

SWORD COAST LEGENDS: RAGE OF DEMONS

# DRAGON+

## RAVENLOFT AWAITS

Minsc & Boo head to  
Barovia in *Shadows of  
the Vampire* Issue #1

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

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ISSUE 6

# DRAGON+ 6

## Welcome to Dragon+ Issue 6

Vampirism has existed for millennia in folklore. The notion of beings who feed on the life essence of other creatures dates back as far as the Mesopotamians. Yet it may surprise you to learn that the original image of vampires was as bloated creatures with dark skin, who wore shrouds.



## Jim Zub: Butt-kicking for Comic Goodness

The Legends of Baldur's Gate author takes Minsc, Boo, and their party deep into Ravenloft as the relaunched Dungeons & Dragons comic heads to the domain of dread.



## From the Creators: Unraveling Ravenloft

The co-creator of the classic Ravenloft module reveals how Curse of Strahd is taking



## Travel Talk: Ravenloft

A visit to Barovia by Volothamp Geddarm (as told to, and set down by, long-suffering scribe Ed Greenwood).

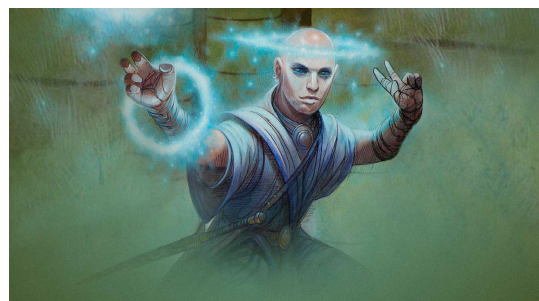


vampire folklore back to its roots.



## Top 6 Warlock Features in Sword Coast Legends

Everything you need to know about the warlock class in the Sword Coast Legends video game, as its first downloadable content takes us deeper into the Underdark.



## Unearthed Arcana: Psionics and the Mystic

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## Finding the Fun: D&D Board Games

From Dungeon! to Tyrants of the Underdark, via Dragon Dice and Lords of Waterdeep, Matt Chapman looks at what makes a great Dungeons & Dragons board game.



## INTERVIEW: PATRICK ROTHFUSS

Fantasy author Patrick Rothfuss

is Acquisitions Incorporated's greatest living intern and one of today's most celebrated geeks. He tells Matt Chapman how that wasn't always the case.



## Imagining the Ampersand

Dragon+ cover artist Chuck Lukacs shares his pride at creating Ravenloft's Tarokka deck, which now sadly ages him a year every time the cards are dealt!



## Dungeons, Dragons & Disabilities

Elsa S. Henry makes the case for inclusivity in D&D, explaining how disabled characters, players and DMs help make your fantasy world even more immersive.

## Ravenloft: Your Indispensable Guide

Illustration by Jason Thompson





## Streaming Highlights

The D&D crew wraps up the Rage of Demons storyline in its weekly livestream, while vlogger ProJared proves that December really is the most wonderful time of the year by launching D&December.



## Tavern Tales

Introducing the Dungeon Masters Guild, plus your chance to download the preview adventure to Curse of Strahd.

## Sage Advice

## Next Issue: Dragon 07

There's no need to cast Divination to discover next issue's goodies: we speak to Forgotten Realms creator Ed Greenwood about his latest novel, remember Dungeons & Dragons videogames gone by



A big thank you to the extended

and dig deep into the latest action RPG Sword Coast Legends. D&D family for their help with the creation of this issue.



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# DRAGON+ 6

## Welcome to Dragon+ Issue 6

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Matt Chapman

**W**e would argue that three major literary works have influenced the vampire we know and love today. John Polidori's *The Vampyre*, written in 1819, describes a sophisticated and charismatic individual. Bram Stoker's hugely influential 1897 novel *Dracula* is practically a how-to guide for vampires that still holds enormous sway today. Meanwhile, the *Ravenloft* D&D module by Tracy and Laura Hickman embedded this gothic villain in the world's richest storytelling universe.

He may not have made it onto our cover, but Strahd von Zarovich once again casts a large shadow over this issue of *Dragon+* (even if, by his very nature, it's a metaphorical shadow rather than a real one). His co-creator Tracy Hickman also returns (see page six), to explain how a game he and his wife played every Halloween





became such a memorable D&D module. Hickman also reveals his role in the return of the archetypal undead foe, for the upcoming storyline *Curse of Strahd*.

We also speak to writer Jim Zub (see page five) about another welcome return, as IDW's *Dungeons & Dragons* comic makes a comeback. Issue #1 has the delicious premise of transporting Minsc and Boo and the other party members to Strahd's homeland of Barovia. Make way villainy! Hero coming through!

Still, if you ask us, Strahd's a glass half-empty kind of guy (unless that glass contains blood). It's *Curse of Strahd*, not *Happy Smiley Strahd*, after all. So perhaps when artist Chuck Lukacs has finished talking us through the *Dragon+* cover image (page 14), which bravely does not appeal to the Count's vanity by featuring his likeness, he may want to check out Volo's travel article on page eight. If you were planning a trip to Barovia, Chuck, might we suggest somewhere a little less deadly, like Myth Drannor or a demon-infested Underdark?

Matt Chapman, Editor-in-Chief

[Email Matt](#)

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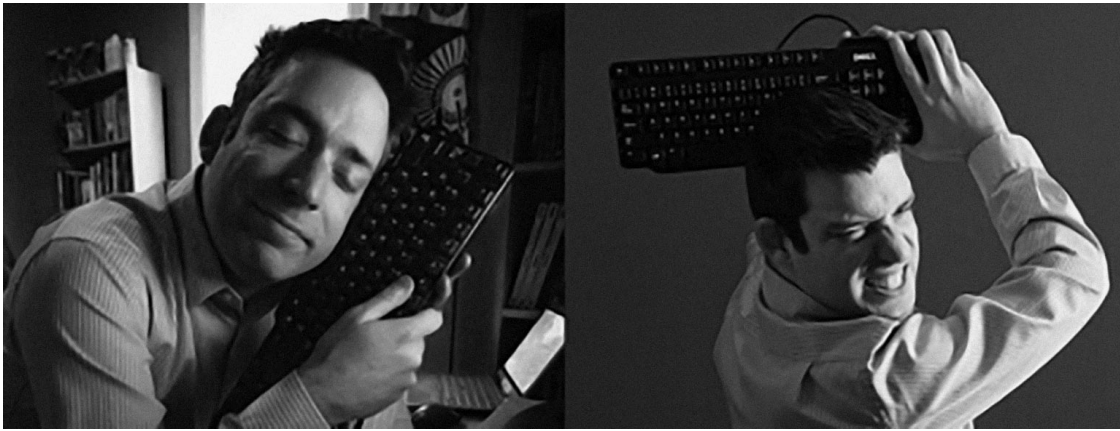
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**“T**he first time I wrote a comic featuring Minsc and Boo, I was kind of intimidated. These are real fan-favourite characters that people know and love, so you want to get that voice right,” says comic writer Jim Zub. “Coming back to them for this second adventure was really comfortable and the best approach was to put yourself in the player mind set. OK, you’re Minsc, here’s the situation you’re in, what are you going to do about it?”





Zub's first creative brush with Minsc and Boo was in the five-issue comic mini-series *Legends of Baldur's Gate*, which ran from 2014 to 2015. That tale saw a petrified Minsc revived from his statue-like existence, an event that riffs on something that happens to a character in the *Baldur's Gate* video game. Yet the 'situation' he has placed the unpredictable character into is familiar turf for Zub.



“Ravenloft is actually one of my favourite adventures of all-time,” he says. “I’ve run it myself several times and played through the adventure several times. My friends and I were really obsessed with the campaign setting when I was in high school, so I know this stuff



pretty well.”

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## Meet The Cast

Read about the cast in the following slides.



"Most people know Minsc and Boo from the Baldur's Gate video game and they're the heart of this story. Technically Minsc is a ranger, although you wouldn't assume that when you see him, as he seems more like a barbarian berserker. He's a little brain addled and is not always there but he is very, very heroic and wants to do the right thing, often charging forth vaingloriously to prove it. "His animal companion is a small hamster named Boo, who's been with him as long as he can remember, although Minsc's memory is not always what it should be. The two of them are intent on doing good deeds but often get themselves into all sorts of trouble, although always in very exciting and heroically intended ways. I think their ability to fall into capers in this way reflects the spirit of Dungeons & Dragons, where you're playing a game with friends and it's not always the perfect story of heroics. Sometimes it's those ridiculous funny things that are the most memorable."

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“You put those five intense personalities together and it’s a really fun



group. All of them have distinct ways of dealing with problems and it creates sparks,” Zub says. “I had a lot of fun taking these heroic and good characters and putting them in one of the dreariest, evil, dark gothic settings imaginable—taking these two extremes and seeing how that contrast plays out.”

The first issue of Dungeons & Dragons comic goes on sale in April 2016 and the story plays out over five issues. While it features those same characters as the previous *Legends of Baldur’s Gate* comic, Zub says it’s not necessary for newcomers to have read that series.

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FREE COMIC

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“Issue one sets the characters up, making sure they are well established and the reader gets a sense of their capabilities. We also add the new cleric into the mix to make sure all the pieces are there, ready to roll. Then it’s just a matter of setting those pieces in motion, building the tension and bringing them into the domain of dread ready for issue two,” he explains.

Having heightened the intensity of the story by delivering his party to



Strahd's domain, you may expect the heroes to make a beeline for that iconic castle and have words with its pale owner. Not so, says Zub. They'll be in the Ravenloft setting, but their tale will be a broader take on the realm.

“What I didn't want to do is have the adventuring party go through the D&D module. The way I look at it that's what the reader's adventuring party will do as it works through *Curse of Strahd*,” he says. “There are other stories to be told in that place. It's a unique

challenge because it means putting these heroic characters into a situation where the biggest, baddest evil is not necessarily their goal. They've got other tasks they need to do while they're there.”

## Top Five Tips For Writing A D&D Comic

With that storytelling challenge in mind, Zub shares his top tips for creating a great D&D comic book.

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Know the material...

*When working with any kind of commercial property it's crucial to familiarize yourself with the setting and core ideas to ensure you're portraying it as accurately as possible. In the case of D&D and the Forgotten Realms that's simultaneously easy (play lots of D&D!) and difficult (there are hundreds of sourcebooks, adventures, and novels you could pore over). Even so, putting your brain in the right mindset is crucial.*

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...but don't be overly slavish to it.

*It can be tempting to play “inside baseball” with terminology and trivia to show off all that knowledge and love for the source material, but don't let that come at the expense of the core story you're*



*creating. My job is to create a comic story D&D fans and non-gamers alike can easily jump into and enjoy. The character goals should be straight forward and readers shouldn't need to dig through Wikipedia entries to understand what's happening or what's at stake.*

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Action speaks louder than dialogue...

*D&D mixes character role-playing and action in equal measure, but comics are a visual medium so action should take a front seat in a D&D comic story. Give the story lots of opportunities for visual splendor and pulse-pounding combat to play up what comics do best.*

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...but readers need a reason to care.

*That said, big action won't have any effect if the reader doesn't care about the cast and their story. Make sure you know what motivates each character and what they're fighting for. There needs to be a heart beating beneath those well-tooled stat blocks.*

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Don't forget the fun!

*Getting together with friends to create a story around the gaming table is an absolute joy. A D&D comic should carry that same spirit of bombast and entertainment.*

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Zub has already proved he can nail those points with his *Legends of Baldur's Gate* mini-series, which was his first ever writing project for D&D. Yet his knowledge, fulfilling point number five, goes back much further.

“I grew up as a D&D player and have been playing since I was probably eight years old. It's like D&D is in my blood at this point, so it was nice to be able to dig back into all that nostalgia and be able use some of those elements,” he says, adding proudly, “and my

parents can't say all that role playing was for nothing! Growing up with this stuff, my parents were always like, 'What are you doing?' They didn't hate it but even so there was a sense of, 'What is this all for?' And now it's come full circle."

Shadows of the Vampire issue #1 is on sale in April 2016 .

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## From the Creators: Unraveling Ravenloft

The co-creator of the classic Ravenloft module reveals how *Curse of Strahd* is taking vampire folklore back to its roots.

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**J**ohn Scott Clegg. Even the most ardent Dungeons & Dragons fan won't know his name, yet he's up there with the very best unsung heroes. If it wasn't for Clegg, who ran a D&D game back in 1978, there would be no Count Strahd von Zarovich. Indirectly, this DM helped create one of the tabletop roleplaying game's most enduring and popular characters.

“I was new to D&D back in 1978, when my wife first introduced me to the game,” says *Ravenloft* co-creator Tracy Hickman. “One of my first sessions was with a friend I had known in high school, John Scott Clegg.”





Hickman describes the session as the typical adventure people played in those days. The party set about exploring a hodgepodge of dungeon rooms connected by corridors, beating up the monsters they encountered as they amassed treasure and experience points. Suddenly they were face to face with random encounter number thirty-four: a vampire.

“Our party turned the corner and there he stood. I remember thinking, ‘What are *you* doing here?’ He seemed out of place with the other standard monsters we were encountering. I thought, ‘You’re lost. You’re in the wrong place. You need to have your own adventure, setting, and story.’ That’s pretty much where it all started.”

When Hickman returned home from that game, he told these thoughts to his wife Laura. The pair immediately began researching the mythology and folklore surrounding vampires, starting with a vague, black-and-white image of Bela Lugosi from 1931. Digging deeper, they found so much more.

## The Vampire Diaries

“Laura and I have always worked well together and we did a lot of research into vampire lore and their foundations. I read Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* out loud to her. It was a lot of fun exploring the deeper themes of that book,” he remembers.

