do Name-givers, from seemingly mundane items to strange objects created from a Horror's body or forged by a Horror or one of its servitors. Some Horror-cursed items grant the user certain of the Horror's powers; in many gruesome cases, they also transform the user into a Horror construct. The danger of a Horror curse should never be underestimated, for entire towns have fallen under a Horror's influence because some careless merchant sold a Horror-cursed item to an inhabitant.

Descriptions of a few Horror-cursed items follow.

GAME INFORMATION

A Horror-cursed place or item functions in the same way as a Horror mark (see **Game Information**, p. 97). Through the curse, a Horror establishes a link to the item or place and can use its powers against any characters who pass through that place or come into contact with that item. Because the Horror must work indirectly through the cursed item or place, however, its powers become less effective. Resolve the use of the Horror's powers as described in **Horror Powers (Game Information, p. 93)** and weaken the powers by 5 to 10 steps to reflect this. Feel free to adjust the power's effect higher or lower than the suggested level, as best suits your game. Generally, Horrors channel their powers carefully through cursed items or places, using only those powers that will not alarm the living sufficiently to make them abandon the place or object.

In some instances, Horrors may also Horror mark any character who comes into contact with cursed items or places. To do this, the gamemaster makes a Curse Test against the Spell Defense of the character. The curse's step number for this test is the Spellcasting step of the Horror that laid the curse. If the test is successful, the character is Horror marked. This method of Horror-marking provides

the only exception to the standard line-of-sight restriction on the Horror Mark power (for more information, see **Using the Horror Mark Power**, p. 97).

Other Horror-cursed items or places may contain specific curses that affect characters. Use the Curse Test described in the preceding paragraph to determine if characters are affected by these curses.

To break a Horror curse, the characters must usually kill the Horror that marked the item or place. Doing so breaks the curse on the place or item and on any characters under its effects.

THE FLYDROP COAT

According to legend the so-called flydrop coat, Raknidor, was created by magicians enslaved by the infamous Horror known as Hate. Few records exist of this garment, which reputedly transforms its wearers into monstrous, spiderlike Horror constructs called jehuthras.

The Flydrop Coat requires no threads or Key Knowledges to activate its power. Anyone who puts on the coat for the first time must make a Willpower Test against a Difficulty Number of 10. A successful test postpones the coat's effect on the wearer for 24 hours. If the character is still wearing the coat the next day, he or she must make a Willpower Test against a Difficulty Number of 11. The difficulty number increases by 1 for each day the character wears the coat or until the character's Willpower Test fails. A failed test arouses in the wearer an inexplicable desire to wear the coat every day.

The coat changes fashion and color up to once a day as the wearer desires. However, the design always includes gray fur (actually spider hair) and conceals the body from shoulder to knee. Second, whenever the wearer wills it, the coat kills all flies within a radius in feet equal to the wearer's Willpower step. After a week of wearing the coat, the wearer learns that he or she may excrete a lump of organic material that draws flies from a radius in miles equal to the wearer's Willpower step. The lump's magic lasts one week, after which time the wearer can produce another lump.

At about the same time, the thought enters the wearer's mind that the flies killed by the coat probably taste good. A second full week of wearing the coat brings on a compulsion to spit saliva, which dries instantly into tough threads, and to weave the threads into cat's cradles or webs. A month after the failed Willpower Test, the wearer's behavior drives away even casual visitors.





At this point, the coat attaches thick adhesive tendrils to the wearer's body, preventing the wearer from removing it. Over the next month the wearer, who now feeds solely on flies, grows lazy and withdraws into some shadowy, unfrequented niche such as a cave or a cellar.

The coat now begins to transform the hapless character. The wearer's limbs atrophy and most of his body withdraws into his abdomen, which swells fivefold. His skin grows milky, tough, and inflexible, eventually becoming a cocoon. As the cocoon grows, the coat peels away under its own power and re-forms intact nearby. After three days of slow growth into a papery, foul-smelling sphere, the cocoon tears open and a mature jehuthra crawls out (see p. 305, ED). The new-hatched jehuthra carries the coat to a public place where someone will find it and goes off to spread panic and terror as Hate desires.

The wearer can remove the coat without trouble during the first week in which he wears it. After that, another character must persuade, trick, or force the wearer to remove the coat. If this happens, the wearer must make a Willpower Test against a Difficulty Number of 17. If this test is successful, the wearer recovers his senses and recognizes the coat as a vile item.

At the gamemaster's discretion, the wearer may make a similar Willpower Test to remove the coat after some shock, such as eating his first fly or facing a jehuthra in combat and uncomfortably recognizing his own kinship with his opponent. Once the transformation begins, however, removing the coat inflicts damage at a step number equal to the number of weeks the wearer has worn the coat. Nothing protects against this damage. A questor's healing magic can reverse the transformation at any time before the cocoon stage and enable the wearer to remove the coat without damage.

Destroying the coat requires powerful magic. That act also releases the coat's energies, which attracts Hate's attention. Treat attempts to destroy the flydrop coat as a use of raw magic to determine whether Hate Horror-marks the coat's destroyer.

THE SKULL OF MAARBERG

The legendary Skull of Maarberg is a fearsome-looking helmet formed from the skull of a large reptilian Horror killed in the early years of the Scourge. Traditionally, the skull is described as having seven eye sockets and several large spiked horns, which give its wearer a menacing appearance. Reputedly, anyone who wears the Skull gains the powers of the Horror to which it once belonged—and risks possession by the Horror as well.





The ancient Skull of Maarberg has turned a dull brownish color with age and patches of light green discoloration mar its surface. The Skull is much stronger than it looks, however, and the legends are true—any wearer who weaves threads to the skull receives the ability to wield several Horror powers.

Currently, the Skull belongs to Moltaa, an obsidiman nethermancer who leads a small unit of the Grim Legion in the hinterlands of Barsaive just north of the Tylon Mountains. See the **Earthdawn** adventure **Infected** for more information about Moltaa and the Grim Legion.

SKULL OF MAARBERG

Maximum Threads: 1

Spell Defense: 21

Thread Ranks

Rank 1 **Cost:** 500

Key Knowledge: The skull belongs to a Horror slain by a great hero during the earliest days of the Scourge. It was recovered many years after the Invae Burnings in a buried city its discoverers christened Maarberg. The user must discover the Name given to the city by its long-dead inhabitants (the gamemaster supplies the Name).

Effect: The user gains the Swat ability. The step number for this ability is the wearer's Strength step plus the helmet's thread rank. Using Swat does not require an action. When struck, the wearer makes a Swat Test. If the die roll result equals or exceeds the result of the opponent's Attack Test, the user can deflect the force of the blow with a backhanded swipe of his or her arm. The force of the blow rebounds into the attacker, sending him or her flying backward a number of yards equal to the difference between the two test results. To avoid taking 1 point of Stun damage for each yard flown, the target must make a successful Dexterity, Avoid Blow, or similar test against a Difficulty Number equal to the Swat Test result. If the wearer's Swat Test fails, the attacker's blow does standard damage, and the character wearing the helmet suffers an automatic Knockdown.

Rank 2 **Cost:** 800

Effect: The user gains the Horror power Animate Dead. The step number for this power is the wearer's Willpower step plus the helmet's thread rank.



Rank 3 **Cost:** 1,300

Key Knowledge: The wearer must discover the Name of the hero who slew the Horror in the final defense of his or her city (the gamemaster supplies the Name).

Deed: When the user attaches the Rank 3 thread to the Skull, the lingering, malign presence of the dead Horror psychically assaults the user. To resist, the user must make a Willpower or Willforce Test against the Horror's Spell Defense of 21. If the test fails, the spirit of the Horror possesses the user for three days, during which it attempts to force the user to cause as much pain and suffering as possible.

Effect: The user gains the Horror power Cursed Luck. The step number for this power is the wearer's Willpower step plus the helmet's thread rank.





Rank 4 **Cost:** 2,100

Effect: The user gains the Horror power Damage Shift. The step number for this power is the wearer's Willpower step plus the helmet's thread rank.

Rank 5 **Cost:** 3,400

Key Knowledge: The user must learn the Name of the Horror whose skull he wears (the gamemaster supplies the Name).

Deed: When the user attaches the Rank 5 thread, the Horror's spirit psychically assaults the user. To resist, the user must make a Willpower or Willforce Test against the Horror's Spell Defense of 21. If the test fails, the Horror possesses the user for a year and a day.

Effect: The user gains the Horror power Skin Shift. The step number for this power is the wearer's Willpower step plus the helmet's thread rank.

Rank 6 **Cost:** 5,500

Effect: The user gains the Horror power Corrupt Karma. The step number for this power is the wearer's Willpower step plus the helmet's thread rank.

Rank 7 **Cost:** 8,900

Key Knowledge: The user must learn the curse that escaped the lips of the Horror at the moment of its death: "Through a Name-giver's greed for power, I shall live again to laugh at your crumbling bones!"

Deed: The spirit of the Horror makes a final attempt to possess the user, who must make a Willpower or Willforce Test against a Spell Defense of 28 to defeat the Horror. If the test fails, the Horror destroys the wearer's identity and takes over his or her body until the body dies of natural causes. If the test is successful, the Horror possesses the wearer for three days.

Effect: The user gains the Horror power Karma Tap. The step number for this power is the wearer's Willpower step plus the helmet's thread rank.

THE PIPES OF WRONGNESS

The Pipes of Wrongness are a set of panpipes beautifully wrought of pewter. Crafted by an unknown, long-dead craftsman, the rune-covered pipes carry an unusual and powerful curse of the Horror called Fla Tra Lys, the Eater of Music.

Anyone who picks up the pipes immediately experiences an irresistible urge to blow them and hear their



melody. Unfortunately, the only music they produce is a high, unpleasant, piercing whistle. Within days after a character blows the pipes, an undead servant of the Horror called Fla Tra Lys appears. This servant is an unimaginably haggard, haunted looking individual with thin white hair, sunken cheeks, and a skeletal body. His clothes are filthy, as though he has been recently dug from the earth. The servant possesses the same game statistics as a cadaver man (see p. 288, *Earthdawn* rulebook.)

The servant says, "I am a gift from Fla Tra Lys, the Eater of Music. I will serve as your slave for a year and a day. You may beat me or starve me, but I will serve you. You may drive me away, but I will return to serve you. If you slay me, I will rise from the dead and serve you even as my body rots."