Their search took them to the first ‘modern’ literary version of this creature, John William Polidori’s 1819 novel *The Vampyre*. Polidori was Lord Byron’s personal



Bela Lugosi as Dracula

company, as the same evening Mary Wollstonecraft (soon to be Mary Shelley) wrote a story that would later become *Frankenstein*.

What the Hickmans found was that the romantic vampire of the earliest years of the genre was not just a spouse beater but a spouse killer, the archetype of abuse in the worst kind of destructive codependency.

“Strahd came directly from the roots of vampire lore. The origins of the modern vampire spring from feminine cautionary tales warning women away from the ‘bluebeard’ archetype. It was essential to understand this in order to properly construct him,” Hickman says.

“But the vampire genre has taken a turn from its roots in recent years. The vampire we so often see today exemplifies the polar opposite of the original archetype: the lie that it’s okay to enter into a romance with an abusive monster, because if you love it enough, it will change.”

physician, and when Byron suggested one evening that his guests each write a short ghost story, *The Vampyre* was Polidori’s contribution. He was in good

THE  
V A M P Y R E:  
A Tale.

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR SHERWOOD, NEELY, AND JONES,  
PATERNOSTER-BOW.  
1819.  
[Entered at Stationers’ Hall, March 27, 1819.]

John Polidori's 1819 Novel



## Playtesting

While work began on the module in the late 1970s, it wasn't released until 1983. In the intervening years it became a Halloween staple in the Hickman household. Each year brought added refinements, including the random elements that saw weapons and even Strahd's motivation decided by drawing cards.

“We played that game every Halloween and Laura and I wanted to keep the players guessing, even when they had played it with us before. So that became part of the design, Hickman says.

“Initially we were going to title the adventure *Vampyr*, as one of a series of games we called *Nightventure*, which Laura and I were self-publishing back in 1978. The castle was called Ravenloft, and when Halloween came around each year our friends asked us if we could play ‘that Ravenloft game’ again, so the better title won out.”

Little wonder it was so popular, given how much its storyline affected those experiencing it. Hickman remembers one campaign where Strahd's tragic backstory was too much for one player: “When they found Strahd at last, distraught and prostrate over the tomb of Ireena Kolyana, this player could not bring himself to use the Sun Sword to slay the vampire. The others in the party had no such compunction, however, and fell on the creature with a vengeance.”

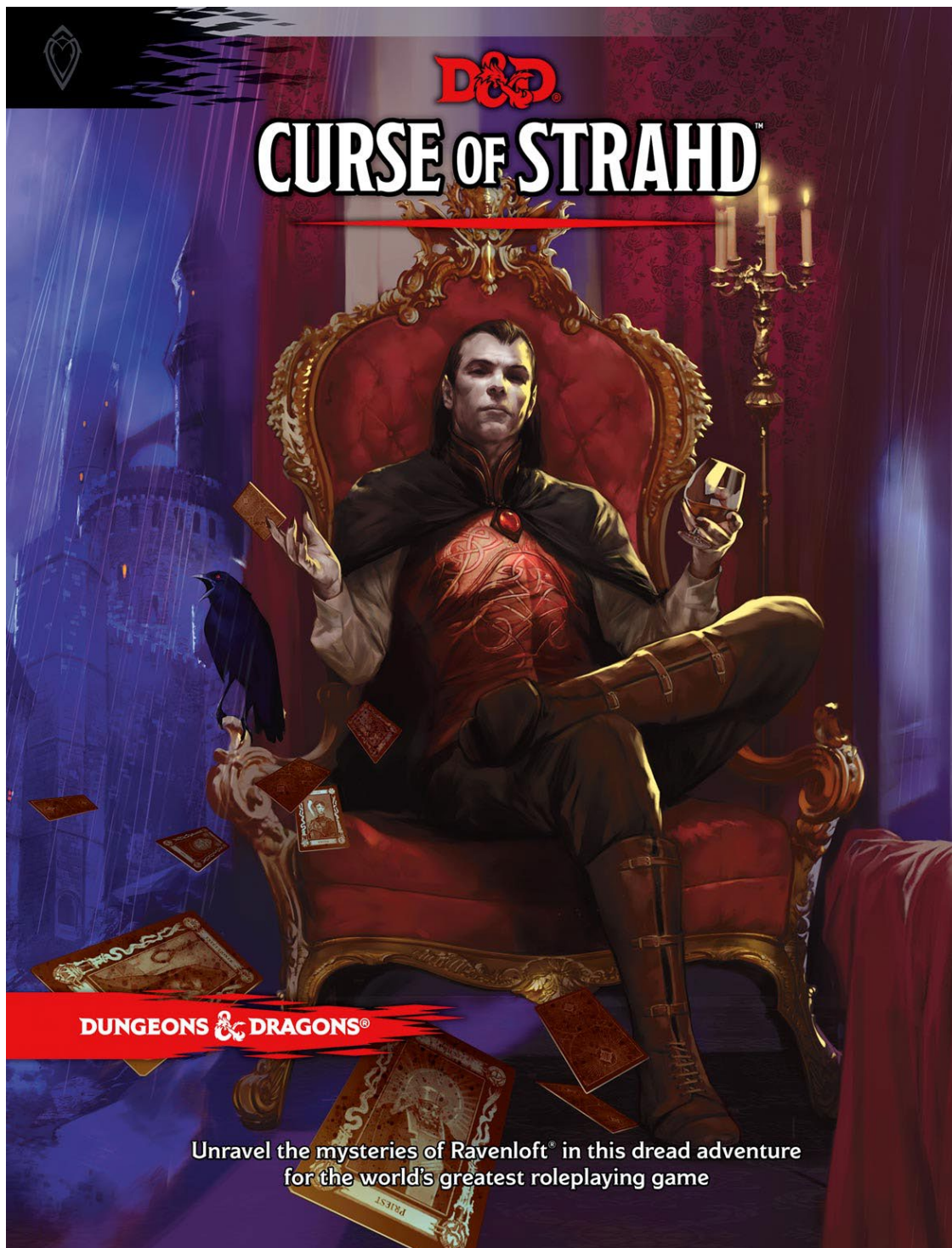
Once released, *Ravenloft* had a similar effect on many other players, who loved the rich gothic world it brought to D&D. On the 30th anniversary of *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Dungeon* magazine ranked Ravenloft as the second greatest D&D adventure of all time—behind *Queen of the Spiders*.

Hickman says he and his wife have always been “deeply honored and



touched” by the reception of their adventure. The pair also worked on the original designs for *Ravenloft II: The House on Gryphon Hill*, although that module was later finished by others. That was the last time they collaborated on a project involving Strahd, until now...

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## Curse of Strahd

“Laura and I are delighted to have been able to participate in this new and amazing incarnation of *Ravenloft*. We didn’t hesitate one moment, we were on board at once,” Hickman says. “I flew up to Wizards of the Coast and spent a week with Chris Perkins and his team. It was a wonderfully creative time filled with ideas and dark tales that Chris wove into *Curse of Strahd*.”

One of the objectives Hickman wanted to achieve was to bring vampire folklore back to its roots. “Vampires have strayed from their original role in cautionary tales, which warned women about monsters and thereby empowered them,” he says. “Strahd is a classic abusive monster who is, at his root, selfish. The tale is timeless and has nothing to do with some of the recent and harmful versions of glittering romance that vampires have appeared in.”

As Count Strahd von Zarovich makes his welcome return, it’s time to give credit where credit’s due. So thank you, John Scott Clegg, for your role in helping create such a well-rounded character. Without you there would be no Strahd, and *Dragon+* salutes you!

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# WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?



From lead writer Chris Perkins  
*in consultation with Tracy and Laura Hickman*

A 256-page fantasy-horror campaign  
Inspired by the original Ravenloft adventure

Official Release  
March 15



Designed for  
levels 1-10

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## Travel Talk: Ravenloft

A visit to Barovia by Volothamp Geddarm (as told to, and set down by, long-suffering scribe Ed Greenwood).

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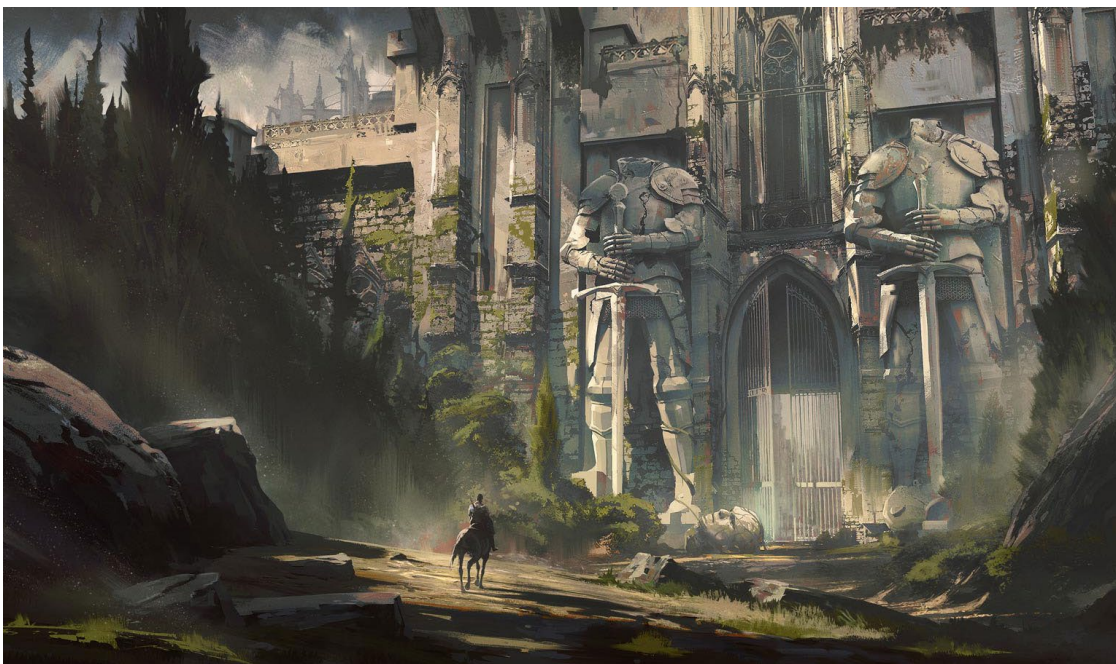
**V**olothamp Geddarm at your service, gentles, once more setting forth truths and observations of my adventures before you, like choice Tharsultan grayling prawns poached with plovers' eggs in garlic butter! (A dry Berduskan pairs wonderfully with that, by the by).

I was most flattered recently to have a longtime rival, Randilus Qelver, of *Qelver's Joyous Journeys in Baldur's Gate*, offer me a commission (ninety newly-minted Waterdhavian dragons, no less!) to explore a place too remote for his current busy schedule of mapping the best anchorages in the Nelanther for him to see to himself. A place called "Barovia."

This was a small valley realm, I was given to understand, not found on any maps because it's "hidden behind mists." (A curious enough

description, to be sure, but in fact much of far and fabled Sossal is often in the very same state, due to warm damp air rising out of its deep valleys to meet prevailing frigid arctic winds). All Qelver could tell me was that the lord of this land was a “capitol fellow,” a retired “peerless conqueror of a warlord who now lives quietly in his castle,” one Lord von Zarovich by name, and that I should look him up and thereby have all the treasures of Barovia proclaimed to me, for sharing—after my personal inspection to square the proud hyperbole of the proprietor with what the wayfarer will truly find, of course—with subsequent travelers who allowed themselves to be guided by my screed.

In past dealings—admittedly not many in number, or overly involved in nature—I have found this Qelver less than gracious, nasty even, but mayhap time mellows us all. He was most affable, and even shared some choice green Sardark of classic vintage, and toasted delfarnbread with spiced snail-butter to go with it. Qelver suggested I follow an ancient, deeply sunken “old straight track” into the depths of the Wood of Sharp Teeth, this track commencing at about the midpoint of the forest’s western edge and running northeast straight into the heart of this Barovia.



Well, now. An unknown land, however small, in the deep midst of a wild wood I’d passed many a time over my veteran years of wayfaring across the Realms, but never ventured into? A chance not to be missed! Moreover, funds have been rather slender of late, or to

Speak with full candor have been all too paltry since my arrival in the late 1400s (another tale, for another time, that), and a commission is a commission. Qelver offered me ten dragons up front, but grudgingly advanced another ten after some hard bargaining. When all is said and done, *Volo is the one and only Volo*.

Yet mindful of the Wood's reputation for harboring fearsome monsters, dragons and "eldritch" (a wizardly term for "been there a long time, frightened my innards out of me; ran before I could ascertain proper details") monsters of tentacles and awesome powers, I thought it prudent to seek the advice of an old colleague of mine, the Sage of Shadowdale, Elminster.

He seemed both amused and at the same time full of warnings he was anxious to share. "Ye *do* know some places are better left unvisited, aye? Unless ye want to die horribly—or enter, again horribly, a miserable existence in undeath. Not everyone's life goal, but then, ye've always been... *different*, Volothamp Geddarm!"

I thanked him with modest pride, but his response was to shake his head and mutter, "Though ye may be useful yet. I could have a future pressing need for a prize stone-headed idiot; ye never know. And being as ye've had a stellar record—and are gaining this new bout of practice, too—at playing a patsy..."

I'm used to the Sage's rather caustic judgments of me (standing in the shadow of someone so much younger and more handsome and accomplished must sting for one of his long years and longer reputation), and took it well enough, but he moved quickly on to warning me that Qelver's directions were unreliable ("Ye'll never find Barovia when ye want to, lad; that's not how the mists work!") and that I could only succeed in finding the place if I accepted a talisman he would craft—and surgically implant beneath my skin! "Aye, lad, ye're going to launch a hopefully short, and even more hopefully to end well, career as a hunchback! Now, *don't* go about removing it, now, and don't let anyone else remove it, or I cannot offer much chance of your safe return!"

"What?" I teased him. "No guarantee?"

And then in unison, we chanted the response I already knew he'd make: "Lad, in life, there *are* no guarantees!"



He made me lie on a table, atop an old cloak, swabbed my back with something wet and icy, cast a spell that “Will keep ye from shrieking and thrashing about from the pain, as I’ve seen and heard quite enough suffering for several lifetimes,” and refused to show me the “talisman” he was implanting. Which he did by incisions I could not feel, a bucket of leeches that swelled up dark and almost comically round with what must have been my blood, and some unpleasant tugging that I suppose was him sewing me up. Then he cast a long and complicated ritual—several spells, in succession, all unfamiliar to me—that had the effect of making me feel decidedly unwell; empty, or somehow *drained*. I told him as much, but as he helped me get dressed again, he replied, “Good, good; ’tis supposed to,” and added, “When ye’d return here, say ‘dharts’ firmly, three times in swift succession.”

“Dharts?”

“Lad, lad, *I* did not name him. Aye, ‘dharts.’ Don’t forget now, unless ye want to reside in Barovia permanently—one way or another.”

Then he handed me four wooden stakes to slide down my boots, a shoulder-sack of “hardbread, cheese, pickles, sausages, sheathed dagger, a spare belt and two spare clouts, and a modest purse full of coins, all wrapped in a blanket,” two waterskins (“holy water and good old drinking water with a little mint in it”) and a handaxe that was actually a cut-down lucerne hammer hooded with a leather weather-cover to conceal its true nature—one end a vicious spike, and the other a flat hammer-head that the Sage told me cheerfully was “for pounding the stakes through a vampire’s heart.”

*A vampire’s heart?*

While I was still grasping that, he patted me on the back and said, “Now, if ye should meet with a man named van Richten, try to befriend him; ye’ll all too likely have need of him. So, off to Barovia with ye. My way. Don’t want ye getting lost in its mists; they can kill, ye know—or should know.”

And with that, he touched me, there was a whirling of blue sparks the size of my hands that wove around me so swift and furiously that I

could only blink—and when I could see again, I was standing in a valley surrounded by towering, frowning evergreen-girt mountains. A strangely still place I can only describe for wayfarers as “decidedly eerie.” It looked nothing at all like the Wood of Sharp Teeth, so I concluded the Sage’s spell must have gone wrong. Typical.

However, I could readily see that I was standing by the side of a muddy road that wound down the valley, that there were farms all around me, and small houses with steeply-pitched roofs and chimneys. In the other direction, the land rose as the valley narrowed, and where distance made even my eagle-eyed seeing dim, I could only *just* see two tall, dark towers—one cone-capped, the other crenelated—that must be the loftiest eminences of a castle, likely the lord’s abode.



So I headed in that direction.

Where almost immediately, as the road took me over a gentle hill and down into a dell, I espied a splendid little caravan-wagon, fitted with a chimney and lamps and side-windows; a traveling abode rather than a wares-carrying conveyance. A strikingly-beautiful, rather fierce-looking woman with a long fall of dark hair gathered by a crimson headband, and wearing a crimson way-coat of fine cut and make, was behind it feeding the beasts that drew it. She was armed like a warrior or adventurer, and gave me a long hard look as I approached; a look that did not waver when I called cheerfully, “Well met, lady! I am Volo, a peaceful wayfarer! What land is this?”

“You stand in Barovia,” she replied.

“And does the good Lord von Zarovich still reign here?”

She gave me a very strange look, then nodded without uttering a word. So I called thanks, added a wink and a smile that were received with cold and silent scorn, and went on my way.

That castle must stand on high, for it was farther off than it looked; I walked most of the day on strangely silent and deserted roads, and seemed to draw only a little nearer to it. What few folk I saw were farmers, at work in their fields; they regarded me with curiosity, but also silence, and neither answered my hails nor ventured nearer when I tried to converse with them.

When dusk drew down—both suddenly and swiftly, thanks to the mountains walling in this so-far-less-than-welcoming valley—I made for the nearest house to ask for shelter or directions to an inn. It was a smaller, sorrier hutch than many of the farmhouses I’d passed, and looked frankly abandoned; lightless, with the shutters closed over its windows, and having a sag in its roof that my veteran eyes could clearly see simply must let in damp at any prolonged rain. And it stood hard by a small but fast-flowing clear stream, so situated that it probably flooded if spring storms came to this valley. Perhaps that was why it had been abandoned; I hastened, to check for foxes or snakes or worse inside before the light failed entirely, for if a bed or clear, level area of floor survived, it could serve me as a resting-place for the night. Wrapped in my cloak and with my head pillowed on the sack Elminster had given me, I’d be more comfortable than many past nights of my life.





The place was damp and full of rotten furniture, with spongy floorboards festooned with toadstools underfoot. It consisted of only three rooms, or so I gathered before I found myself—I confess my heart made quite a leap—face to face with someone coming out of the darkest back room: a pale, almost purplish-skinned man with burning red eyes; he did *not* look well.

“Who,” he hissed, “are you?”

“Volothamp Geddam,” I made haste to say. “At your service, gentle sir. I confess I believed this house to be empty, and could serve me as shelter for the night. I intend no violence, and can pay for a bed and a meal! I’m a traveler from afar, and have lost my way. What are these mountains called, that hem us in so?”

“The Balinok Mountains. Bed through there.” He pointed whence he’d come.

“And your name, good sir?”

“Andramar,” he said flatly. Ah. A man of few words. “Meal,” he added, and turned away. I headed through the doorway he’d indicated, into pitch darkness, and stumbled immediately—for the

floor was broken and uneven—and fell against one wall.

And that saved my life, for even as I struck the floor, there was a sharpish hiss right above me; Andramar was lunging through the air where I'd stood, eyes two red coals, hands like claws, and his mouth gaping to reveal teeth as long as fangs.

I scabbled for my belt knife, swinging the sack off my shoulder and up between us to try to serve as a crude shield of sorts, and—

Above me, Andramar stiffened, arched unnaturally, and let out a huge shuddering gasp. I could only conclude this peculiar behavior had something to do with the long sharpened spear of wood that had just burst out of his chest.

Behind him was its wielder, the woman from the caravan. “You! Volo!” she snapped at me. “Take his ankles!”

I mumbled my incomprehension, and she took hold of the helplessly-staring Andramar under the arms, started dragging him back through the doorway, and snarled at me, “Grab hold of his ankles and help me carry him, fool! Or do you *want* to be slain by a vampire spawn?”

“Oh.” I made haste to oblige. “If you put it that way—”

“I *do*,” she said severely, and I couldn't tell if she was trying to be funny, or was utterly humorless. As we carried Andramar—he was *heavy*—outside, me bringing up the rear with his worn-through boots and filthy breeches and her determining where we went, that sharp wooden spear protruding from my would-be murderer's chest and bobbing with our steps, I put on my most ingratiating smile and asked, “And you are—?”

“*Busy*, lhobb,” she snapped, leading the way to the stream. “Evil must be attacked and fought, not shrunk from and allowed to fester!”

“No, no—I, that is, *yes*, of course, to evil being fought, but what I *meant* was: what's your name?”

“Ezmerelda.” She said her name flatly, like flinging down a stone—and waded right into the stream.

“Lady Ezmerelda?”

She shrugged. “Ezmerelda d’Avenir.” Towed by the starting-to-struggle body of Andramar, I had to follow her into the stream, splashing and almost falling. The waters were ice-cold, and running fast. She forced Andramar down, grabbing the spear to hold it in place—and as he went under, the vampire spawn started to flail like a madman. Ezmerelda sprang onto him like a wrestler, pinning him, her face intent but calm.



“Lady Ezmerelda, what means ‘lhobb’?”

“*Idiot,*” she replied, with what seemed to me like great satisfaction, and added, “Volo, *hold* the spawn *under* the water, no matter what happens—and look also all around and tell me if you see anyone approaching. Or any beast. Even a bat.”

I did as I’d been bidden, finding myself still able to see—if poorly—in the dying twilight, and reported truthfully, “No.”

“Then you just might live until morning. Now, let go of the spawn and run. Get your things from the house, and get right back out to the road, and make haste the way you were going!”



“But—”

Andramar was struggling like a fiend under her (and I speak as one who’s seen actual fiends struggle), and Ezmerelda was being dragged this way and that.

“But—” My usual glib tongue seemed to have temporarily deserted me.

“ *Move, fool! Get you gone!*”

I moved. As I scrambled into the house, a cool night breeze arose. Most of me was soaked, and it was *cold*. I swore as I fumbled for my shoulder-sack, but remembered to call out thanks as I trotted to the road.

“You’re welcome, foolish man, now *run!*”

“But—but—” Her face told me this was not the time for pleasantries, so I saluted her and called, “Until next we meet!”

“Here’s hoping you’re *alive* at that meeting!” she snapped back. “You want the Blood of the Vine, an inn in the village over the next hill! Stop or leave the road for no one!”

Well, I hardly need say that I obeyed her to the last syllable. Her voice held the snap of command, and I admit I’m swayed by bold action; Ezmerelda D’Avenir is very like the best warcaptains I’ve met. Flashing eyes, nigh-fearless, and knows what she’s doing when it comes to battling undead. I couldn’t help but notice there was something odd about her right boot; it didn’t match her left. Perhaps just an affectation of fashion; I admit I cannot keep up with the changing fads and styles. If I had to sum her up in a word or two, those words would be “dashing” and “fierce.” As she dwells in a mobile caravan, I can’t speak for where she may be encountered if you visit Barovia, but she is certainly impressive, and well worth watching out for.

I heard the howls of distant wolves as I hastened (from up in those dark mountainside woods, I judged), and when I reached the inn (which proved to be just as Ezmerelda had described it), I duly noted this down for the benefit of wayfarers, and was gratified to discover

the oilskin bag hanging around my neck and on my chest had not only protected my throat with its gorget-plate, it had kept my parchments dry, and my inks and quills unbroken (though Elminster long ago showed me the trick of using your own cut-to-a-point fingernail as an improvised pen).

The inn was barely more than a large, old rambling house, sporting a few extra chimneys where back and upper rooms had been made over into guest bedchambers. Every interior door I saw—even the one leading from the forehall into what I'd have called the front parlor or lounge—had a stout bar that could be swung down to hold it shut against any forceful intrusion that didn't involve an axe. But the place is warm and cozy, if a trifle shabby, and I got the impression it doubled as a neutral meeting-ground for locals to trade, gossip, and pursue hobbies (from pipesmoking through whittling to gambling) away from their families.

Those locals, by the by, call themselves the “Vistani,” and dress in bright hues; they tend to have abundant hair that's dark unless they are elderly, possess pointed noses and what might be termed “sharp” features, and eat, drink, and undertake things with gusto, singing loudly, laughing often, and reacting quickly.



I would term the Blood of the Vine “as comfortable as home,” but utterly lacking in luxuries, with simple but hearty fare (stews and ale and warm round loaves of dark nut bread with strong yellow-green cheeses of unfamiliar local varieties). The resident owner prefers to call his house a tavern, and himself its “master,” as the sale of food and drink to locals far outstrips the rentals of his rooms—which he says are most often made use of by weary travelers caught by night far from home, or someone temporarily apart from their kin due to some quarrel or other.

This barkeep, Arik, was a quiet, wary-seeming sort who was forthcoming rather than garrulous; he related to me the layout of Barovia, and everything I saw thereafter confirmed his words. The dark, thick, wolf-roamed evergreens climbing the mountains around the valley are the Svalich Woods; the largest of the Balinok Mountains (the snow-covered one) is Mount Baratok; and the bald, slightly smaller mountain nearby is Mount Ghakis, with Lake Zarovich between them. South of the lake is the palisaded town of Vallaki, and atop a hill west of the two peaks is the walled village of

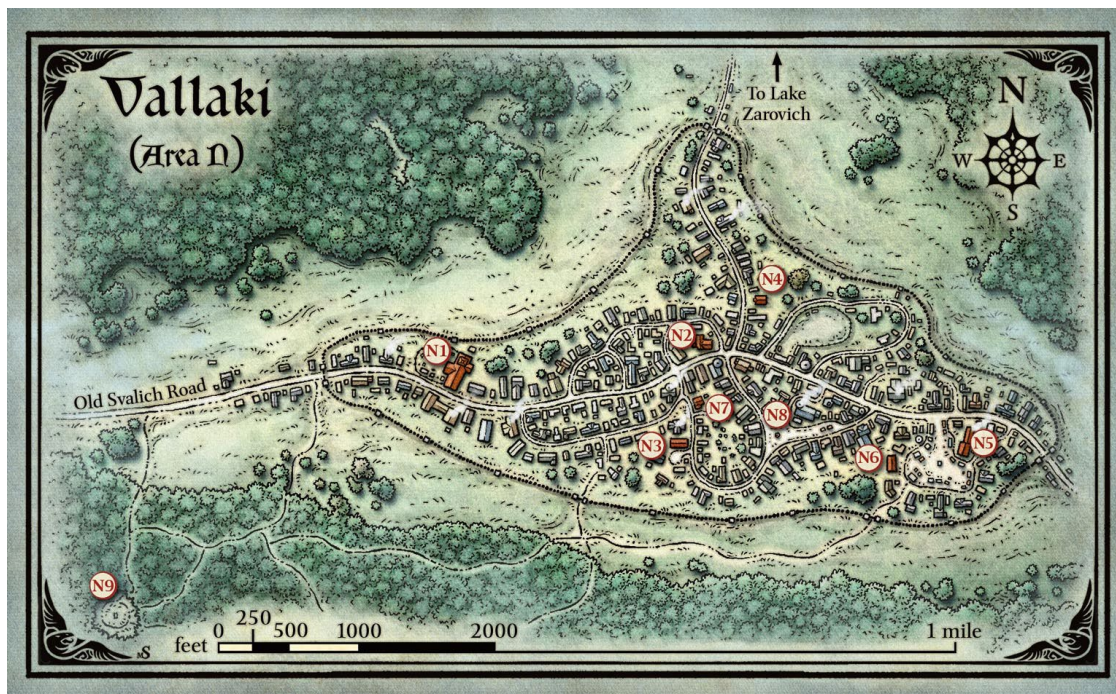


Krezk with the Abbey of Saint Markovia standing in its center. Between Vallaki and Krezk lie farms and the still-impressive ruins of Argynvostholt, a fortified mansion once home to a now-fallen knightly order. East of the mountains lie more farms in plenty, and as one continues east, the road winding through woods as it climbs to reach it, the unwallled village of Barovia, where I now found myself. The village, I learned, was overlooked by Castle Ravenloft, the abode of the Lord of Barovia, Strahd von Zarovich. The castle perches atop a rock column called the Pillarstone of Ravenloft—and yes, there *are* ravens.