The undead servant remains with the character for a full year and a day. During that time, the servant rises from any injury or death to continue its service. Once that time has elapsed, the Horror appears to claim the servant and slay the character it has been serving. Then the Horror uses the Unnatural Life power (p. 299, **Earthdawn** rulebook) to transform the character into a new undead servant, who serves the next character who blows the pipes.

If a character who blew the pipes dies before Fla Tra Lys claims him, the undead servant remains with the character's surviving fellow adventurers. However, the Horror shows up soon to devour the servant. Blowing on the pipes again before the servant's time is up has no effect.

Characters may compel or bargain with Fla Tra Lys to take back the pipes and remove the item's curse from a player character. However, they must first summon the Horror by some means (if it is not already present), such as the Eighth Circle nethermancer spell Horror Call.

The pipes can be destroyed by tossing them into the Death's Sea, but the Horror will try to prevent this. Dragon flame also destroys the pipes, but persuading a dragon to use its breath in this manner may prove difficult. A generous gamemaster may decide that the act of destroying the pipes also weakens Fla Tra Lys, so that characters may more easily destroy the Horror. A powerful questor of Garlen, Lochost, or Mynbruje can remove the enslaving curse from a victim but cannot destroy the pipes.

For a legend associated with the Pipes of Wrongness, see **Legends of Earthdawn, Volume I**.

Fla Tra Lys

Use the statistics for bloatforms (p. 299, **Earthdawn** rulebook) but reduce the Combat Movement to 10 and Full Movement to 20. Fla Tra Lys has Circle 7 nethermancer spells instead of wizard spells and cannot fly.

This slow, globular-shaped Horror has six short, thick tentacles. When it moves, bulky masses shift and rotate beneath its scabby hide. A shimmering haze rises from it, and it emits a cool, sterile smell like rubbing alcohol.

Survivors of Fla Tra Lys's attacks named the Horror "the Eater of Music" for its horrible effect on music. The Horror uses a unique magical effect to turn music played in its vicinity into wretched, grating noises. Apparently the Horror delights in the disquiet this causes and often manifests where music is being played.

Fla Tra Lys has ambitions beyond a steady supply of human pain. Less bluntly manipulative than some other Horrors, Fla Tra Lys seeks to corrupt Name-givers' artistic



impulses. It offers easy wealth to talented creators, especially musicians, if they accept its suggestions when creating their works. If an artist gives a performance or fashions a work that embodies the Horror's advice—an unsettling experience for any audience, inasmuch as the Horror has no sense of beauty—then Fla Tra Lys tells the corrupted creator how to reach some long-hidden treasure. This usually involves hardships far beyond the treasure's intrinsic worth. Inevitably the artist's resulting wealth and guilty conscience bring corruption of a different kind, and Fla Tra Lys feeds well on that, too.

TAINTED ORICHALCUM

Name-givers throughout Barsaive use orichalcum in a variety of enchantments, ranging from the forging of magical weapons and armor to blood-magic rituals. Because of the widespread use of this magical metal, Horror-tainted orichalcum remains a grave and never ending threat to all Name-givers.

A Horror may use the Horror Mark or Horror Thread power (p. 101) to taint a supply of orichalcum. Treat all items made of tainted orichalcum as Horror-cursed items. (For more information, see **Regarding Horror-Cursed Items**, p. 86, and p. 211 of the **Earthdawn** rulebook.)





GAME INFORMATION

This section explains the format of each Horror entry, defines Horror game statistics, and describes several new Horror powers. The section also offers guidelines for other Horror abilities, discusses how to use Horrors effectively in an **Earthdawn** adventure or campaign, and describes the Horror Stalker Discipline.

HORROR ENTRY FORMAT

Generally, each of the descriptions in **Horrors** is presented in four sections: a fictional commentary on the Horror by a character familiar with the Horror being discussed, a **Game Information** section, suggestions for using the Horror in adventures, and **Statistics**.

Typically, the commentary includes a physical description of each Horror or Horror construct, as well as descriptions of its habitat, eating habits, natural defenses, magical abilities (if any), and possible ways to defeat or escape it. Not all of the commentaries contain the same kinds of information. And because they reflect the personal views of the authors, they may not be completely accurate. (The contributors to this tome know a great deal about the Horrors that plague Barsaive, but they do not know everything.) Furthermore, the information in this section is confined to what the author knows or has heard, and in many cases is far from extensive. Most of what is known about the Horrors is at best educated guesswork by scholars and sages, and so much of the written information about them is suspect.

The **Game Information** sections in each description provide rules that correspond to the information given in the commentaries. For example, if a Horror is described as having "vicious claws dripping with poison," the **Game Information** section for that Horror contains game mechanics for determining the damage caused by the claws and the effects of the poison. This section also includes rules for resolving the use of any unusual powers or abilities a Horror or construct may possess.

The section on using specific Horrors in adventures suggests at least one way gamemasters might use a Horror in adventures. These adventure hooks are intended to spark ideas for fleshing out a complete adventure and/or integrating the Horror into an ongoing **Earthdawn** campaign. Keep in mind that the suggestions offered in this section are just

that—suggestions. Feel free to use the Horrors in this book in any way you like. Remember that the Named Horrors in this book represent significant threats to Barsaive and its adepts and so take care when using them in adventures.

Finally, each Horror entry includes game statistics, presented in the format used in the **Earthdawn** rulebook. The following passage explains of these statistics.

STATISTICS

Attributes: Each Horror has a step number for the following Attributes: Dexterity (DEX), Strength (STR), Toughness (TOU), Perception (PER), Willpower (WIL), and Charisma (CHA). Use the Action dice for the step number indicated when making tests based on Attributes.

Initiative: Use the Action dice for this step number to make the Horror's Initiative Tests.

Number of Attacks: This number describes how many attacks the Horror may make in each Combat Round. A number in parentheses means that the gamemaster must subtract other actions the Horror takes in that Combat Round from the Number of Attacks. For example, if a Horror with **Number of Attacks:** (1) wants to cast a spell, it must give up its attack for that round to do so. A Horror with **Number of Attacks:** (2) may make one attack and take another action in the same round.

Attack: Use the Action dice for this step number to make the Horror's Attack Tests. If the Horror can make more than one type of attack, the step number for each type of attack is listed separately.

Damage: Use this step number to make Damage Tests resulting from the Horror's physical attacks. Separate Damage step numbers are provided for each type of attack a Horror can make.

Number of Spells: This number describes how many spells the Horror can cast in one Combat Round. A Horror may sacrifice one of its spells to weave spell threads. A number in parentheses means that the gamemaster must subtract an action to use Spellcasting from the number of attacks or other actions the Horror may take in a round. For example, a Horror with **Spellcasting:** (1) must give up an attack to cast a spell. Note that many Horrors must choose between a physical attack or a magical effect in combat.

Spellcasting: Use this step number to make tests whenever the Horror attempts to cast a spell or create a magical





effect. Horrors also use their Spellcasting Talent to weave any spell threads they need for a spell or magical effect.

Effect: This is the step number of any of the Horror's magical effects or spells. This category describes the spell or effect that results from the Horror's successful Spellcasting Tests. Gamemasters will most often be instructed to roll the Effect dice to determine a value, such as the amount of damage inflicted by an attack, the duration of the effect of the spell, and so on. See **Spell Magic**, p. 153 of the **Earthdawn** rulebook, for more information.

Physical Defense: This is the Horror's Physical Defense Rating.

Spell Defense: This is the Horror's Spell Defense Rating.

Social Defense: This is the Horror's Social Defense Rating. Characters must be able to communicate to use social talents against the Horror. Taunts and other non-verbal talents work on most Horrors.

Armor: This is the Horror's natural Armor Rating. Most often, a Horror's natural armor is its thick skin or some other body covering. Most Horrors also have special magical abilities that determine or affect this number.

Mystic Armor: This is the Horror's Mystic Armor Rating.

Knockdown: The Horror uses this step number to resist knockdown. A notation of "Immune" means that the Horror cannot be knocked down. A notation of "NA," or "Not Applicable," means the Horror cannot resist knockdown; it is knocked down any time it suffers a Wound.

Death Rating: This number represents the Horror's Death Rating.

Wound Threshold: This is the Horror's Wound Threshold. A notation of "Immune" means the Horror cannot be Wounded.

Unconsciousness Rating: This number represents the Horror's Unconsciousness Rating. A notation of "Immune" means that accumulated damage does not render the Horror unconscious.

Recovery Tests: This represents the number of Recovery Tests the Horror may make each day. Most Horrors use their Toughness step for Recovery Tests. If the Horror uses a step number other than its Toughness step to make Recovery Tests, that step number appears in parentheses.

Combat Movement: This is the number of yards a Horror can move in a Combat Round while remaining able to attack or take other action.

Full Movement: This number represents the number of

yards the Horror can move if it takes no other action in a Combat Round.

Flight: Certain flying Horrors have separate listings for their Flight Movement. The number before the slash is the Horror's Combat Movement when flying. The number after the slash is its Full Movement when flying. The Combat/Full Movement designation also applies to Horrors that can move underwater or underground.

Karma: All Horrors and most Horror constructs can use Karma to enhance their abilities. See the various Karma-related abilities under **Horror Powers** for more information.

Powers: This notation lists all the powers possessed by the Horror.

Legend Points: A character receives this number of Legend Points for defeating a Horror. Keep in mind that defeating a Horror does not necessarily mean killing it.

Equipment: This notation refers to any weapons, armor, magical items and the like that the Horror possesses. At the gamemaster's discretion, a Horror may have more equipment than is listed.

Loot: This notation lists the valuable items or body parts the Horror possesses, including items worth Legend Points. For more information on treasure and Legend Points, see **Earning Legend Points**, pp. 218–20 in the **Earthdawn** rulebook.

THE NATURE OF THE HORRORS

What the Horrors are, where they come from, and their reasons for doing what they do are not easily answered questions. Though theories abound, debated endlessly by scholars, sages, and nethermancers, the people of Barsaive know precious little of the Horrors' true nature. Few of the existing theories answer all the questions posed about the Horrors; though this book describes many traits common to the known Horrors in Barsaive, vast areas of information remain frustratingly vague.

In terms of game play, the key to understanding the Horrors is to remember that there are no rules that apply to all Horrors all the time! The Horrors should remain a source of mystery and terror. They do what they do because it is their nature to do so. No further explanation exists for their behavior.

Therefore, the characters should never know the whole story when it comes to the Horrors. Players also should never think that they know the real truth, because there is no real truth. The gamemaster has the final word on how and why Horrors act as they do. The rules pertaining to





Horrors in this book and in the **Earthdawn** rulebook are simply guidelines that reflect how the Horrors and their powers function in the game.