I related my encounter with Ezmerelda to Goodman Arik, and he informed me she was one of the vistani, a wandering people who could come and go from the lands of Barovia. Arik was so kind as to

recommend me seek out another newcomer to Barovia like myself—a half-elf bard by the name of Rictavio, who came from distant lands to Barovia in a carnival wagon, with a cane in his hand and a pet monkey perched on his shoulder. This bard is a carnival ringmaster by trade; he dwelt in an abandoned tower on an island in Lake Baratok for some months, then came to Vallaki to recruit new actors for a future carnival tour; he’s apparently a friendly sort who likes to tell tales of the lands he came from, and sound out people to see if they have good singing voices, comic timing, and acting abilities. He’s not averse to buying food and drink to entice folk to sit and talk with him.



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Well, now, this seemed almost too interesting to be true, so on the morrow, I set out to visit this Rictavio. My journey to Vallaki was uneventful enough to not warrant telling you of, other than to observe that the character of the town of Vallaki (“Vah-LAH-key”) seems a more cheerful place than the rest of Barovia, under the reign of the festival-loving Baron Vargas Vallakovich. They consider the ruler of Barovia, Strahd, to be a devil here, and I found Rictavio easily enough, at the Blue Water Inn in town. (They did warn me that the wolves are bold and growing bolder, and seemingly more numerous, and have even begun to attack travelers on the roads, not just in the woods!)

Rictavio looked and acted... old. A colorfully-dressed (a stylish mauve-and-orange full-sleeved shirt, and a leather tabard-cut jacket over it adorned with many trios of accent-buttons; very grand) half-elf with, yes, a monkey on his shoulder and a cane in his hand—and it looked very like a sword-cane to these worldly eyes.



He seemed suspicious of me at first, but a few glib anecdotes about my thespian flings caught his interest, and we sat down over some wine to chat. After hearing the tale of my visit to Barovia thus far, he shook his head and said of Randilus Qelver: “Strahd’s creatures seem everywhere! Like the wolves, he grows bolder, and reaches farther... this cannot go on. Yet any change, to avoid *real* violence and disaster, requires careful planning. Strategy. Forethought. Like a good carnival act, things must be planned, not improvised.”

When I told him of Ezmerelda d’Avenir, he seemed very excited, and said, “This sounds very much like a woman I’ve not seen for some time, who is like a daughter to me. *Where* did you see her last, again?”

He warned me not to go to Castle Ravenloft, “whatever enticements you’re offered,” but I came here to see Barovia, and could hardly depart without at least seeing its namesake village. So we parted amicably enough, after a night at the Blue Water Inn (fair/reasonable; my standards are mellowing, I confess) in which we traded many tales and I fear he began to think of me in the same wise as the Lady



Ezmerelda had, though he was too polite to use words like “fool” or “idiot.” He thanked me for the quips and jests I’d let drop before his ears, though, and made me promise once again not to accept any invitations to Castle Ravenloft or be bold enough to ride up to its gate towers—or beyond.

I was in full agreement with him the next day, when I set out once more under frowning skies. Lowering storm clouds cloaked the valley, imparting the gloom of near-twilight and warning me I’d probably be drenched ere long. Nearing the gates, bound for Krezk, I encountered a smiling (but wary and far from happy) and rather plump man. He was a burgomaster or merchant, by the cut of his tailcoat, and he made haste to inform me that the Lord of Barovia, Strahd von Zarovich, would entertain me at Castle Ravenloft at my earliest convenience.

I would ordinarily have thanked the fellow and assured him I would be delighted to accept the invitation, but some confused memory of hearing bad things about the name “Strahd,” long ago in a tavern in Suzail, made me say, “Oh, *that* Strahd! I would love to, but fear I find myself in an urgently pressing hurry to be elsewhere!”

“Where?”

“Anywhere! I—uh—that is to say—”

The man’s face hardened, and he began to say something stiff and formal that began with the words, “It is *unwise* to scorn an invit—” but that was as far as he got before something behind me caught his eye, his face went as pale as new butter and he scuttled away, clearly in the grip of profound terror.

I cast about for the cause of his fright, and was still doing so when a bat flapped to the ground, twisted and *grew* amid a burst of dark smoke or mist, in a horrible boiling manner—and became a man, standing smiling at me. He was tall and richly dressed in half armor and a cloak, and had skin as pale as chalk, a haughty countenance, aquiline features, pointed ears, dark brows, and an imperious stare. His smile was not a nice smile.



“And what, sir, might your name be?” he asked, quietly and pleasantly enough.

“Volothamp Geddarm, at your service!” I replied brightly, putting on my best smile.

“You are indeed,” he agreed. “I am Strahd von Zarovich, Lord of Barovia. I’ll expect you to dine with me at my castle tonight. I would hear of where you hail from.” His eyes narrowed, and he added, “And of the strange magic I perceive you carry.”

“Magic?” I asked, contriving to seem the very soul of innocence with my usual glib success.

“Yes,” he repeated simply, and turned away. “Until tonight.”

And a moment later, I was alone, a bat flapping away from me—east,

in the direction of the castle whose two towers I could again *just* see, in the misty distance.

I watched it out of sight, then said, “Dharts!”

And nothing happened.

“Dharts!” I said again, louder this time.

I was answered, out of the empty air, with a cold, mocking chuckle.

“Dharts! Dharts! Dharts!” I told the gloom around me insistently, and I don’t mind admitting the tiniest thread of panic wriggled within me at that moment. Growing.

And then the world around me went away. A most unpleasant feeling.

It was very cold, and very dark, and I seemed to be falling, endlessly falling, my head full of mist.

Until, quite suddenly, I was lying on my back, blinded by what turned out to be a simple lantern, and Elminster was bending over me.

“Still alive? And in one piece?” he inquired cheerfully. I managed to nod.

“Right, roll over,” he said briskly, getting out a wicked little knife. “We need to get that talisman back out of ye. Has a piece of one of Strahd’s fingernails in it, ye know; that’s the only reason it works. Yet it also means, if he summons time and determination enough, he can reach out to ye. And that would *not* be good.”

“I can believe that,” I told him, and meant it. And then, of course, I *had* to know how the magic worked.

Elminster gave me what is probably best described as a “withering” look. And said, “I separated thy body from thy soul, then attached body and soul to the talisman and to each other by strands of the Weave. So the talisman can be, ahem, *yanked* back to where the soul is—here—and bring ye with it. It only works because of a fragment of fingernail and some Vistani traveling between Barovia and not far



from here at just the right time; most who venture to Barovia are trapped there forever.”

“Forever?”

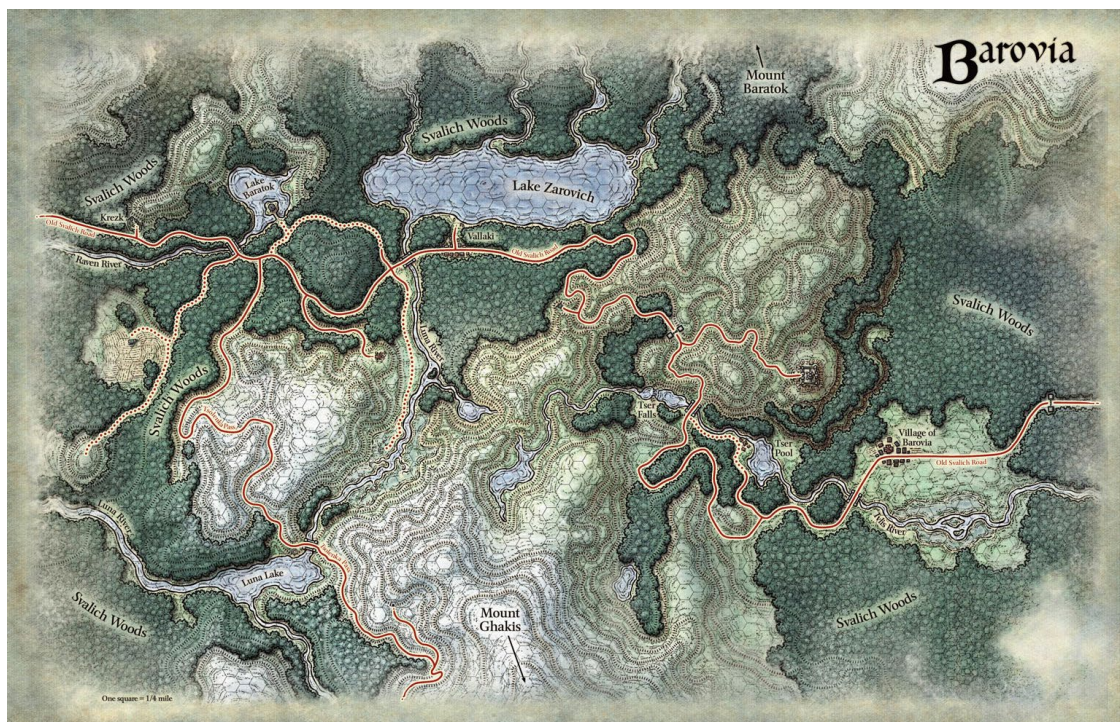
“Unless they can destroy Strahd.”

“Oh. Forever.”

Elminster smiled. “I have every confidence in thee, Volo, but I suspect ye’ve seen enough of Barovia. Aye?”

“Aye—I mean, *yes!*”

So that is my Barovian adventure, and why I cannot recommend it as a wayfarers’ destination. I enjoyed my time there, of course, for when all is said and done, Volo is Volo!



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## Top 6 Warlock Features in Sword Coast Legends

Everything you need to know about the warlock class in the *Sword Coast Legends* video game, as its first downloadable content takes us deeper into the Underdark.

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**A**s the madness of *Rage of Demons* infects the *Sword Coast Legends* video game, thanks to a piece of upcoming DLC, a powerful new character class joins the fight. “The warlock was actually chosen by our design council, which is a community-based council,” says Ash Sevilla, n-Space’s community manager. “We had an internal vote and it was very close, with the druid coming in second. But the community push for the warlock was perfect, because it matches up with the *Rage of Demons* storyline and the new tiefling race really well.”





## Warlocks: What's What?

In the D&D tabletop roleplaying game, a warlock is defined by a pact with an otherworldly being. The ability trees for the *Sword Coast Legends* warlock follow the various pacts and patrons from the fifth edition *Player's Handbook*, which allows the warlock to play a wide variety of party roles within the video game. Here are the major features players can enjoy:

1. *SCL* warlocks start with the signature *Eldritch Blast*, but if the player desires they can spend points to purchase *Pact of the Blade*, which allows the character to be a viable melee-oriented caster.
2. Warlocks in *SCL* have a reworked version of *Finger of Death*. When using the attack, multiple zombies are conjured near the affected target and follow the warlock's bidding.
3. Warlocks gain a new crowd control spell in the form of *Tasha's Hideous Laughter*, which causes the afflicted target to be knocked down, as horrible laughter incapacitates it for a long period of time.
4. *Dark One's Blessing* is a passive ability that grants temporary hit



- points any time the warlock kills an enemy.
5. *Hurl Through Hell* is a passive ability that randomly takes a struck target out of combat for a brief period, dealing fire damage over time as it's spirit is tormented in the fires of hell.
  6. Warlocks can also gain the ability to resurrect a corpse as a zombie servant using the spell *Create Thrall*.

## Underdark Unearthed



Those new skills will certainly come in handy, now that this hidden kingdom beneath the Sword Coast has been revealed more fully. “We touch on the Underdark in the core *Sword Coast Legends* campaign,” says Jay Turner, narrative director at game developer n-Space, “so we wanted to get into it more deeply with *Rage of Demons* and reveal a bit more of what the movers and shakers are like down there.”

Unfortunately for players, the “movers and shakers”, as Turner refers to them, are even more rowdy than usual these days. With demon lords running amok, the Underdark’s usual crazy characters and warring factions are even more unhinged and belligerent than usual.

“In the tabletop *Dungeons & Dragons* storyline, *Rage of Demons* is really about getting the players into this alien world of the Underdark. So we’re working to match that feeling of exploring a strange place and meeting exotic people in our CRPG,” Turner adds.

With so much Rage of Demons content already available, as demons terrorize tabletop adventures, novels and the *Neverwinter* MMO, it might seem as if this tale has already been well told. Yet the n-Space team worked closely with Wizards of the Coast to fashion their own forays into this deep, dark place.