HOW THE HORRORS MANIFEST

Though many Horrors invaded the world and ravaged it physically, a number of Horrors remained in astral space. Instead of doing the world direct physical harm, these Horrors worked their magic from the astral plane—polluting whole regions of it, corrupting the magic of adepts and magicians, and penetrating the magical defenses of kaers and citadels across Barsaive. Indeed, as much of the damage wrought by the Scourge came from these Horrors' astral activities as from the hordes of Horrors that swarmed across the face of Barsaive.

In terms of manifestation, Horrors may be single-natured or dual-natured. Single-natured Horrors can exist in only one form at a time, most often either physical or astral. Some single-natured Horrors can only take one form or the other, but not both. Most of the mindless, savage Horrors, including gnashers, winglayers, baggi, dread iota and so on, are of this type. Many other single-natured Horrors can switch from physical to astral form (or the reverse) at will. This is most often true of more intelligent Horrors, especially Named Horrors. Horrors capable of entering astral space in this manner often switch forms to escape dangerous situations or confrontations.

The dual-natured Horror is the most dangerous type. These Horrors exist simultaneously in physical and astral form. Though such a Horror's physical body and astral spirit are connected, they are in fact two separate manifestations of the same Horror that can operate independently of one another. Destroying a dual-natured Horror, therefore, is only possible if a character slays both the body and the spirit. The mere death of such a Horror's body does not destroy the Horror; its spirit remains alive in astral space until it can create a new body or find a suitable Name-giver to serve as a host.

The way in which Horrors manifest determines how they interact with the world and also restricts how characters may confront them. For example, a Horror that has a physical form can be battled physically. Likewise, Horrors that manifest only in astral space must be battled in astral space. Dual-natured Horrors must be confronted in both realms.

HORROR POWERS

All Horrors demonstrate powerful magical abilities. They may use the magical energies of the world to wield

these powers, as Name-givers use spells or talents, or these powers may exist because the Horrors are actual manifestations of astral energy. No one knows for certain.

Keep in mind that not every Horror possesses every Horror power, nor are Horror powers limited to a given list. The powers described in the following pages are the ones most extensively documented. As far as anyone knows, the Horrors may have any number of additional, fearsome abilities.

The following text summarizes existing Horror powers and describes new ways to use some of them, describes new Horror powers introduced in the book, offers guidelines for altering Horror powers to suit individual Horrors, and describes other abilities unique to Horrors. Wherever the descriptions below of existing powers differ from those given in the **Earthdawn** rulebook, the text has been expanded and clarified.

ALTERING HORROR POWERS

The descriptions of Horror powers in the **Earthdawn** rulebook, as well as those appearing for the first time in this book, represent the most commonly encountered manifestation of those Horror powers. However, not all Horror powers function identically for all Horrors. Many Horrors have slight variations on "standard" powers. These variations add an element of the unknown to the game. Alterations to Horror powers may make them more powerful, but can also make them less so. Some Horror powers are deadly; adding limitations to such powers makes the Horror a bit easier for the characters to deal with. Below are guidelines for altering certain Horror powers during play.

The most common method of altering a Horror power from the norm changes the parameters of a power's effect, such as its range or duration. For example, many standard Horror powers can only be used on victims that the Horror can see. One variation might allow the Horror to use any or all of its powers on any victim it has Horror marked, operating on the theory that the Horror mark allows it to "see" the character in question. Similarly, the standard Damage Shift power lasts for 5 rounds. One variation might limit each use of Damage Shift to only 1 round.

The other method of alteration involves changing the power's actual effect. Such variations are common among the Named Horrors presented earlier in this book. Each of these Horrors is unique and so manifests its powers in a unique way. The Horror Mark power used by the entity known as Taint provides a good example of an altered effect. Instead of marking victims as most other Horrors do, Taint must mark the victim a little bit at a time until the Horror has





tainted the victim's pattern sufficiently to create the Horror mark. Once a victim has been marked, Taint can use its Corrupt Magic power on that character. The alterations to Taint's Horror Mark power limit the power in one way, but also allow the Horror to use other abilities against the victim.

The rules for Horror powers are meant as guidelines, and the gamemaster may bend, twist, or even break them in whatever way best suits their adventures. Similarly, the descriptions of Horror powers given in the **Earthdawn** rulebook and in this volume are simply mechanics for resolving the actions most commonly associated with the Horrors, and the gamemaster should feel free to modify the way these powers work as he sees fit. For example, if the gamemaster wishes to create a Horror whose Horror Mark allows it to take control of its victims for brief periods of time, he should do so. Just because the existing description of the Horror Mark power does not cite this type of effect does not mean that a given Horror cannot use it that way.

However, keep in mind that the dreadful powers of many Horrors can result in the death of many characters if used without caution. Horror powers are dangerous enough as written, and any enhancements of them might easily make the Horrors unbeatable. If the characters have little or

no chance of ever defeating a Horror, the adventure in which they face the Horror will soon cease to be fun. Therefore, resist the temptation to beef up Horror powers too much. In fact, altering a Horror's powers to reduce their effectiveness may add to the fun of the game by forcing the Horror to use more subtle approaches to ensure its success.

Some Horror powers are so effective as written that they can prevent the characters from taking any action against the Horror. The Terror power, for example, can completely incapacitate an entire group of adepts, while the Damage Shift power can transfer all damage the characters do from the Horror to other victims. High step numbers for either of these powers can result in a dead-end scenario for the characters, and so the gamemaster may wish to substitute lower step numbers for these powers. If a Horror's Damage Shift step number is only one or two steps higher than the average Spell Defense of a group of characters, the Horror likely will suffer some of the damage the characters inflict on it.

HORROR POWERS FROM THE EARTHDAWN RULEBOOK

The following text expands on and clarifies the Horror powers that originally appeared in the **Earthdawn** rulebook. The descriptions are included in this book for easy reference.





Because the Horror Mark power can be used for so many different purposes, it requires a more extensive treatment than other powers and so appears at the end of this section.

Animate Dead

The Animate Dead power allows a Horror to place an undead spirit into a corpse or cadaver, resulting in the creation of a cadaver man (see p. 288, *Earthdawn* rulebook).

To animate a corpse, the Horror must touch a portion of the deceased body and make an Animate Dead Test against the Spell Defense of the deceased. If successful, this power raises the dead man for three days, turning him into a cadaver man under the Horror's control. The Horror may use blood magic to extend the animation beyond the three-day limit. By taking 1 point of damage the Horror can keep the cadaver man "alive" for a year and a day. At the end of this time, the cadaver man collapses into dust unless the Horror continues the blood magic. The Horror can control the cadaver man at a range of 150 to 400 yards. Though the Horror must concentrate to control the dead, it need not make any tests to give the cadaver man orders. Because cadaver men created with this power are telepathically linked to the Horror, its commands to them do not depend on speech or line of sight.

Corrupt Karma

The Corrupt Karma power allows the Horror to alter another being's use of Karma. The Horror first makes a Spellcasting Test against the target character's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the Horror then makes a Corrupt Karma Test against the target's Karma step. A successful result on this test allows the Horror to override the character's use of Karma, preventing the character from spending Karma on tests made against the Horror. If the Horror achieves an Excellent or better success on the Corrupt Karma Test, it can prevent the character from using Karma on any test. Though this power normally works only through line of sight, it can also work against a Horror-marked character several hundred miles away from the Horror in question.

Cursed Luck

Many Horrors can bring bad luck to their opponents using this power. To use Cursed Luck, the Horror makes a Cursed Luck Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the power reduces the result of at least one die rolled by the target for any action to 1. The success level achieved determines how many of the target's dice

have their results reduced. An Average success reduces one die, a Good success reduces two dice, an Excellent success three, and an Extraordinary success four. Cursed Luck automatically reduces the highest numbers rolled by the target character. For example, if a character rolls a 2 and a 6, the Cursed Luck power reduces the 6 to a 1. If the success level achieved by the Horror allows it to reduce more dice than the target character has rolled, the power affects all the target's dice and gives the character an automatic result of 1, meaning that his or her action fails. (For an explanation of the Rule of One, see p. 34, *Earthdawn* rulebook.) A character may not use cursed dice as Bonus dice, because the curse has already reduced any result from such dice to 1 before the character can gain any benefit. Cursed Luck only affects the results of one test.

Damage Shift

The Damage Shift power allows a Horror to shift damage it has taken onto a target character. Though the Horror spends a Karma Point to accomplish this, it rolls no Karma dice; the Karma Point simply enables the Horror to make the necessary Damage Shift Test to use its power. Damage Shift is a simple action, and does not use up one of the Horror's Attack or Spell actions available in a Combat Round. The Horror may use Damage Shift whenever it takes damage by making a Damage Shift Test against the target's Spell Defense. A successful result shifts all damage the Horror has just taken to the target character. Each use of Damage Shift lasts for 5 Combat Rounds; the Horror may make a Damage Shift Test in any of those 5 rounds, transferring the damage it takes from each attack in that round to the target. Damage Shift works by line of sight, meaning that the Horror must be able to see its chosen target.

Karma Points

Nearly all Horrors and many Horror constructs have Karma Points that they may use on any test, though they may spend only 1 Karma Point per test. Horrors regain Karma Points at a rate of 1 to 5 points a day, until they reach the maximum listed for each Horror. Horrors can regain Karma faster than normal via use of the Karma Drain (p. 102) and Energy Drain (p. 103) powers.

Karma Tap

This ability allows a Horror to suggest actions to characters. The Horror makes a Spellcasting Test against the target character's Spell Defense; if the test is successful, the Horror forms a telepathic link with the character. If a character is





Horror marked by the Horror suggesting the action, the Horror adds 3 steps to its Spellcasting Test. The Horror then makes a Karma Tap Test. The result is the number of days the link lasts. If the character accepts the suggestion, the Horror substitutes its Karma step for the character's when the character embarks on the suggested course of action. Though the influenced character must still spend his or her own Karma Point, he may spend it on any action, and uses the Horror's Karma step rather than his own to carry it out. The telepathic link extends for 1,000 miles.

Skin Shift

This gruesome ability allows the Horror to mutilate a target's body. The Horror makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense; if the test is successful, the Horror rolls the Skin Shift dice to determine damage. The target takes Damage Points equal to the result of the Skin Shift dice roll; his skin tears loose from muscles and ligaments, twisting and rotating about his body. During the first round in which the Horror uses this power, Skin Shift inflicts 7 Wounds on the target in addition to the damage of the Skin Shift dice roll result. Each use of Skin Shift lasts for 3 rounds, causing additional damage in each round.

Spells

Horrors often learn spells from sentient captives who follow a particular magician Discipline. Horrors can learn every spell from their captives' listed Disciplines and Circles, though they rarely learn those spells that affect the undead and spirits. Though Horrors may learn the spells from a Discipline, they acquire none of that Discipline's other talents. Though Horrors cast all spells as raw magic (see p. 155, *Earthdawn* rulebook), they take no damage and tend to ignore raw magic spells cast by other Horrors. Also, Horrors do not use spell matrices, though they must weave spell threads where required. To determine the effect of Horror-cast spells, use the Horror's Willpower step. Horrors do not have Willforce.

Terror

Terror allows Horrors to instill intense fear into their targets. Each use of Terror costs the Horror 5 Strain Points. To use this power, the Horror makes a Spellcasting Test and compares the result to the Spell Defense of all characters within 50 yards of the Horror. If the test is successful against any character, the Horror makes a Terror Test. The result becomes the difficulty number against which an affected character must make a successful Willpower Test before he or she can perform any action against the Horror. Until the

character makes a successful Willpower Test, he can take no other action. His speech becomes a piteous wail, and any movements become random twitches.

Thought Worm

The Thought Worm power allows a Horror to create a telepathic link between itself and a target. The target character must be within the Horror's line of sight for the Horror to place a Thought Worm in the character's mind. The Horror makes a Spellcasting Test against the intended victim's Spell Defense. If the target has been previously Horror-marked by the Horror creating the Thought Worm, it gains a +3 step bonus to its Spellcasting Test. A successful result places the Thought Worm within the mind of the victim. A Thought Worm lasts for a year and a day, and the Horror may renew it at the price of 1 permanent point of damage for each year of renewal. If the target character dies, the Horror regains the spent Damage Points.

A Thought Worm allows the Horror to make telepathic suggestions to the target when he or she is within 1,000 miles of the Horror. If the target resists the suggestion, the Horror makes a Thought Worm Test, and the character takes Damage Points equivalent to the result. This damage is extremely painful. When a character resists, the gamemaster also records a number of Legend Points for the Thought Worm equal to the target's Circle Number $\times$ 100. For example, when a Fifth Circle character resists the Thought Worm, the gamemaster records 500 Legend Points. Because Horrors enjoy rewarding their faithful servants, each resistance adds to the total Legend Points; if the character subsequently acts upon a suggestion from the Thought Worm, he gains all of the Legend Points the Thought Worm previously accumulated by his resistance. Unfortunately, in addition to the Legend Points, the character also automatically gains a Horror Mark.

Unnatural Life

This ability allows a Horror to give a corpse the "gift" of unnatural life. This ability only works on corpses dead for less than a year and a day. To use this power, the Horror touches the dead body and makes an Unnatural Life Test against its Spell Defense. If the test is successful, Unnatural Life revives the corpse. Though not as dreadful to behold as a zombie or a ghoul, the corpse remains visibly decayed and retains the distinctive odor of rotting flesh. Aside from a horrific appearance and smell, the animated character can function as he did in life; Unnatural Life revives him with all of his Attributes and talents intact.





Characters animated by Unnatural Life are hard to destroy. They may make a Recovery Test during any Combat Round, which counts as their action for that round. Additionally, the unnaturally living may make unlimited Recovery Tests in the course of a day.

The Horror loses 1 Damage Point when it uses this power and regains it when the Unnatural Life ends. The Horror may stop the effects of Unnatural Life any time the unnaturally alive character is within 100 yards of the Horror.

USING THE HORROR MARK POWER

This terrible ability allows Horrors to mark victims, thereby linking the Horror and the target character. To use Horror Mark, the Horror must be able to see the target character. The Horror makes a Horror Mark Test against the target character's Spell Defense. If the target character has used raw magic, use the Horror Mark Test method provided on p. 156 of the **Earthdawn** rulebook, rather than the Horror Mark Test. Any character who has used raw magic may use only his original Spell Defense to resist the Horror Mark. If a character has not used raw magic, he may increase his Spell Defense by using magical items or spells.

The Horror Mark links the Horror to the target over vast distances and allows the Horror to use any of its abilities against the target character when the character is within 10 miles of the Horror. For a range up to 100 miles, the Horror Mark allows the Horror to take actions against the character that do not directly cause damage, and communication between the Horror and the target extends for 5,000 miles. Horror Marks last a year and a day, and the Horror may renew the Horror Mark whenever the target character is within 100 miles of the Horror.

Unique Horror Marks

The standard description of the Horror Mark power outlines the power's basic effects and the most common method in which Horrors use it. However, many major Horrors have their own versions of this power that exemplify each Horror's strengths, weaknesses, and favorite tactics. The **Game Information** sections for many of the Named Horrors in this book offer expanded, specific game mechanics for how the Horror's unique variant of the Horror Mark power functions in the game.

When creating new Horrors or using the Horrors in published **Earthdawn** material, feel free to alter the specific effects of the Horror Mark power to best suit the Horror using it and satisfy the needs of the story (see **Altering Horror Powers**, p. 93).





Effects of a Horror Mark

A Horror mark has an impact on the marked character and the overall adventure/campaign. The gamemaster immediately has a new story to tell in which the Horror uses the advantages of its mark, either directly or subtly. Exactly how and when the Horror shows itself is up to the gamemaster and depends on the specifics of his or her campaign.

In the meantime, the Horror mark affects the victim as much or as little as the gamemaster decides. When determining possible effects of a Horror mark on a character, consider the following ideas:

First, a Horror-marked victim does not necessarily know that he or she has been marked. Only in unusual circumstances, or if the Horror appears to announce the fact, will a character learn about the mark he or she carries. If the gamemaster wishes to spill the beans, he or she can allow the marked character to make some sort of test by which he might sense the Horror mark. Such a test should be tough, with a difficulty number equal to the Horror Mark step number or Spell Defense of the Horror that placed the mark.

Second, a Horror mark leaves no physical trace on the victim unless the Horror's specific use of this power causes one. In most cases, Horror marks cannot be detected astrally either (for optional guidelines, see **Detecting Horror Marks**).

Third, most people in Barsaive know that a Horror mark is a bad thing. If it becomes common knowledge that a character has been marked, that character will face challenges in dealing with fellow Name-givers. Ever fearful of the Horrors, the common folk would rather leave a Horror-marked victim to die of wounds or exposure rather than aid such a person and risk facing a Horror. Like much about the Horrors, Horror marks are a source of considerable superstition. Countless tales exist about the ways in which Horrors can work through their marked victims, many of which are true. For every true tale, however, there are perhaps two or three false ones told.

Detecting Horror Marks

When cast on a target, a Horror mark becomes embedded into the victim's True Pattern, making it difficult even for other Horrors to detect. The following optional rule provides a method by which Horror marks can be spotted; feel free to ignore this rule if it disrupts your game significantly.

A Horror mark taints a victim's True Pattern, and so detecting one requires some type of astral sensing ability such as the Astral Sight talent, the Astral Sense spell, or the naturally astral-sensitive sight possessed by windlings and

most dragons. Almost any Horror with significant magical abilities possesses some way of sensing astrally and so can detect a Horror mark on a Name-giver victim.

To detect a Horror mark, the sensing character must make an astral sensing test based on the appropriate ability against the Spell Defense of the Horror that marked the victim. In some cases, detecting a mark might require the sensing character to achieve a Good, Excellent, or even Extraordinary success. Base the success level needed to detect the mark on the strength of the Horror and how recently the Horror has made use of the Horror mark. A Horror mark that has lain dormant for thirty years should be considerably harder to detect than one that a Horror used yesterday. This astral sensing test can also allow characters to detect Horror curses on items and places, though successful attempts should almost always require the character to achieve a Good success or better.

When perceived astrally, a Horror mark appears as a small stain on the victim's pattern. The texture and design of this stain are unique to the Horror whose mark it is. For example, the Horror mark of Aazhvat Many-Eyes might appear as an unblinking eye, while the Horror mark of Taint would resemble a spot of corrupted energy. Describing the appearance of a Horror mark in a way that reflects the Horror who marked the victim allows the gamemaster to drop hints about the Horror's nature to the characters and players (assuming that the character is unaware of the Horror mark in the first place).

Horror Marks and Raw Magic

A magician who casts raw magic may find himself Horror marked. The use of raw magic acts like an astral flare, drawing the attention of nearby Horrors and allowing them to easily locate the magician in astral space. Once a Horror finds the magician, it can easily use its Horror Mark power on the unfortunate victim. The Horror (or type of Horror) that marks a character in this situation depends on the preparations and personal preferences of the gamemaster.

If the Horror mark was not pre-planned (as is most likely), the creation of a Horror mark through the use of raw magic allows the gamemaster to design a Horror that can later be introduced into the campaign to torment the unfortunate magician. The gamemaster can also link the marking to an upcoming adventure that features a Horror.

This situation can also fit into an adventure or campaign in which a Horror is already involved. This Horror might well be the one that marks the magician; in fact, such





a situation occurs in the **Earthdawn** adventure **Terror in the Skies**. If the adventure ends with the death of the Horror, the victim avoids its dreadful intentions. If not, he or she will face no end of challenges in subsequent adventures.

If the gamemaster planned for the Horror mark, he or she can bring the Horror into the campaign in the most convenient manner. In this case, the gamemaster has chosen a Horror and is simply waiting for the right opportunity to use its powers against the characters. A magician using raw magic provides just such an opportunity.

For situations in which the gamemaster has a Horror standing ready to mark any adepts daring enough to use raw magic, the following optional method may be used to resolve the Horror Mark Test required by the casting of raw magic (see p. 156, **Earthdawn** rulebook). This option greatly increases the likelihood of the magician in question receiving a Horror mark. This option also assumes that a Horror is lurking nearby in astral space, has already targeted the magician and is simply waiting for the best opportunity to mark him.

The step number for the standard Horror Mark Test when casting raw magic is based on the Circle of the spell cast and the type of region in which the magician cast the spell (see **Raw Magic Table**, p. 156, **Earthdawn** rulebook). Under the optional rule, the Circle of the spell and the type of region act as bonus to the step number of the Horror Mark power. For the appropriate bonus, consult the Raw Magic Horror Mark table on this page.

NEW HORROR POWERS

The following Horror powers appear for the first time in this book.