“We found a spot in the Rage of Demons story that WotC isn’t touching on. So we’ve carved out a niche in that storyline and we’re going a little bit off the rails to see what’s going on behind the scenes of that main plot,” says Turner. “Working together to bring the Underdark to life was very much a two-way street. For their part, they might move more obscure locations to places that are better suited to us, or if we’re filling in areas they haven’t touched, they will often work that into the greater canon of the Forgotten Realms. It’s been a really good creative, collaborative effort.”

## Raging Onwards



Released on October 20, 2015, there’s been plenty of time for video gamers and reviewers to express their opinions on *Sword Coast Legends*. Based on that feedback from the community and the press, the n-Space team has also been able to bundle a number of upgrades into the Rage of Demons DLC.

“We’ve obviously been tweaking bugs and doing some fine tuning.

But we've always talked about how we are a very small and nimble team, and how we had a lot more ideas. We originally wanted to get the game out in front of everybody as soon as we could and continue to build on that, adding classes, adding races, adding content," says Tudge. "One thing we are really focused on with Rage of Demons, which is something both the fans and the press wanted, is to really flex the RPG side of things. So you'll find a lot more intrigue and a lot more non-combat based roleplaying within the expansion. Deepening that side of Rage of Demons is pretty exciting."

In addition to telling the story, the new Rage of Demons material also provides players with extra dungeon creation tools. That includes new tile sets and areas to populate, as well as new interiors and creature sets, to help Dungeon Masters further expand their own campaigns. While Tudge admits the team has been burning the midnight oil to finish the Rage of Demons DLC, he promises that once they're a little freer, they'll also be looking to share more designer-created campaigns with the community.

## Secrets of the Underdark



"While we're fitting our tale within a pocket of the Rage of Demons story, it does tie into the greater overarching arc. So yes, you will see



Drizzt make an appearance,” Tudge says, as we try and tease specifics from him. However, he remains tight-lipped about many aspects ahead of n-Space’s official launch.

Although he confirms that the story concerns some of the ripples caused by the demons running loose, he says the demon lords won’t necessarily appear as end-of-level bosses (although he later admits new “bosses” will be useable in the DM mode). Despite describing the elder brain and the illithids as “very interesting”, he will “neither confirm nor deny” their involvement in the storyline.

What we do know for sure is that alongside new items to collect, there’ll be a new playable race in the form of tieflings. These powerful human-based beings are infused with the touch of the fiendish planes, and that is reflected in their racial abilities. In *Sword Coast Legends*, that manifests itself in the following ways:

- Hellish Resistance: All fire damage is reduced by 50 per cent.
- Hellish Rebuke: Flames surround the caster, reaching out and burning any creature that attacks for the next forty seconds.
- Darkness: Magical darkness spreads from a point within range to fill a three-yard radius sphere for the duration.

Turner also confirms that the underground trading outpost of Mantol-Derith features heavily in the game: “We’re going into the marketplaces and you’re going to meet the people from the various factions; the duergar, the drow, and the Zhentarim. They’re down there trying to make a buck in this almost lawless area, with just gentlemen’s agreements keeping them from tearing each other’s throats out.”



## Community Action

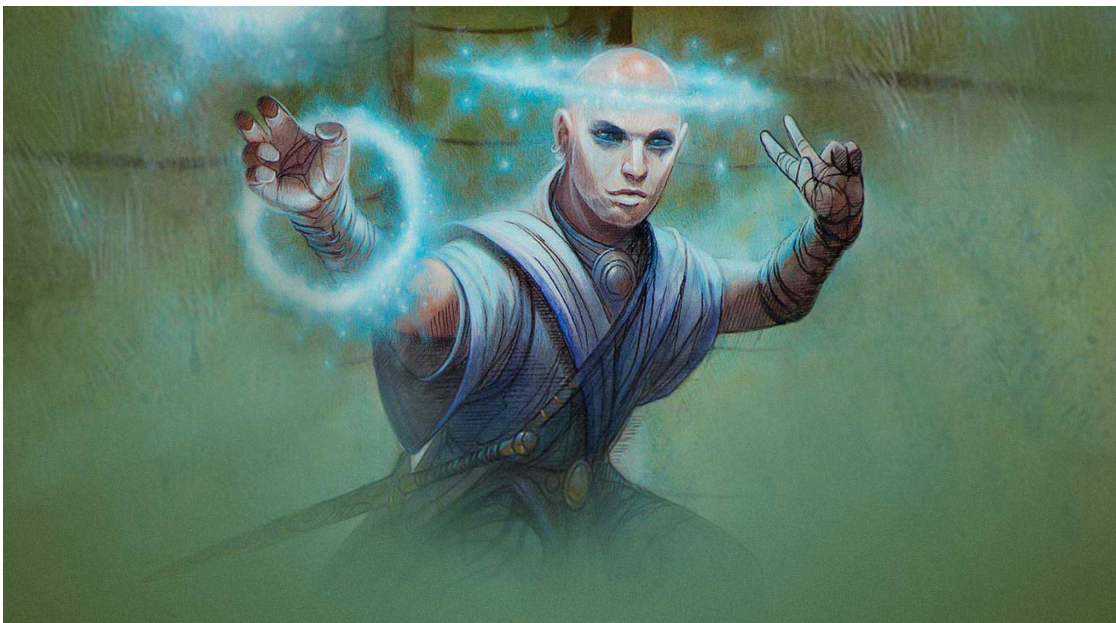
Many of those hostile characters have been chosen by the design council, which Tudge describes as being “very, very creative.” The same group was responsible for the creation of weapons and armor in the main game. “Right now they’re actually deciding some of the NPCs that are going to be in town. They’re choosing names and backgrounds and those will be forwarded to the team, who’ll decide if they’re useable,” adds Sevilla.

How much will this new DLC adventure and all its additions cost? Tudge breaks the good news, with a price that is definitely right. “The Rage of Demons DLC is free for everyone who has purchased the game. We’re really honoring our commitment to the fans,” he confirms. “And if you buy the game after Rage of Demons has already been released, you’ll still get the DLC free, we’re not going to be charging for it. It’s free for anyone, now and moving forwards.”

*Sword Coast Legends: Rage of Demons* is released for PC and Mac in early 2016. It will follow on PlayStation 4 and Xbox One later.

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## Unearthed Arcana: Psionics and the Mystic

Unearthed Arcana returns to the mystic character class to take another look at the rules for psionics.

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**P** sionics and magic are two distinct forces and not every D&D world features psionic power to the same extent. In worlds that are relatively stable and hew close to the archetypal D&D setting, psionics is rare—or might not exist at all. That's because psionics indirectly originates from the Far Realm, a dimension outside the bounds of the known multiverse.

We've taken another look at psionics in relation to the mystic, and based on the playtest feedback you sent us, there are a number of changes you can expect:

- The class now goes to 10th level. The core concepts had enough support that we feel confident moving forward with them.
- Psionics is more flexible. You have a psychic focus, which allows you to pick one discipline and gain a constant, special benefit from it. Otherwise, you can expend points to use any discipline you know.



- Psionics now includes psionic talents, the equivalent of a spellcaster's cantrips.
- Psionic disciplines are now available to all mystics, regardless of mystic order. However, your order grants you a benefit for using its associated disciplines.

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To read the latest rules for psionics and the mystic, download the draft document.



[DOWNLOAD THE PDF](#)

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As always, the material presented in Unearthed Arcana ranges from game mechanics that we might publish someday to house rules from our D&D campaigns that we want to share with you.

These unofficial game mechanics are usable in your campaign but not fully tempered by playtests and design iterations. They might be unstable; if you use them, be ready to rule on any issues that come up. They're written in pencil, not ink. For these reasons, material in this column is not legal in D&D Adventurers League events.

At this point, we're not necessarily tied to any of these options. This

effort is merely a first draft to gauge where we should start and what kind of approach to psionics in fifth edition will work best. You can expect a survey asking for feedback on these draft rules in a month or so.

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# Unearthed Arcana: Psionics & the Mystic, Take 2

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## Psionics

Psionics is a source of power that originates from within a creature's mind, allowing it to augment its physical abilities and affect the minds of others. Psionic abilities are called **psionic disciplines**, since each one consists of rigid mental exercises

needed to place a creature in the correct mindset to wield psionic power.

A discipline offers a number of abilities, but some of them require additional energy and expertise to create their effects.

**Psionic talents** are akin to disciplines, but they require no psi energy and can be used at will. They are almost an innate part of the mystic.

In addition, a creature skilled in the use of psionics can exert its **psychic focus** on a psionic discipline. This effect allows a creature to gain a constant benefit from the discipline.

## Otherworldly Power

Not every D&D world features psionic power to the same extent. Psionics indirectly originates from the Far Realm, a dimension outside the bounds of the known multiverse. The Far Realm has its own alien laws of physics and magic. When its influence extends to a world, the Far Realm invariably spawns horrific monsters and madness as it bends reality to its own rules.

As the laws of reality twist and turn, individual minds can be awakened to the cosmic underpinnings that dictate the form and nature of reality. The tumult caused by the Far Realm creates echoes that can disturb and awaken minds that would otherwise slumber. Such awakened creatures look on the world in the same way that creatures existing in three dimensions might look on a two-dimensional realm. They see possibilities, options, and connections that are unfathomable to those with a more limited view of reality.

In worlds that are relatively stable and hew close to the archetypal D&D setting presented in the core rulebooks, psionics is rare—or might not exist at all. The cosmic bindings that define the multiverse are strong in such places, making it unlikely that an individual mind can perceive the possibilities offered by psionics. Mystics in such worlds might be so scarce that a mystic never meets another practitioner of the psionic arts. Characters might unlock their psionic potential by



random chance, and ancient tomes, journals, and other accounts of mystics might serve as the only guide to mastering this form of power.

Psionics is more common in worlds where the bounds of reality have been twisted and warped. The realm of Athas in the Dark Sun campaign setting is the prime example of a world where psionics is common. The gods are absent, magic has been twisted into an ecological scourge, and the common threads that bind many worlds of D&D have been sundered. By contrast, the world of Eberron is a setting where the bounds of reality have been tested but not fully broken. Psionics is not as pervasive in Eberron as in Athas, but the influence of the otherworldly realm of Xoriat makes it a known and studied art.

## Psionics and Magic

Psionics and magic are two distinct forces. In general, an effect that affects a spell has no effect on a psionic effect. There is one important exception to this rule. A psionic effect that reproduces a spell is treated as magic. A psionic effect reproduces a spell when it allows a psionic creature or character to cast a spell. In this case, psionic energy taps into magic and manipulates it to cast the spell.

For example, the mind flayer as presented in the *Monster Manual* has the Innate Spellcasting (Psionics) feature. This feature allows the mind flayer to cast a set of spells using psionic energy. These spells can be countered with *dispel magic* and similar effects.

# Mystic

## The Mystic

Level	Proficiency		Talents Known	Disciplines Known	Psi Points	Psi Limit
	Bonus	Features				
1st	+2	Psionics, Mystic Order	1	2	4	2
2nd	+2	Mystical Recovery	1	3	6	2
3rd	+2	Mystic Order feature	2	3	14	3
4th	+2	Ability Score Improvement, Strength of Mind	2	3	17	3
5th	+3		2	4	27	5
6th	+3	Mystic Order feature	2	4	32	5
7th	+3		2	5	38	6
8th	+3	Ability Score Improvement, Mystic Order feature	2	5	44	6
9th	+4		2	6	57	7
10th	+4	Consumptive Power	3	6	64	7

A mystic draws on the power of psionics—the energy of the mind—to create powerful effects.

## Class Features

As a mystic, you gain the following class features.

### Hit Points

**Hit Dice:** 1d8 per mystic level

**Hit Points at 1st Level:** 8 + your Constitution modifier

**Hit Points at Higher Levels:** 1d8 (or 5) + your Constitution modifier per mystic level after 1st

### Proficiencies

**Armor:** Light armor, medium armor

**Weapons:** Simple weapons

**Tools:** None

**Saving Throws:** Intelligence, Wisdom

**Skills:** Choose two skills from Arcana, History, Insight, Medicine, Nature, Perception, and Religion

### Equipment

You start with the following equipment, in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

- (a) a spear or (b) a mace
- (a) leather armor or (b) scale mail
- (a) a light crossbow and 20 bolts or (b) any simple weapon
- (a) a scholar's pack or (b) an explorer's pack

## Psionics

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As a student of psionics, you can master and use psionic disciplines and talents.

### Psionic Talents

A psionic talent is a minor psionic effect you have mastered. At 1st level, you know one psionic talent of your choice (see the talent options later in this class description). You learn additional talents of your choice at higher levels, as shown in the Talents Known column of the Mystic table.

### Psionic Disciplines

A psionic discipline is a rigid set of mental exercises that allows a mystic to manifest psionic power. Such disciplines are divided into two categories: lesser disciplines and greater disciplines. A mystic masters only a few disciplines at a time.

At 1st level, you know two lesser disciplines of your choice (see the discipline options later in this class description). You learn additional disciplines of your choice at higher levels, as shown in the Disciplines Known column of the Mystic table. You must be at least 5th level to learn a greater discipline.

In addition, whenever you gain a level in this class, you can replace one discipline you know with a different one of your choice. You can replace a lesser discipline with a greater discipline, but only if you are at least 5th level.

### Psi Points

You have an internal reservoir of energy that can be devoted to the psionic disciplines you know. This energy is represented by psi points. Each psionic discipline describes effects you can create with it by spending a certain number of psi points. A psionic talent requires no psi points.

The number of psi points you have is based on your mystic level, as shown in the Psi Points column of the Mystic table. The number shown for your level is your psi point maximum. Your psi point total returns to its maximum after you finish a long rest. The number of psi points you have can't go below 0 or over your maximum.

### Psi Limit

Though you have access to a potent amount of psionic energy, it takes training and practice to

channel that energy. There is a limit on the number of psi points you can spend to activate a psionic discipline. The limit is based on your mystic level, as shown in the Psi Limit column of the Mystic table. For example, as a 3rd-level mystic, you can spend no more than 3 psi points on a discipline each time you use it, no matter how many psi points you have.

### Psychic Focus

You can focus psychic energy on one of your psionic disciplines to draw ongoing benefits from it. As a bonus action, you can choose one of your psionic disciplines and gain its psychic focus benefit, which is detailed in that discipline's description. The benefit lasts until you are incapacitated or until you use another bonus action to choose a psychic focus benefit. You can have only one psychic focus benefit at a time.

### Psionic Ability

Intelligence is your psionic ability for your psionic disciplines. You use your Intelligence modifier when setting the saving throw DC for a psionic discipline or when making an attack roll with one.

**Discipline save DC** = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Intelligence modifier

**Discipline attack modifier** = your proficiency bonus + your Intelligence modifier

## Mystic Order

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At 1st level, you choose a Mystic Order: the Order of the Awakened or the Order of the Immortal, both detailed at the end of the class description. Each order specializes in a particular approach to psionics. Your order gives you features when you choose it at 1st level and additional features at 3rd, 6th, and 8th level.

## Mystical Recovery

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Starting at 2nd level, you draw vigor from the psi energy you use to power psionic disciplines associated with your Mystic Order.

Whenever you spend psi points on a psionic discipline of your order, you regain hit points equal to your Intelligence modifier if your current hit point total equals half your hit point maximum or less.

## Ability Score Improvement

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When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

## Strength of Mind

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Even the simplest psionic techniques require a deep understanding of how psionic energy can augment mind and body. This understanding allows you to alter your defenses to better deal with threats.

Starting at 4th level, you can replace your proficiency in Wisdom saving throws whenever you finish a short or long rest. To do so, choose Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, or Charisma. You gain proficiency in saves using that ability, instead of Wisdom. This change lasts until you finish your next short or long rest.

## Consumptive Power

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At 10th level, you gain the ability to sacrifice your health in exchange for psychic power. As a bonus action, you regain up to 5 psi points. For each point you choose to regain this way, your current hit points and hit point maximum are both reduced by 1 for each level you have in this class. This reduction can't be lessened in any way.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest, and the reduction to your hit point maximum lasts until you finish a long rest.

## Mystic Orders

Psionics is a mysterious form of power within most D&D worlds. Secretive orders study its origins and applications, while pushing the boundaries of what psychic power can achieve.

Each mystic order pursues a specific goal for psionic power. That goal shapes how the members of an order understand psionics and determines the disciplines they master.

## Order of the Awakened

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Mystics dedicated to the Order of the Awakened seek to unlock the full potential of the mind. By

transcending the physical, the Awakened hope to attain a perfect state of being—focused on pure intellect and mental energy.

The Awakened are skilled at bending minds and unleashing devastating psychic attacks, and are able to read the secrets of the world through psionic energy. Awakened mystics who take to adventuring excel at unraveling mysteries, solving puzzles, and defeating monsters by turning them into unwilling pawns.

## Mind Mastery

At 1st level, you gain the *mind meld* and *thought spear* psionic talents (these are in addition to the talents you gain in the Mystic table). If you already have either one, you can pick any other talent to replace it.

## Awakened Expertise

Starting at 1st level, your focused mental training grants you extended knowledge. You gain proficiency in two skills of your choice.

In addition, choose one skill you are proficient in. Your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check you make that uses that skill.

## Psionic Investigation

At 3rd level, you can focus your mind to read the psionic imprint left on an object. If you hold an object and concentrate on it for 10 minutes (as if concentrating on a psionic discipline), you learn a few basic facts about it. You gain a mental image from the object's point of view, showing the last creature to hold the object, regardless of how long ago it was last handled.

You also learn of any events that have occurred within 20 feet of the object within the past 24 hours. The events you perceive unfold from the object's perspective. You see and hear such events as if you were there, but can't use other senses.

Additionally, you can embed an intangible psionic sensor within the object. For the next 24 hours, you can use an action to learn the object's location relative to you (its distance and direction) and to look at the object's surroundings from its point of view as if you were there. This perception lasts until the start of your next turn.

## Psychic Surge

Starting at 6th level, you overload your psychic focus to batter down an opponent's defenses. You



can impose disadvantage on a target's saving throw against a discipline or talent you use, but at the cost of using your psychic focus. Your focus immediately ends, and you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest. You can't use this feature if you can't use your psychic focus.

## Potent Psionics

At 8th level, you can add your Intelligence modifier to the damage you deal with any psionic talent.

## Order of the Immortal

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The Order of the Immortal strives to achieve physical perfection by augmenting the body's natural strength with psychic power. This order's goal is for its members to achieve immortality by overcoming the effects of aging through rigorous discipline and psionic perfection. To members of this order, psionic energy is a tool to augment, control, and perfect the physical body.

Members of this order who take up the adventuring life are skilled warriors. Their psionic abilities allow them to shrug off injuries and hazards, while focusing their strength and speed in combat.

## Martial Order

At 1st level, you gain proficiency with martial weapons, heavy armor, and shields.

## Psionic Resilience

At 3rd level, you learn to use psionic energy to speed up your natural healing. At the start of each of your turns, you gain temporary hit points equal to your Intelligence modifier, provided that you have at least 1 hit point.

## Surge of Health

Starting at 6th level, you can draw on your psychic focus to escape death's grasp. As a reaction when you take damage, you can halve that damage against you. Your psychic focus immediately ends, and you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest. You can't use this ability if you can't use your psychic focus.

## Cutting Resonance

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon attacks with psychic energy. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a

weapon, you can deal an extra 1d8 psychic damage to the target. When you reach 14th level, this extra damage increases to 2d8.

## Psionic Disciplines

Psionic disciplines are the heart of a mystic's craft. They are the mental exercises and psychic formulae used to forge inner will into tangible effects.

Disciplines were each discovered by different orders and tend to reflect their creators' ethos and specialties. However, a mystic may learn any discipline regardless of its associated order.

## Using a Discipline

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Each discipline has a number of ways you can use it, all contained in its description. The discipline specifies the type of action and number of psi points needed to use its effect options. It also details whether you must concentrate on its effects, how many targets it affects, what saving throws it requires, and so on.

The following sections go into more detail on using a discipline.

## Psychic Focus

The Psychic Focus section of a discipline describes the benefit you gain when you choose that discipline for your psychic focus.

## Effect Options and Psi Points

A discipline provides different options for how to use it with your psi points. Each effect option has a name, and the psi point cost of that option appears in parentheses after its name. You must spend that number of psi points to use that option, while abiding by your psi limit. If you don't have enough psi points left, or the cost is above your psi limit, you can't use the option.

Some options show a range of psi points, rather than a specific cost. To use that option, you must spend a number of points within that point range, still abiding by your psi limit.

Each option notes specific information about its effect, including the action required to use it (if any), its range, and whether it requires concentration. If an option doesn't state that it is used as an action, a bonus action, or a reaction, using it requires no action.

## Components

Disciplines don't require the components that many spells require. Using a discipline requires no spoken words, gestures, or materials. The power of psionics comes from the mind.

## Duration

An option in a discipline specifies how long its effect lasts.

**Instantaneous.** If no duration is specified, the effect of an option is instantaneous.

**Concentration.** Some effect options require concentration. This requirement is noted with a "C" after the option's psi point cost.

Concentrating on a discipline follows the same rules as concentrating on a spell. This rule means you can't concentrate on a spell and a discipline at the same time, nor can you concentrate on two disciplines at the same time.

## Targets and Areas of Effect

Psionic disciplines use the same rules as spells for determining targets and areas of effect. See chapter 10, "Spellcasting," of the *Player's Handbook*.

## Saving Throws and Attack Rolls

If a discipline requires a saving throw, it specifies the type of save and the results of a successful or failed saving throw. The DC is determined by your psionic ability.

Some disciplines require you to make an attack roll to determine whether the discipline's effect hits its target. The attack roll uses your psionic ability.

## Combining Psionic Effects

The effects of different psionic disciplines add together while the durations of those disciplines overlap. Likewise, different options from a single psionic discipline combine if they are active at the same time. However, a specific option from a psionic discipline doesn't combine with itself if that option is used multiple times. Instead, the most potent effect—usually dependent on how many psi points were used to create the effect—applies while the durations of the effects overlap.

Psionics and magic are separate effects, and therefore their benefits and drawbacks overlap. A psionic effect that reproduces a spell is an exception to this rule (see "Psionics and Magic" earlier, as well as "Combining Magical Effects" in

chapter 10, "Spellcasting," of the *Player's Handbook*).

## Discipline Descriptions

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The following disciplines are presented in alphabetical order.

### Psionic Disciplines

Discipline	Rank	Order
Adaptive Body	Greater	Immortal
Body of Wind	Greater	Immortal
Celerity	Lesser	Immortal
Conquering Mind	Lesser	Awakened
Intellect Fortress	Lesser	Awakened
Iron Durability	Lesser	Immortal
Mind Over Emotion	Greater	Awakened
Mind Vault	Lesser	Awakened
Psionic Restoration	Lesser	Awakened
Psionic Weapon	Lesser	Immortal
Third Eye	Lesser	Awakened

### Adaptive Body

*Greater discipline (immortal)*

You can alter your body to withstand punishing environments.

**Psionic Focus.** While focused on this discipline, you don't need to eat, sleep, or breathe.

**Energy Adaptation (5, C).** As an action, you touch a creature and give it resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage for up to 1 hour.

**Energy Immunity (7, C).** As an action, you touch a creature and give it immunity to acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage for up to 1 hour.

### Body of Wind

*Greater discipline (immortal)*

You and your possessions take on a gaseous quality, allowing you to move like a howling gale, squeeze through small spaces, and escape danger. You move with the lightest steps using this discipline.

**Psionic Focus.** While focused on this discipline, you take no falling damage and ignore difficult terrain.

**Wind Step (1–7).** As your move, you can fly up to 20 feet for each psi point you spend. You must land at the end of this movement, otherwise you fall, unless you have some means of staying aloft.

**Wind Form (5, C).** As an action, you gain a flying speed of 60 feet for 10 minutes.

**Misty Form (7, C).** As an action, your body becomes mist-like. In this form, you gain resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage. You can pass through openings that are no more than an inch wide. This benefit lasts for up to 1 hour.

## Celerity

*Lesser discipline (immortal)*

You channel psionic power into your body, honing your reflexes and agility to an incredible degree. In your eyes, the world seems to slow down while you continue to move as normal.

**Psychic Focus.** While focused on this discipline, your speed increases by 5 feet, and you have advantage on initiative checks. If you are surprised, you can spend 1 psi point to no longer be surprised.

**Seize the Initiative (1–5).** When you roll initiative, you can use your reaction to give yourself or one creature you can see within 60 feet of you a +2 bonus to initiative for each psi point you spend.

**Surge of Speed (2).** As a bonus action, you increase your speed by 30 feet until the end of your turn. In addition, you don't provoke opportunity attacks this turn.

**Surge of Action (5).** As a bonus action, you can gain an additional action this turn. That action can be used only to take the Attack (one attack only), Dash, Disengage, Hide, or Use an Object action.

## Conquering Mind

*Lesser discipline (awakened)*

By channeling psionic power, you gain the ability to control other creatures by substituting your will for their own.

**Psychic Focus.** While focused on this discipline, you gain proficiency in one of the following skills of your choice: Deception, Intimidation, Performance, or Persuasion. You can change the chosen skill each time you apply your focus to this discipline.

**Exacting Query (2).** As an action, you target a creature that you can see within 120 feet of you. The target must make an Intelligence saving throw (it succeeds automatically if it is immune to being charmed). On a failed save, the target truthfully answers one brief question you ask it as part of

this action, provided that it understands the question. On a successful save, the target is unaffected, and you can't use this ability on it again until you finish a long rest.

**Occluded Mind (2).** As an action, you target a creature that you can see within 120 feet of you. The target must make an Intelligence saving throw (it succeeds automatically if it is immune to being charmed). On a failed save, the target believes one statement of your choice for the next 5 minutes, provided that it understands the statement. The statement can be up to ten words long, and must describe you or a creature or object the target can see. On a successful save, the target is unaffected, and you can't use this ability on it again until you finish a long rest.

**Broken Will (5).** As an action, you target a creature that you can see within 120 feet of you. The target must make an Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, the target is charmed until the end of its next turn, during which you choose its movement and action. On a successful save, the target is unaffected, and you can't use this ability on that creature again until you finish a long rest.

**Psychic Grip (7, C).** As an action, you target a creature you can see. The target must make an Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, you overload the creature with psychic energy. The target is paralyzed for 1 minute, but at the end of each of its turns it can make another Intelligence saving throw. On a success, this effect ends. On a failure, you can use your reaction to force the target to move up to half its speed, despite being paralyzed.

## Intellect Fortress

*Lesser discipline (awakened)*

You forge an indomitable wall of psionic energy around your mind—one that allows you to launch reflexive counterattacks against your opponents.

**Psychic Focus.** While focused on this discipline, you gain resistance to psychic damage.

**Psychic Backlash (1).** As a reaction, you can impose disadvantage on one attack roll made against you if you can see the attacker. If the attack still hits you, the attacker takes psychic damage equal to half your mystic level (rounded up).