Aura of Awe

The Aura of Awe power allows a Horror to alter the attitudes of other characters toward it. (See p. 235 of the **Earthdawn** rulebook for details on attitudes.) To use this power, the Horror makes a Spellcasting Test against the Spell Defense of the target. If that test succeeds, the Horror makes an Aura of Awe Test against the target's Social Defense. The success level of the Aura of Awe Test determines the attitude of the target. On a Poor success, the target adopts a Neutral attitude toward the Horror. On an Average success, the target adopts a Friendly attitude. On a Good success, the target becomes Loyal; an Excellent or better success means that the target is Awestruck. The effect lasts until the target has been out of the Horror's presence for a year and a day, or until the Horror directly injures the target.

RAW MAGIC HORROR MARK TABLE

Type of Region	Bonus to Horror Mark Step
Safe	No bonus
Open	Circle
Tainted	Circle + 3
Corrupt	Circle + 5

When a player character is affected by the Aura of Awe, the gamemaster may secretly instruct the player to run the character appropriately or may temporarily take over decisions for the player until the Aura of Awe is dispelled. The difficulty number for dispelling Aura of Awe is equal to the Social Defense of the Horror that cast it.

Corrupt Reality

The Corrupt Reality power enables a Horror to distort the fabric of reality within sensing distance of a victim it has previously Horror-marked. By distorting reality in this manner, the Horror can alarm and torment the victim and anyone else in the victim's vicinity. This serves to isolate the victim from others, who will typically avoid the presence of anyone who is a locus for such occurrences. Typical effects of Corrupt Reality include the ever-present eye images associated with Aazhvat Many-Eyes, as well as the fouling of food and drink, the creation of eerie sounds or changes in temperature, the transformation of mundane objects into slime-covered monstrosities, and the induced rapid decay of inanimate objects. These manifestations are not illusions, and so it does no good to disbelieve them. However, the effects of Corrupt Reality are not permanent. Any transformed object returns to normal at the end of the round, and Corrupt Reality cannot directly cause damage to living organisms. Of course, the fear and dismay the effect induces may cause those beholding it to act in a manner that results in harm to themselves or others.

Disrupt Magic

The Disrupt Magic power allows a Horror to disrupt any form of magical force or pattern, from a sustained spell to the True Pattern of a Name-giver. To use this power, the Horror first makes a Spellcasting Test against the target. If the target is a spell, the difficulty number is the spell's Circle number. If the target is a character's talent or other ability, the difficulty is the targeted character's Spell Defense.





If the Spellcasting Test succeeds, the Horror then makes a Disrupt Magic Test. If the target of the power is a spell, the Disrupt Magic Test result must equal or exceed the Dispel Difficulty of the target. If it does, the spell is dispelled. If the Disrupt Magic Test result equals or exceeds the step number of the ability or talent being targeted, the ability/talent is damaged and cannot be used until the target character (or creature) makes a Recovery Test to restore the ability/talent.

The Disrupt Magic power can also be used against astral creatures, characters in the astral plane, and other denizens of astral space, such as spirits. To use the power in this fashion, the Horror first makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the Spellcasting Test succeeds, the Horror makes a Disrupt Magic Test to determine the damage caused to the target. Mystic armor protects against this damage.

Dream Shape

The Dream Shape power enables a Horror to enter the dreams of a sleeping Name-giver by making a successful Dream Shape Test against the subject's Spell Defense. (The Horror can only use this power against Name-givers it has marked.) The Horror can make only one attempt per night

to enter a specific Name-giver's dreams. A successful test allows the Horror to manipulate the victim's dreams in any way the Horror desires. For example, a Horror might continuously plant a specific dream instructing the character to go to an undiscovered kaer and perform certain actions that will free the Horror's physical form. Some Horrors use this power to cause particular emotions in their target. Others enjoy driving their victims mad through the sadistically twisted imagery they place in the Name-givers' minds. For example, Druistadt often causes its victims to dream of themselves dying, impaled on the burning bill of a ferocious bird with glowing red eyes.

Once a Horror has successfully entered a Name-giver's dreams, the victim can only rid himself of the Horror's taint by performing some sort of purification ritual or by slaying the tormenting Horror.

Forge Trap

The Forge Trap power enables a Horror to transform an earth, stone, or metal passageway so that it becomes a trap or contains a mechanical trap. The nature of the Horror determines the precise type of trap. The difficulty number for the Spellcasting Test necessary to use this power is based on the





predominant material of the passageway. For a passage of raw earth, the Difficulty Number is 5; for raw stone, 10; for worked stone, 15; and for metal, 20. If the Spellcasting Test succeeds, make a Forge Trap Test and distribute the result between the trap's Detection Difficulty, Disarm Difficulty, Trap Initiative, and Trap Effect/Damage Step. (For more on traps, see pp. 209–10, *Earthdawn* rulebook.)

The Horror may spend a Karma Point to create a link between itself and its traps, which enables it to feed off the suffering of any living being taking damage from the traps. Traps may do indirect damage—for example, by preventing characters from escaping a small room—and may require nonstandard methods to neutralize. For example, characters might need to solve a riddle or puzzle to deactivate the trap.

Horror Thread

The Horror Thread power enables Horrors to connect to the patterns of magical items and Name-givers. The connection formed by use of this power is similar to that created by a Horror mark but is far stronger. A Horror thread allows a Horror to eventually tap into and use the victim's natural abilities.

Horrors can only use the Horror Thread power on victims they have previously Horror-marked. To use this power, the Horror spends 5 Karma Points and makes a Horror Thread Test against the Spell Defense of the target. If the test is successful, the Horror has woven a thread connecting its True Pattern to the victim's. Once this thread is established, the Horror can attempt to obtain Pattern Knowledge about the victim, just as if the Horror had acquired one of the victim's Pattern Items.

Obtaining this Pattern Knowledge requires the Horror to make a series of Spellcasting Tests against the victim's Spell Defense. These tests do not require the Horror to spend Karma. With each successful test, the Horror learns a portion of the victim's Pattern Knowledge, which enables the Horror to weave additional threads to the victim. Each additional thread woven to a victim requires the Horror to spend 5 Karma Points. The Horror must study the victim for at least a month before it can attempt to learn any of the victim's Pattern Knowledge and must attach a new thread to the victim each time it learns before it can attempt to gain additional Pattern Knowledge.

The effects of the threads connecting the Horror to its victim grow with the number of threads woven. Each thread grants the Horror a +1 step bonus to any Horror power or





Spellcasting Test made by the Horror against the victim. The first thread woven grants the Horror access to the victim's thoughts and memories. This allows the Horror to taunt and torment the victim.

When the Horror's thread number equals the victim's Willpower step number, the Horror can actually tap into the victim's powers and use them as its own. The victim becomes merely a channel between the Horror and the physical world. This allows the Horror to use the victim's talents, skills, spells, and the like as it desires. When using these abilities, the Horror makes tests using the victim's appropriate step numbers. The Horror can spend Karma Points on any action taken by a victim via use of this power. The Horror can also use any of its own abilities through the victim.

The Horror Thread power also allows the Horror to take physical control of its victim. For example, a Horror might force a beastmaster to use his or her Claw Shape and Claw Frenzy talents against an unsuspecting target. In this case, the Horror would physically dominate the beastmaster as the Horror slashes the victim's claws into its target. In the case of some talents, particularly Spellcasting and Thread Weaving, no physical clues reveal that a Horror is controlling the victim's actions. In all cases, however, the victim himself senses that some alien entity is using his or her abilities.

Karma Boost

The Karma Boost power enables a Horror to offer aid to a victim and eventually transform the individual into a Horror construct. To use the power, the Horror offers to boost the Karma of a previously marked character. If the character accepts the offer, the Horror must spend a Karma Point. The victim may then add the Horror's total Karma Points to his own. Note that the victim must willingly accept the Horror's aid for Karma Boost to be used. The Horror must spend a Karma Point each time the victim accepts its aid.

Keep track of how many times a given character has accepted the Karma Boost. Anywhere from 1 to 6 hours of game time after each acceptance, secretly make a test for the Horror against the character's Spell Defense. The step number for this test is the total number of times the character has accepted the Horror's aid to date. If the test is successful, the character begins to transform into a Horror construct. Three such successful tests, which need not be consecutive, turn the character completely into a Horror construct. Until these three successes are achieved, affected player characters remain under the control of their players.

After the first success, the character notices minor changes in his body. His skin may harden in places or become discolored, his teeth may elongate or become jagged, coarse hair might begin to grow in unusual spots, and so on. The character also begins to suffer vivid dreams, during which he or she commits terrible acts of carnage upon friends and loved ones.

After the second success, the character's transformation intensifies. The victim becomes visibly monstrous, eliciting negative reactions from other Name-givers. The character's skin hardens permanently, providing 2 points of natural Armor. Fingernails lengthen into claws, becoming natural weapons (Damage step 2) that can be used with the Unarmed Combat talents/skill. However, the character also suffers a -2 step penalty on all Talent Tests. Additionally, whenever the victim is in a situation the gamemaster deems stressful, the character must achieve an Extraordinary success on a Willpower Test to avoid going into a berserk killing rage. The difficulty number of the test is determined by the gamemaster based on the stress of the moment, but usually ranges from 7 to 11.

After the third success, the victim becomes a Horror construct and is no longer under the player's control. He or she loses all talents; for each talent rank lost, add 10 to the construct's Death Rating. The victim becomes immune to Unconsciousness and Knockdown. The victim's claws grow larger (Damage step 4) and his or her body grows increasingly grotesque, although other characters who knew the victim will continue to recognize him. The victim seeks out former allies and loved ones and attempts to slay them. Nothing but his own death will dissuade him from this aim.

The effect of Karma Boost can be dispelled while the victim is still in the midst of transformation. The Dispel difficulty number equals the Spell Defense of the Horror responsible for the Karma Boosts. Slaying the responsible Horror also reverses the effect. However, once the victim has been transformed completely, the effect is irreversible.

The only reliable way to erase a number of willing acceptances of the Karma Boost is to slay the responsible Horror. Horrors with Karma Boost may not build on Karma Boosts accepted previously by another Horror. Once a Horror uses Karma Boost on a victim, any previous acceptances of aid from other Horrors are neutralized.

Karma Drain

This power allows a Horror to transfer Karma Points to itself from any of its Horror-marked victims. To use Karma





Drain, the Horror makes a Karma Drain Test against the victim's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the Horror can drain Karma from the victim; the success level achieved determines the number of Karma Points drained. Each level of success above Poor drains 1 point from the victim in each round. For example, a Good success drains 2 points per round, while an Extraordinary success drains 4 points per round.

Most Horrors have an innate variant of this power that allows them to restore their own Karma by feeding on the emotions and life energy of their victims. This special form of Karma Drain is described in **Innate Horror Abilities**.

Suppress Horror Mark

The Suppress Horror Mark power allows a Horror to bury a Horror Mark deep within the pattern of a marked character. The Horror can only affect one of its own Horror Marks with this power. As long as the power is in use, the Horror Mark has no effect on the character. To use this power, the Horror makes a Suppress Horror Mark Test. The result is the difficulty number for detecting the suppressed mark and also the difficulty number the Horror must exceed to remove the effects of this power. When attempting to detect a suppressed mark, consult the Horror Travel Table, p. 28. The relationship between the marked character and the detecting character determines the success level needed to detect a Suppressed Horror Mark. See **Detecting Horror Marks**, p. 98, for more information about detecting Horror marks.

INNATE HORROR ABILITIES

In addition to their Attributes, characteristics, and powers, many Horrors also possess certain innate abilities that spring from the Horrors' nature and the manner in which they draw nourishment from their victims. Because these abilities are common to virtually all Horrors, they are not included in Horror statistics. Almost any Horror can use them at almost any time. However, Horrors that possess no active magical abilities such as spells or powers are less likely to have these innate abilities. The gamemaster decides if a particular Horror has these abilities and can use them.

Most of these abilities require the Horror to make a Spellcasting Test to use them. Each use of an innate ability counts as a spell in terms of the number of spells the Horror can use each round. Horrors can use Karma to augment any of these abilities.

Astral Sight

Like windlings and dragons, all Horrors possess astral sight. To use this ability, the Horror makes a Spellcasting Test. The gamemaster then compares the result to the Spell Defense of any object or being within 100 yards of the Horror and in its line of sight. If the result equals or exceeds an object's or being's Spell Defense, the Horror can see the target's astral image.

Entering and Leaving Astral Space

As described earlier, many Horrors can exist in the physical world, astral space, or both. All Horrors capable of existing in both astral space and the physical world have the ability to enter and leave astral space at will. When a single-natured Horror (see p. 93) uses its innate ability to enter astral space, its body disappears from the world. If the Horror is attacked and killed while in this state in astral space, it is utterly destroyed.

To use this ability, the Horror makes a Spellcasting Test against its own Spell Defense. The Horror cannot voluntarily lower its Spell Defense for this test. The type of region the Horror is in when it attempts to enter or leave astral space can aid or hinder the Horror. Horrors receive a bonus to the Spellcasting Test when moving into or out of astral space in Tainted or Corrupt regions. Tainted regions add +2 steps to the Horror's Spellcasting Test, while Corrupt regions add +4 steps. Open regions add no bonus; Safe regions subtract -2 steps.

If the test is successful, the Horror shifts into or out of astral space, depending on where it is when it uses this ability.

Energy Drain

This ability allows Horrors to sustain themselves by feeding on the emotions and life energies of their victims. This nourishment is represented by a Horror's Karma Points, which in turn represent the Horror's raw magical energy. All Horrors regain at least 1 Karma Point per day, and powerful Horrors may regain more. The innate Energy Drain ability allows Horrors to gain additional Karma Points beyond the base rate of 1 to 5 per day.

Horrors can gain this Karma by feeding on the negative emotions of Name-givers or by drawing on the victim's life energy. In the first case, fear, anger, hatred, and jealousy are all examples of the types of emotions the Horror find pleasurable. Most often, the Horror feeding on these emotions has caused those emotions to boil up in its victims in the first place. The Horror essentially manipulates its victims into creating food for it.





The second method allows Horrors to feed on the magical or life energy of Name-givers. As magic and life are so closely intertwined in *Earthdawn*, these two types of energy are essentially the same. When feeding on life energy, the Horror is usually careful not to completely drain its victims, so that it can maintain its own food supply.

Feeding off emotion requires the Horror to make a Spellcasting Test against the victim's Social Defense; draining life energy requires a Spellcasting Test against the victim's Spell Defense. When draining energy from multiple victims, the Horror makes the appropriate test against the highest Defense Rating among all the victims. In either case, a successful test means the Horror gains additional Karma Points. The success level achieved determines how many

additional Karma Points the Horror regains per day. An Average success adds 1 point; a Good success adds 2; an Excellent success, 3 points; and an Extraordinary success, 4 points. These Karma Points are in addition to those the Horror regains under normal conditions. For example, if a Horror normally able to regain 3 Karma Points per day achieves an Excellent success on a Spellcasting Test for the Energy Drain ability, the Horror gains a total of 6 Karma Points that day.

Some powerful Horrors can also increase their Karma step using this ability. Each time a Horror achieves an Extraordinary success using its Energy Drain ability, it may increase its Karma step by 1 instead of gaining 4 Karma Points. This increase is not permanent, however. The





Horror's Karma step will revert to normal 1 month after the Horror has increased it in this way.

This ability is related to the **Karma Drain** power (p. 102), but can only be used once per day. All magically active Horrors have this ability.

Forging Horror Constructs

Most magically active Horrors can create Horror constructs from other life forms such as mundane animals, magical creatures, and even Name-givers. Horrors can forge constructs from dead or living bodies, although they prefer living creatures. When using Name-givers, the vilest Horrors usually leave a bit of the victim's mind intact, so that he will live out his entire existence dimly aware that he is a Horror construct. To use this ability against living targets, the Horror must have previously Horror-marked them.

The body used must be of sufficient size and weight to form the body of the construct desired. For example, a Horror would need a body at least the size of troll or obsidian-man to create a construct as large as a jehuthra. However, as Horror constructs can be of virtually any size and shape, most Horrors can make do with whatever victims happen to be handy.

To forge a construct costs the Horror 5 points of Karma. These Karma Points infuse the target body with the Horror's magical energy, initiating the body's transformation. After the Horror has spent the Karma Points, it makes a series of Spellcasting Tests against the Spell Defense of the target body. If the target body is dead, use the Spell Defense the target had when it was alive. Each successful Spellcasting Test allows the Horror to alter one of the target body's Attribute ratings to that of the type of construct being forged or to grant the construct a power or special ability. Each success level above Average on any Spellcasting Test allows the Horror to alter one additional Attribute or add one additional power. The Horror can also alter the target's other characteristics by making additional Spellcasting Tests.

When used against living targets, each successful Spellcasting Test causes damage to the victim equal to the result of the test. This damage often kills the target, but many Horrors make a point of leaving the target alive and unwilling pawn in their control. To alter the Attributes of living targets, the Horror must achieve a Good success or better on its Spellcasting Tests. When a Horror uses this ability against Name-givers, the victim may make a Willpower Test to attempt to resist the effects

of the Horror's magic. The result of the Willpower Test can substitute for the victim's Spell Defense when he or she resists in this way. Then the victim makes a Willpower Test for each of the Horror's Spellcasting Tests. If the result of the victim's Willpower Test is lower than his or her Spell Defense, he or she defends using his or her normal Spell Defense.

During the transformation from Name-giver to Horror construct, a victim undergoes actual physical change. His skin grows hard, creating natural armor that provides anywhere from 2 to 5 points of protection. His hands and feet might develop claws or talons that can serve as natural weapons, usually with a Damage step ranging from 3 to 5.

When all the construct's Attributes and abilities have been altered as the Horror wishes, the Horror makes a Horror Mark Test to form a link between itself and the construct. If this test is successful, the construct is complete. Once formed, Horror constructs remain under the control of the Horror that forged them. Many Horrors forge constructs and let them roam Barsaive, inflicting pain and suffering on all the Name-givers they encounter.

All magically active Horrors possess the ability to forge constructs. The Horror powers **Animate Dead** and **Karma Tap** are specialized forms of this ability, each with special restrictions. Dual-natured Horrors can also use this ability to forge new bodies for themselves, and some Horrors build this ability into Horror-cursed items such as the flydrop coat. When activated, such items begin to transform a victim into a construct as described above.

This ability is extremely powerful, and gamemasters should use it sparingly against player characters.

USING HORRORS IN ADVENTURES AND CAMPAIGNS

A close look at the statistics and abilities of the Horrors in this book should make clear just how dangerous these beings are. The Horrors possess incredible powers and abilities that they use to do vile, horrible, and evil things. They manipulate whole populations into killing themselves and each other. They feed off the fear and anguish wrought by the devastation of the Scourge. They torture people and creatures for nourishment, in the form of flesh or emotion. This lethal combination of great power with the worst types of actions makes using Horrors in adventures a delicate business. Carefully consider what type of Horrors to use as well as how to use them.





Should the Horrors be that powerful? Yes, absolutely. The Horrors need to be as tough as they are because they are the cause of the Scourge. The Horrors forced the world's population to live in shelters for four hundred years and left the land decimated. They destroyed forests, corrupted jungles and laid waste vast stretches of terrain. With rare exceptions, no one save those who accepted Theran aid survived the Horrors' onslaught.

The evil and powerful nature of the Horrors creates an interesting dilemma for gamemasters. Using any of the Named Horrors in this book will likely result in the death or permanent corruption of one or more of the player characters. When dealing with entities this powerful, those kinds of things are likely to happen. Through the death or corruption of a player character may be undesirable, both are important elements of **Earthdawn**, and the gamemaster should not try to avoid them. If the characters escape unscathed every time they encounter a Horror, the impact of the Horrors on the game universe is diluted because the threat they present to the world becomes less real.

The following guidelines suggest ways to present the true power of Horrors without killing large numbers of player characters in each adventure.

First of all, most Horrors (especially Named Horrors) should be long-term opponents. Certain minor Horrors and Horror constructs may work well in single adventures, but most Horrors should be used over a series of adventures in which the characters encounter the Horror's victims or witness the effects of its powers. Using a Horror in this way allows the players to encounter the Horror indirectly and gradually learn more about its influence and machinations. This knowledge, as well as the power and experience the players will gain during the course of several adventures, will leave them more ready to deal with the Horror by the time they meet it face-to-face.

Consider the Horrors campaign-level opponents. These are not the kinds of beings that characters fight once and slay. Most of the Horrors in this book are so powerful that only an experienced group of characters has any chance of defeating them. The Named Horrors in this book represent opportunities for 15 different types of campaigns, using different kinds of adventures and stories. Also, many of these Horrors prefer to use their powers over a long period of time. For example, planning for the characters to learn about, confront, and battle Ysrthgrathe in the course of a single adventure is a waste of a good Horror.