**Psychic Parry (1–3).** As a reaction when you make an Intelligence, a Wisdom, or a Charisma saving throw, you gain a +2 bonus to that saving throw for each psi point you spend. You can use



this ability after rolling the die but before applying the result.

**Psychic Redoubt (5, C).** As an action, you create a field of protective psychic energy. For the next 10 minutes, you and creatures of your choice gain the following benefits while within 30 feet of you: resistance to psychic damage and advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws.

## Iron Durability

*Lesser discipline (immortal)*

This discipline grants you unmatched toughness and resilience on the battlefield.

**Psychic Focus.** While focused on this discipline, you gain a +1 bonus to AC.

**Psionic Recovery (2).** As an action, you can spend up to two Hit Dice. Roll each die, add your Constitution modifier to it, and regain hit points equal to the total.

**Iron Hide (1-3).** As a reaction when you are attacked, you gain a +2 bonus to AC for each psi point you spend. You spend these points after learning the attack's result but before applying its effects.

## Mind Over Emotion

*Greater discipline (awakened)*

You learn to use psionic energy to manipulate others with a subtle combination of psi and your own, natural charm.

**Psychic Focus.** While focused on this discipline, you gain a bonus to Charisma checks. The bonus equals half your Intelligence modifier (minimum bonus of +1).

**Charming Presence (1-7).** As an action, you exert an aura of sympathetic power. Roll 2d8 per psi point you spend on this ability; the total is how many hit points worth of creatures this spell can affect. Creatures within 30 feet of you are affected in ascending order of their hit point maximum, ignoring unconscious creatures or creatures immune to this effect. Each creature affected by this ability is charmed by you for 10 minutes. While charmed, it regards you as a friendly acquaintance. A creature engaged in combat is immune to this effect.

**Revolting Presence (5, C).** As an action, you exert an aura of repulsive power. Up to five creatures of your choice that you can see within 30 feet of you must each make an Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, a target is frightened of

you for 10 minutes. While frightened, it takes psychic damage equal to twice your mystic level if it doesn't end its turn at least 10 feet farther away from you than it was at the start of that turn. It can then make another Intelligence saving throw at the end of the turn. On a success, this effect ends.

**Invoke Awe (7, C).** As an action, you exert an aura that inspires awe and adulation in others. Up to five creatures of your choice that you can see within 60 feet of you must each make an Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, the target is charmed by you for 10 minutes. While charmed, it obeys all your orders to the best of its ability and without risking its life. The target will only harm creatures that it has seen harm you since it first came under the effect of this ability. At the end of each of its turns it can make another Intelligence saving throw. On a success, this effect ends.

## Mind Vault

*Lesser discipline (awakened)*

Your mind forms a light but useful link to other living things within hundreds of miles. This link allows you to draw on the knowledge of others in the following ways.

**Psychic Focus.** While focused on this discipline, you gain proficiency with one skill, weapon, shield, armor, or tool of your choice. Each time you focus on this discipline, you can choose a different skill, weapon, shield, armor, or tool.

**Borrow Expertise (2).** As a bonus action, you gain advantage on one skill check or saving throw of your choice that you make before the end of your next turn. You must opt to gain the advantage before rolling.

**Borrow Language (5).** As an action, you gain the ability to speak, read, and understand one language for 8 hours. You can use this ability multiple times to gain its benefits with several languages.

**Borrow Lore (7).** As an action, name one specific location in your mind. You learn a summary of the important lore regarding that place. At the DM's option, you also learn up to three secrets about it, such as the location of traps, passwords, or where treasure is hidden within it.

## Psionic Restoration

*Lesser discipline (awakened)*

You wield psionic energy to cure wounds and restore health to yourself and others.

**Psychic Focus.** While focused on this discipline, you can use a bonus action to touch a living creature that has 0 hit points and automatically stabilize it.

**Mend Wounds (1–7).** As an action, you can restore hit points to a creature you touch. The creature regains 3 hit points per psi point you spend.

**Restore Health (3).** As an action, you can touch a creature and remove one of the following conditions from it: blinded, deafened, paralyzed, or poisoned.

**Restore Vigor (7).** As an action, you can touch a creature and choose one of the following: remove any reductions to one of its ability scores or remove one effect that reduces its hit point maximum.

## Psionic Weapon

*Lesser discipline (immortal)*

You channel psionic energy to lend devastating power to your attacks.

**Psychic Focus.** While focused on this discipline, you charge one nonmagical weapon you carry, or one of your fists, with psionic energy. Attacks you make with it are considered magical and have a +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls.

**Ethereal Weapon (1).** As a bonus action, you can momentarily transform a weapon you hold into psionic energy. The next attack you make with this weapon requires no attack roll. Instead, the target must make a Dexterity saving throw against this discipline. On a failed save, the target takes the attack's normal damage and suffers any additional effects. On a successful save, the target takes half damage from the attack, but suffers no additional effects that would normally be imposed on a hit.

**Lethal Strike (1–5).** When you hit a target with a melee weapon attack, you can increase the damage to that target. The target takes an extra 1d10 psychic damage for each psi point you spend.

**Augmented Weapon (5, C).** As a bonus action, you touch one nonmagical weapon and infuse it with psionic energy. For up to 10 minutes, it is a magic weapon with a +3 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls.

## Third Eye

*Lesser discipline (awakened)*

This discipline can open a third eye within your mind, opening your doors of perception.

**Psychic Focus.** While focused on this discipline, you have blindsight with a radius of 30 feet.

**Tremorsense (1, C).** As a bonus action, you gain tremorsense with a radius of 30 feet for up to 1 minute.

**Unwavering Eye (1, C).** As a bonus action, you gain advantage on Wisdom checks for up to 1 minute.

**Truesight (5, C).** As a bonus action, you gain truesight with a radius of 30 feet for up to 1 minute.

## Psionic Talents

A psionic talent is a psychic ability that requires psionic aptitude but doesn't drain a mystic's psionic energy. Talents are similar to disciplines and use the same rules, but with three important exceptions:

- You can never use your psychic focus on a talent.
- Talents don't require you to spend psi points to use them.
- Talents aren't linked to psionic orders.

## Beacon

*Psionic talent*

As a bonus action, you cause bright light to radiate from your body in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional 20 feet. The light can be colored as you like. The light lasts for 1 hour, and you can extinguish it as a bonus action.

## Blade Meld

*Psionic talent*

As an action, you cause one simple or martial melee weapon you are holding to dissolve into your body. This process is harmless to you and the weapon. Until the weapon reappears, it is inaccessible, as are any of its properties. You can have only one weapon at a time affected in this way. You can summon the weapon to your hand as a bonus action. It reappears in your space if you are unconscious or dead.

## Light Step

### *Psionic talent*

As a bonus action, you alter your density and weight to improve your mobility. For the rest of your turn, your walking speed increases by 10 feet, and the next time you stand up, you need to spend no more than 10 feet of movement to do so.

## Mind Meld

### *Psionic talent*

As a bonus action, you can communicate telepathically with one creature you can see within 120 feet of you. You don't need to share a language with a creature for it to understand your telepathic utterances, and the creature understands you even if it lacks a language. You can allow a creature to respond to you telepathically, but it must understand at least one language in order to communicate this way. This ability to communicate lasts until the start of your next turn. You can't communicate with an unwilling creature.

## Mind Thrust

### *Psionic talent*

As an action, you blast psychic energy at one creature that you can see within 5 feet of you. The target must succeed on an Intelligence saving throw or take 1d6 psychic damage. If the target takes any of this damage, you can push it up to 10 feet away from you.

The talent's damage increases by 1d6 when you reach 5th level (2d6), 11th level (3d6), and 17th level (4d6).

## Thought Spear

### *Psionic talent*

As an action, you psychically strike one creature that you can see within 120 feet of you. The target must succeed on an Intelligence saving throw or take 1d8 psychic damage.

The talent's damage increases by 1d8 when you reach 5th level (2d8), 11th level (3d8), and 17th level (4d8).

## Night Eyes

### *Psionic talent*

As an action, you grant yourself darkvision with a range of 30 feet. This benefit lasts for 1 hour.

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## Finding the Fun: D&D Board Games

From *Dungeon!* to *Tyrants of the Underdark*, via *Dragon Dice* and *Lords of Waterdeep*, Matt Chapman looks at what makes a great Dungeons & Dragons board game.

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**D**id you know that the first board game based on D&D was created before Dungeons & Dragons officially existed? In the chicken and egg conundrum, it's as if both chicken and egg came into existence at the same time. It obviously helped that *Dungeon!* board game designer **David Megarry** played in D&D co-creator David Arneson's pencil and paper fantasy game. What Megarry witnessed was a man struggling with a game where anything his players dreamed up could happen, even if, ironically, the DM couldn't experience that joy for himself. Megarry set his mind to solving the problem.

“I was looking at Arneson being the only referee and being overwhelmed by how much effort it takes to make a dungeon. And then for some reason I thought, what do I have to do to eliminate the need for a referee in this game? That was the spark that drove me to make *Dungeon!*” he



David R. Megarry

says. “David was one of the first players of this game. The weekend after I invented it, I took *Dungeon!* to the Arneson basement and we all enjoyed it. And David got to play.”

Megarry naturally credits Arneson’s vision as the inspiration for his board game, citing the huge maps the DM used to draw and the storytelling he employed on these dungeon crawls. He describes how he created *Dungeon!* during a seventy-two-hour “extravaganza”, surviving on two four-hour naps. He says he knew he had to show the entire map, which hadn’t been done before, inadvertently creating the first complete map of a dungeon for use in a fantasy game. Since that moment, **Dungeons & Dragons and board games** have gone hand in hand.

Simply basing a game on D&D doesn’t guarantee it’ll be a fun experience, though. Peter Lee, who has worked on every D&D board game released by Wizards of the Coast since *Castle Ravenloft* in 2010, refers to the “early design doldrums” as the hardest part to get through.

“This is the point where you’ve created a prototype, but the game just doesn’t work. If the design is driven by mechanics, the game often feels like a math exercise. If the design is driven by a story, the game often feels like a bunch of stuff that happened.”

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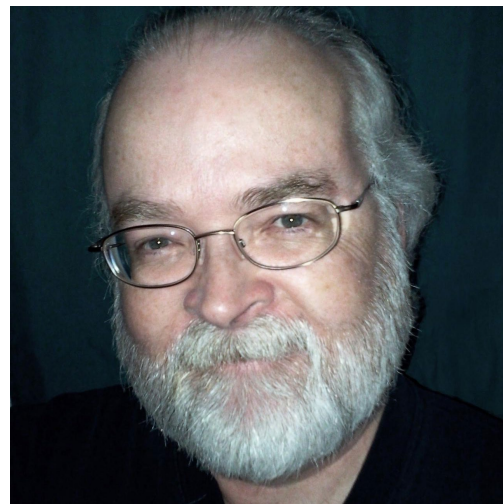
## STEP BY STEP

To counter that problem, Lee says it's best to have a process to guide you through this part of game design. The first step is to have a target to aim the game at. This may be a mechanical target (the game needs to be played in an hour) or it could be an emotional target (a player should feel like they are taking on the role of a D&D character). Once those targets are defined, you design and eventually play the game.

“After the game, we go to a whiteboard and deconstruct the playtest, by drawing and labelling three areas: ‘What works?’, ‘What doesn't work?’, and ‘Next steps.’ Typically the next steps are the removal, addition, or change of high level systems, but as the design matures, you go more into the details of the game,” he explains.

Lee says the process works best with two or three designers. If you fly solo at this point, you can get stuck inside your own head too easily, yet with more than three designers, there are typically too many cooks in the kitchen trying to change the recipe.

Some major projects have sprung into life using just such a procedure. **Lester Smith's** work on *Dragon Dice* was kick started by a comment from TSR's management that ‘trading card games are all the rage, so it's too bad we can't make a collectible dice game, as we're famous for polyhedral dice.’ That created a goal for Smith to satisfy.



Lester Smith



“When I saw upper management bringing in outside consultants for ideas, I felt a gauntlet had been dropped,” says Smith. “I wanted that project! Previous experience at GDW had taught me the power of a well-crafted memo, so I spent the weekend preparing a two-page plan for making a workable game with collectible dice. The next week, the assignment was mine.”



*Tyrants of the Underdark*, which is soon to be released by **Gale Force Nine**, was born from similar desires. Rodney Thompson namechecks the game’s two goals: he wanted to make a strategy game, because *Lords of Waterdeep* was very tactical; while Lee wanted to create a game that used deck building as an engine, but wasn’t a deck building game. Hitting those targets didn’t always result in a winning formula.