Keep in mind that the characters need not confront the Horror right from the start. Many Horrors work through agents, willing or otherwise. Willing agents might include cultists devoted to a particular Horror or constructs under the Horror's control. Unwilling agents might include Name-giver pawns of Ristul or the tormented victims of Chantrel's Horror.

Adventures featuring the Named Horrors from this book also need not conclude with the characters actually confronting the Horror head-on. In some cases, characters should consider themselves fortunate to survive any encounter with a Horror, direct or not! A series of minor victories for the characters that disrupt a Horror's activities is a good way to use these powerful Horrors in adventures without risking the lives of the characters too seriously. Of course, if a Horror's plans are disrupted too often, that Horror might consider a direct assault on the party responsible.

Remember also that adventures in which characters die or become Horror constructs or servitors act as an excellent reminder that the world of **Earthdawn** is a dangerous one. Adventure after adventure in which the characters succeed against any opponent they face only serves to diminish the sense of danger that Barsaive should hold. An occasional adventure in which the characters suffer losses, either through injury or death, helps maintain a challenging atmosphere in your **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns.

It is inevitable that one or more characters will suffer some misfortune at a Horror's hands, so try to work such misfortunes into the story. Make them significant events. Make them mean something beyond the fact that one of the players needs to create a new character. Don't let the death or corruption of a character happen for no good reason. The characters in **Earthdawn** are heroes; if they are going to die, let them die well!

Finally, consider the importance of the Horrors to the world of **Earthdawn**. One of the major themes in **Earthdawn** is battling the Horrors and attempting to drive them from the world. Therefore, the Horrors should be interesting opponents rather than simply invincible ones. Always give your player characters some way to defeat a Horror. Not just any group of characters should be able to defeat any Horror, of course. But the gamemaster must strike a balance between allowing some possibility of success for the characters and maintaining a threat level consistent with the terrible nature of the Horrors.





HORROR STALKER DISCIPLINE

All the adepts of **Earthdawn** stand against the evil of the Horrors in one way or another, but only those who follow the Way of the Horror Stalker actively seek out and destroy these entities. Horror stalkers are desperate men and women serving a desperate cause. Each and every one knows that he or she will die eventually in the pursuit of their goal: the destruction of as many Horrors as possible.

To accomplish this end, followers of the Horror stalker Discipline have developed talents well-suited to this perilous task. Their talents allow them to see and interact with astral space and bolster their minds and spirits against the savage magical assaults of the Horrors.

Followers of this Discipline go about their dangerous business in a most disturbing manner. They allow themselves to be Horror-marked, then use the connection to track the dreadful entities and do battle with the enemy. Though considered insane by many, this tactic has proved time and again to be one of the most effective (if suicidal) ways to find Horrors and permanently dispatch them. Because of their goals and the methods they use, Horror stalkers are both respected and feared.

Talents and special abilities for the various Circles of this Discipline are listed below. Those talents marked with the notation "(D)" are Discipline talents of the Horror stalker (see p. 95, **Earthdawn** rulebook, for more information on Discipline talents). Descriptions of the new talents Bear Mark and Deathstrike are provided at the end of this section. Descriptions of the following talents appear in the **Earthdawn Companion**: Bardic Voice, Confront Horror, Critical Hit, and Lion Spirit (though Confront Horror is generally unavailable until Fifteenth Circle, Horror stalker adepts may learn it at Tenth Circle.) Descriptions of all the remaining talents appear in the **Earthdawn** rulebook.

Important Attributes: Willpower and Perception

Racial Restrictions: None

Karma Ritual: To begin his Karma ritual, the Horror stalker paces out a small circle and outlines it in salt. The stalker then begins the Litany, Naming every Horror stalker who has fallen in battle, then Naming all the Horrors known to have been struck down by followers of this Discipline. After finishing this recitation, the stalker spends several minutes contemplating any Horror marks he or she possesses. Once satisfied that everything is in place, the stalker offers up a short praise to fallen Horror stalkers. Finally, the stalker rubs out the salt circle and draws his or her weapon, aiming it in the direction where he believes the nearest Horror lurks.

Artisan Skills: Scarification, Tattooing

FIRST CIRCLE

Talents

Astral Sight (D)
Karma Ritual
Melee Weapons
Silent Walk
Steel Thought (D)
Tracking

SECOND CIRCLE

Talents

Durability
Evidence Analysis
Deathstrike (D)

THIRD CIRCLE

Talents

Bear Mark (D)
Empathic Sense

FOURTH CIRCLE

Spell Defense: Increase the Horror stalker's Spell Defense by +1.

Talents

Thread Weaving (Horror Weaving)
Willforce (D)

FIFTH CIRCLE

Astral Flare: Horror stalkers use the Astral Flare ability to draw Horrors to them. This ability enables the adept to fire a burst of raw magical energy into astral space, similar to that caused by the casting of raw magic. The character does not suffer warping damage, but probably will become Horror-marked. Treat this as if the character had just cast a Circle Eight spell and make the appropriate tests using the Raw Magic Table (p. 156, **Earthdawn** rulebook).

Talents

Heartening Laugh
Temper Self

SIXTH CIRCLE

Horror Defense: The character may spend Karma on any test being made to resist the magical powers or spells of a Horror.

Talents

Life Check (D)
Missile Weapons







SEVENTH CIRCLE

Spell Defense: Increase the Horror stalker's Spell Defense by 1.

Talents

Second Attack
Spirit Dodge (D)

EIGHTH CIRCLE

Social Defense: Increase the Horror stalker's Social Defense by 1.

Talents

Lion Heart (D)
Spirit Strike (D)

NINTH CIRCLE

Horror Hatred: The adept may spend Karma on any attack against a Horror.

Talents

Bardic Voice
Critical Hit
Steely Stare

TENTH CIRCLE

Social Defense: Increase the Horror stalker's Social Defense by 1.

Talents

Confront Horror (D)
Lion Spirit

NEW TALENTS

The following new talents are available only to followers of the Horror stalker Discipline.

DEATHSTRIKE

Step Number: Rank + Perception

Action: No

Requires Karma: See text

Discipline Talent Use: None

Skill Use: No

Strain: See text

The Deathstrike talent ensures that a Horror stalker will not fall under the sway of a Horror that has Horror-marked him. If at any time the character fails to resist the Horror's magical or other influence and performs an act in the entity's service, the character must make a Deathstrike Test against either the Horror's Horror Mark step or the step number of the ability the Horror is using on the character. Because the adept must use all of his or her available Karma

on this roll, this Talent Test is virtually assured of success. If the test succeeds, the character dies but does an amount of damage equal to his Willpower + Toughness step to the Horror. This damage is applied to the Horror immediately and may not be countered or reduced in any way. If the Deathstrike Test fails, the character dies, free of the Horror's influence, but does no damage to it.

BEAR MARK

Step Number: Rank + Perception

Action: No

Requires Karma: No

Discipline Talent Use: Horror stalker

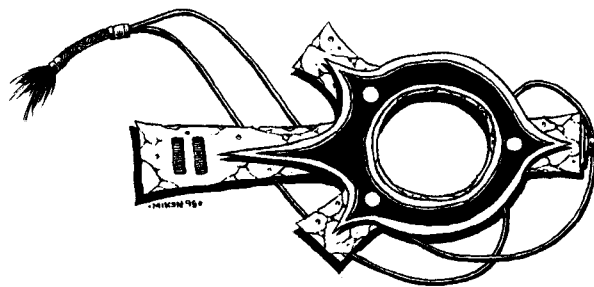
Skill Use: No

Strain: 1

The Bear Mark talent enables Horror stalkers to remain sane while accumulating Horror marks. Using Bear Mark, a Horror stalker can bear a number of Horror marks up to his rank in the talent. The adept cannot resist additional Horror marks until he increases the talent rank. As soon as a character is Horror-marked, he makes a Bear Mark Test against the Horror Mark step of the Horror affecting him. If the test succeeds, the stalker need not worry about being influenced by the Horror through this Horror mark, because the character has effectively isolated the mark from the rest of his pattern permanently.

If the test fails, the adept suffers the usual effects of a Horror mark. However, the adept may repeat the Bear Mark Test any time the Horror attempts to use its powers on the character through the Horror mark. A successful test allows the character to resist the Horror's attempts to use its powers on him. If the character achieves an Extraordinary success on any of these tests, he has effectively isolated the Horror mark from his pattern permanently.

Horror stalkers may also use the Bear Mark talent to determine the location of the nearest Horror that has marked them. To do so, the character must make a successful Bear Mark Test against the Spell Defense of the Horror being sought.

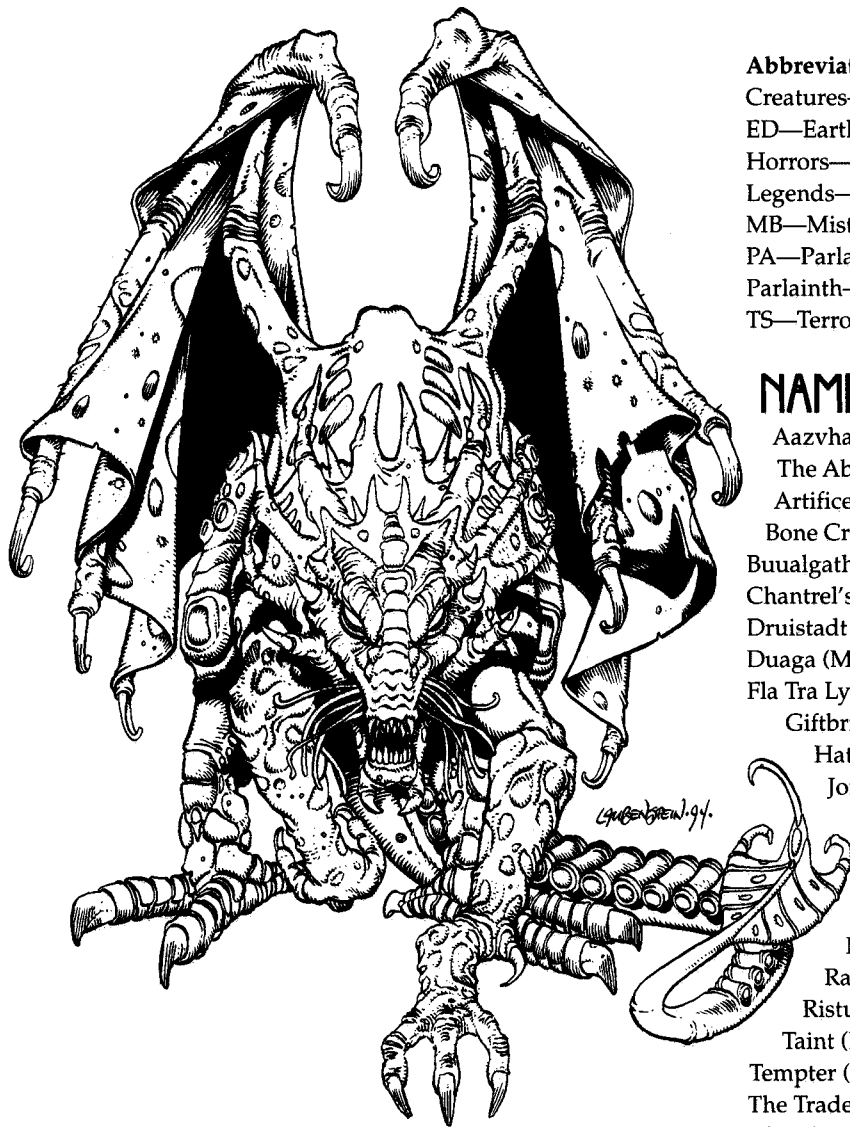




INDEX OF HORRORS

An index? Why do you insist upon repeating these Names over and over?

Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records



Abbreviations

Creatures—Creatures of Barsaive
ED—Earthdawn Rulebook
Horrors—Horrors
Legends—Legends of Earthdawn, Volume One
MB—Mists of Betrayal
PA—Parlainth Adventures
Parlainth—Parlainth: The Forgotten City
TS—Terror in the Skies

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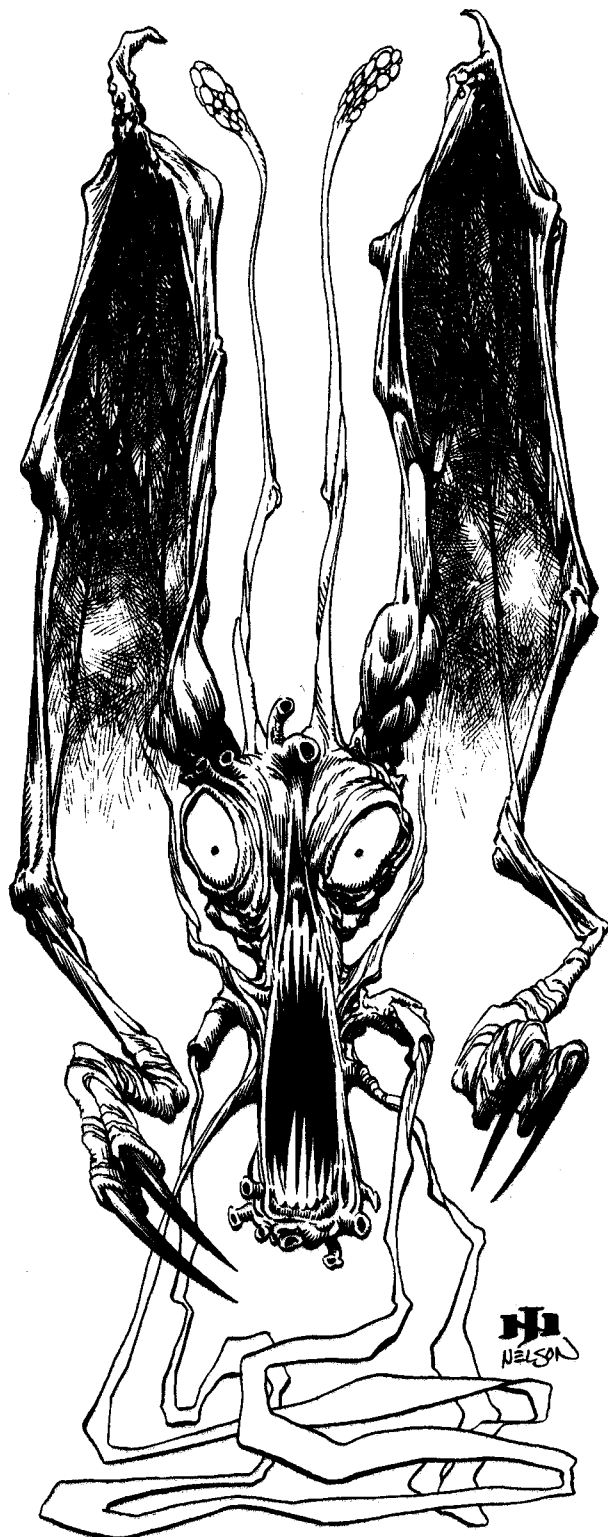
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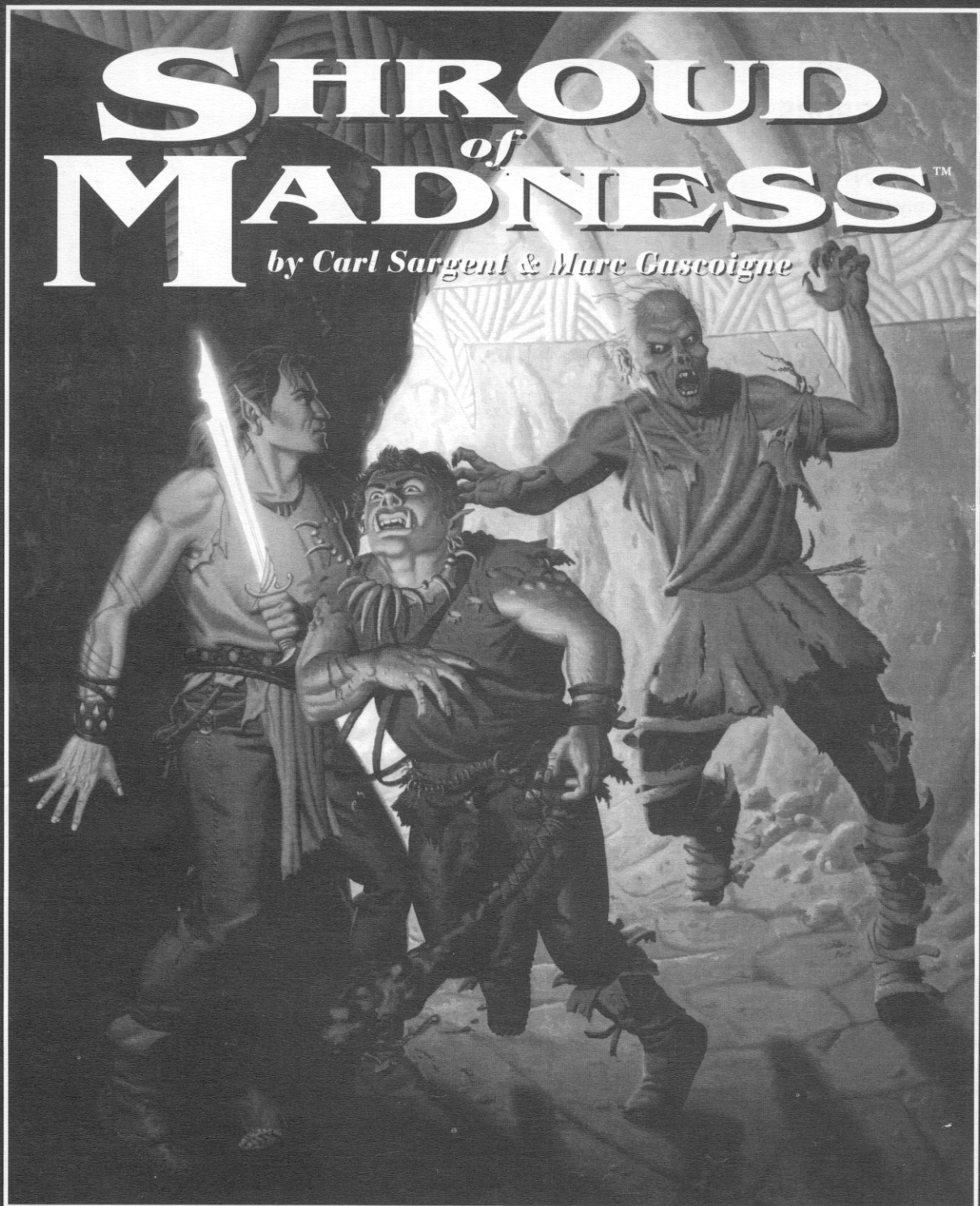
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Human-touched.
You can't blame a Horror for every crime ...



The Theran elf Cassian is sent to Vivane to investigate the brutal murders, sudden insanity and gruesome suicides of several nobles—and finds himself tangling with paranoid wizards, brain-dead zombies and homicidal ork seditionaries. With the help of slave boy Jerenn, Cassian uncovers a new cult of blood magic and tracks a mysterious woman initiate, schizoid and psychopathic, with a dark secret and an uncontrollable urge to kill.

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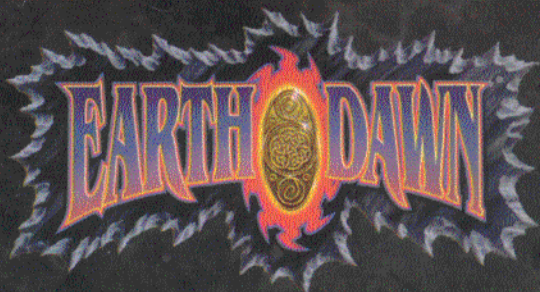
Horrors

Even now I dream of claws and fangs and of floating in a vast sea of evil, my lips only a fraction above the surface. At other times I dream of being devoured from the inside out, my skin only minutes from crumbling away to reveal my true self as a Horror ...

—Adesian Skoln, from Regarding the Horrors, Their Origins, and Their Nature

Horrors offers a chilling, intimate view of the astral-spawned creatures that ravaged the world of Earthdawn during the Scourge. Presented as a compilation of documents recording what is known of Horrors both great and small, this book provides players and gamemasters with a unique perspective on these abominations: what they are, what they do, and how and why they continue to attack the inhabitants of Barsaive. This sourcebook describes more than twenty Horrors, including fifteen of the most powerful and dangerous of their kind. **Horrors** also offers new Horror powers and abilities, clarifications of existing Horror powers, and guidelines for using Horrors and their deadly spawn in adventures and campaigns.

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ISBN: 1-55560-259-2 \$18.00