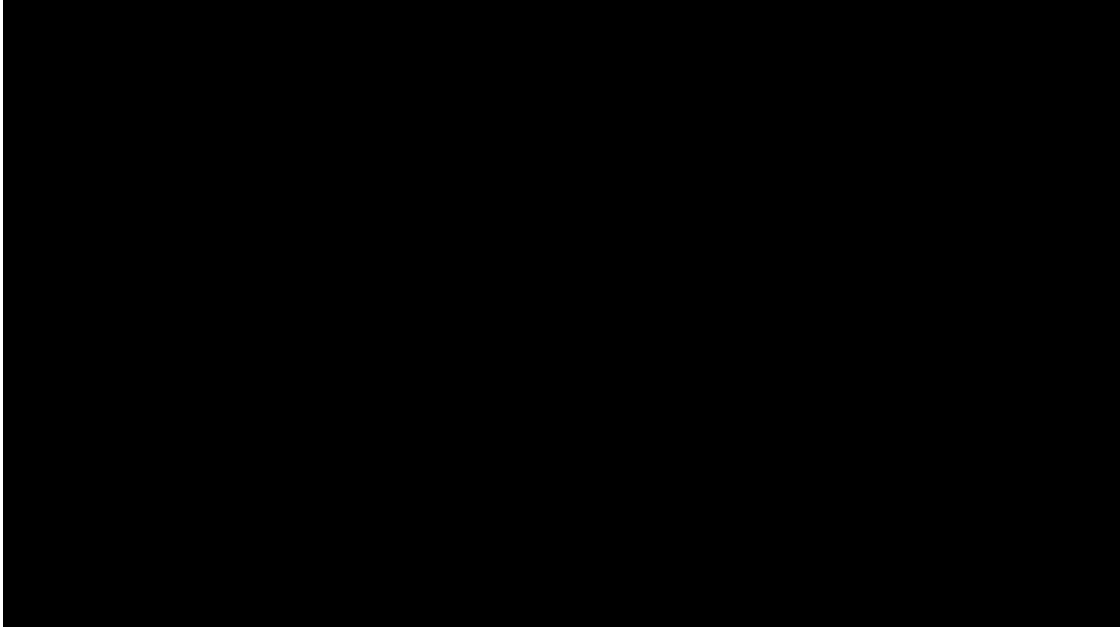
“We started building prototypes that absolutely achieved those goals, but they weren’t fun. It took us a good three months of constantly going back to the drawing board, and at one point we pretty much blew up the entire game,” Thompson says. “The only thing that



survived were some vague ideas. Once we had those, we reshaped them into something and it clicked. You can't really predict when that will happen. It's a nebulous process in a lot of ways until you have that eureka moment."

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### **WATCH a LORDS of WATERDEEP TUTORIAL**



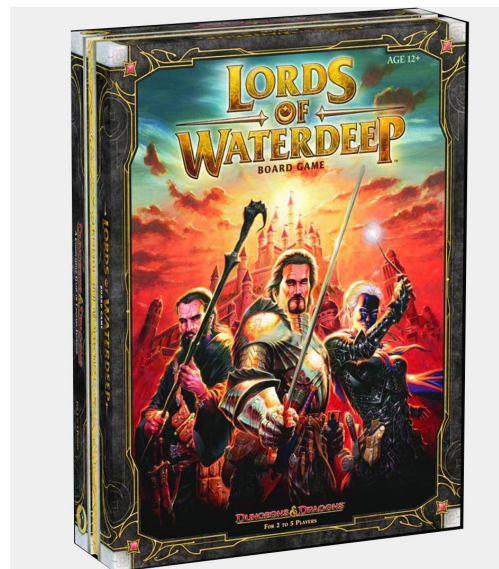
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Making sure a game is well balanced is also a major concern for developers, and one which stretches back to the first D&D board game. Megarry talks about the "calibration" that's necessary to create a functioning dungeon. His game featured four different types of players with four different levels of experience and abilities, collecting four different amounts of treasure in order to win the game.

"To build a game that allows every one of those players to have an equal chance, that's a really hard nut to have cracked," he says. "I was very proud of the fact that people have played it over the years and found it a nicely balanced game: 'I won as a Wizard,' 'I won as a Superhero,' 'I won as an Elf.' If people are saying, 'I've always won as a Wizard' or 'I've never won as an Elf,' that's the death knell of a game."

"There are a graveyard of prototypes that never saw the light of day, which Pete, myself and Chris Dupuis all worked on,"

Thompson confesses. “Our philosophy at the time was to get a game into a playable form as quickly as possible, so we can diagnose whether it’s hot or not. A whole bunch of projects started with the words, ‘OK, I’ve got a crazy idea...’ We’d quickly put the game together, play it, then say, ‘Wow, this is terrible’ and throw it away.”



Thompson says a few of those projects that never came to fruition were worked on for “a really long time,” including a tableau building card game similar to *Imperial Settlers*. Despite being two-thirds of the way towards showing it to colleagues, it never made it past that conceptual point because the designers realized they hadn’t “found the fun yet.” “But even our failures made us better designers,” he says philosophically.

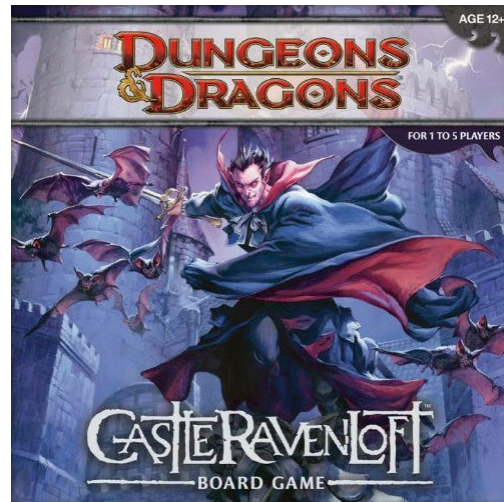


## TESTING TIMES

Playtesting can be key to a game’s success, even when the game hasn’t gone through many changes. Smith notes that the final product for *Dragon Dice* was “pretty much as originally conceived” but playtesting helped adjust some icon effects and spell powers. “I remember play testers showing how the Ash Storm spell could be

abused,” he says.

Still, the practice of playtesting can take many forms. Thompson describes how “ninety-nine per cent of playtesting involves me and Pete, or me and Chris.” That included months playing two-player games with Lee on *Lords of Waterdeep*. However, as always, there’s a plan behind this insular process.



“It wasn’t like it was a dark, internal secret, as people saw us playing it, but the game has to hit a certain point where it is fun and you can really see the shape of it,” he says. “If you show it to someone too early, unless they have the whole vision in their head, they might not be able to see where the game could potentially go. If they can’t see the light at the end of the tunnel, then their feedback isn’t terribly helpful.”

Lee says he only starts to observe playtests, instead of playing in them, as the game matures and becomes more stable. The ultimate test comes near the very end of the process, when he sets up a game with a group that has never played it before.



Peter Lee

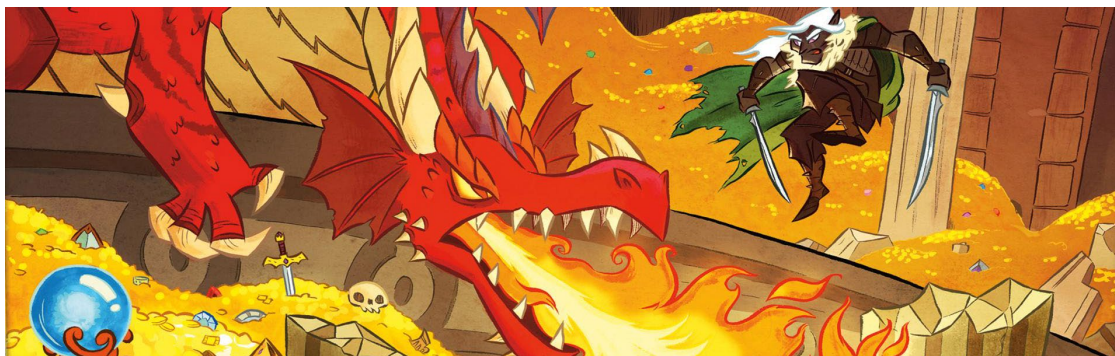
“They get the game and a rulebook, and I sit out of any discussions and write down wherever they might have problems,” Lee says. “One playtest involved giving the players a near final product and it took an hour before they started playing the game, which was an intolerable delay. We heavily revised the structure of the rulebook and the next playtest, with different players, took closer

to 10 minutes to start.”



Thompson quotes a saying within the design community that a game isn't done until there's nothing left you can cut out of it. Despite that logic, just because a feature doesn't make it into the final game, doesn't mean it has to be discarded completely. As he worked on *Lords of Waterdeep*, Thompson already knew he wanted to create an expansion.

“When we designed the base game, we made it the leanest, meanest, most elegant base design that we possibly could. Then we could experiment with some of our wackier ideas for the expansion. We actually had the idea for the corruption mechanic we used in *Scoundrels of Skullport* while designing that base game,” Thompson says.



## TWEAKING A CLASSIC

The design doesn't end when a game hits the stores. Even classic titles can get a refresh, as happened with the original *Dungeon!* in 2012 and 2014. Dupuis admits the task was “a bit nerve wracking at first” as there's so much history wrapped up with *Dungeon!* Having tinkered around with a legacy version of the game for a while, he already had all the original stats laid out on a spreadsheet when the project was handed to him, with a few alternative sheets noting how he would reposition things. “But this project is more of a love letter to the original than a re-envisioning, so those notes will have to stay in that box for a few more years,” Dupuis says.

Not that he didn't make changes. “I spent some time combing through the forums to see what the players thought of the game and I talked to a lot of coworkers who grew up on the different versions. In the end, we focused on adhering to the original as much as possible, while trying to add to the fun and accessibility of the game,” he says.



Aside from changes to the cover art, he also renamed some of the monsters so they aligned with current D&D thinking. The four character types (previously Elf, Hero, Superhero, and Wizard) now similarly match the four core D&D classes (Fighter, Rogue, Cleric, and Wizard). A rule that originally saw a player lose 1d6 turns if they found a cage trap was also toned down, so anyone unlucky enough to role a six wasn't left on the sidelines for six rounds of play. The same trap now costs a player one turn on a roll of one to three, and two turns on a roll of four to six.

## TOP TIPS

Given the combined experience of the game designers featured here, what do they feel is the key to making a great D&D board game? Dupuis says the core of any D&D experience is storytelling. In the TRPG, a player grows their character's story, with the only bounds being their imagination; in a digital RPG, players face down different obstacles, across a world that would most likely crumble without their assistance; whereas in a board game, the story is often more personal.



“When crafting a D&D board game, you’re taking a small snapshot of the D&D experience,” Dupuis says. “Even within those constraints, you still need an iconic location, the protagonist(s), the antagonist(s), and the interaction between all of them. Those ideas feed directly into the three core pillars of D&D: Exploration, Interaction, and Combat. The more the game hits on all three of those pillars, the better it is for it.”

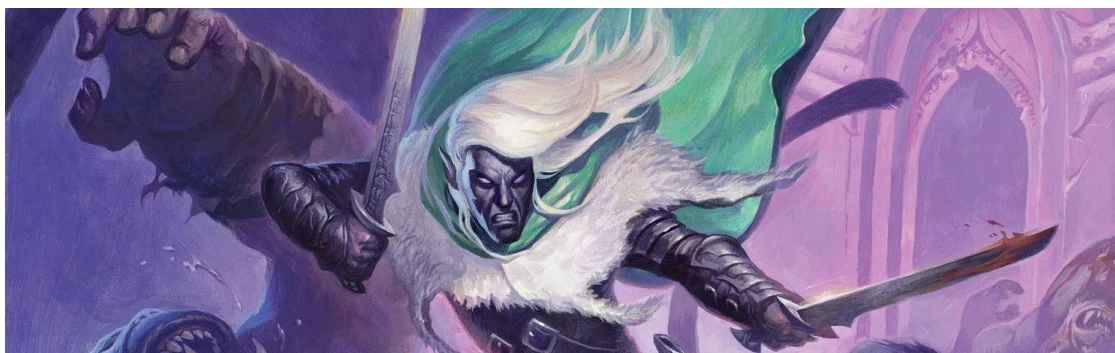
Lee agrees that people love Dungeons & Dragons, but may not have the time to commit to the roleplaying game, making board

games a popular alternative. “I know for me, it is a lot more difficult to commit to an ongoing D&D game,” he says. “These games allow you to take on the role of a character, fight monsters, complete quests, and raise armies, without investing as much time.”



Chris Dupuis

“My wife and I can sit down and play *Lords of Waterdeep* in an hour,” adds Dupuis. “We encounter and explore one of the most iconic cities in Faerûn, we interact with four of the core classes within the game, we get to domesticate owl bears—I mean, come on, that’s comedy gold!—and we get to have our D&D fix with just the two of us, in the short time available to us after we put our toddler to bed.”



## KEEP IT SIMPLE

That spirit of simplifying Dungeons & Dragons goes right back to *Dungeon!*, the first D&D board game. While players were able to pick a character, they were choosing from archetypes and had very limited choices beyond that.

“The original game came with plastic pawns, for example; white for Wizard, red for Superhero, so you had to use your imagination about what your character looked like,” Megarry says. “Mostly, you got to choose where you wanted to go, then you opened doors, fought a monster, and got the treasure. As soon as you got the haul you needed

for your character type, you ran back to the start and said, ‘I’m the winner.’ We’re not dealing with rocket science here. It’s a very simplified Dungeons & Dragons idea.”



Rodney Thompson

“If you make it fun, people will play,” says Megarry, and Thompson agrees with his counterpart: “*Lords of Waterdeep* lead a completely charmed life. We found the fun on the very first playtest, which is miraculous and almost never happens. It took us forever on *Dungeon Command*.”

“If anyone reading this is looking for a kernel of insight, here it is: keep at it,” adds Dupuis. “If you’re designing prototypes and

they aren’t working out, playtest them and ask the players what they think is fun about the design. Once you find that, latch onto it, even if that means ignoring some of your initial concepts. Focus on the fun!”

It’s a phrase that is repeated often during our conversations, as totally functional games that don’t “find the fun” end up in the “graveyard of prototypes” Dupuis described earlier.

When they do find that spark, the result can be magical for both player and designer. “It’s thrilling when you see someone playing the game,” says *Dungeon!* designer Megarry. “As a game designer, I’m trying to make a piece of entertainment for people to enjoy. So when I see them playing it for the third or fourth time, or they say, ‘I’ve played this game to death’ or ‘I wore my game out,’ those accolades are warming to the heart.”

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Portrait of Patrick Rothfuss by Kyle Cassidy

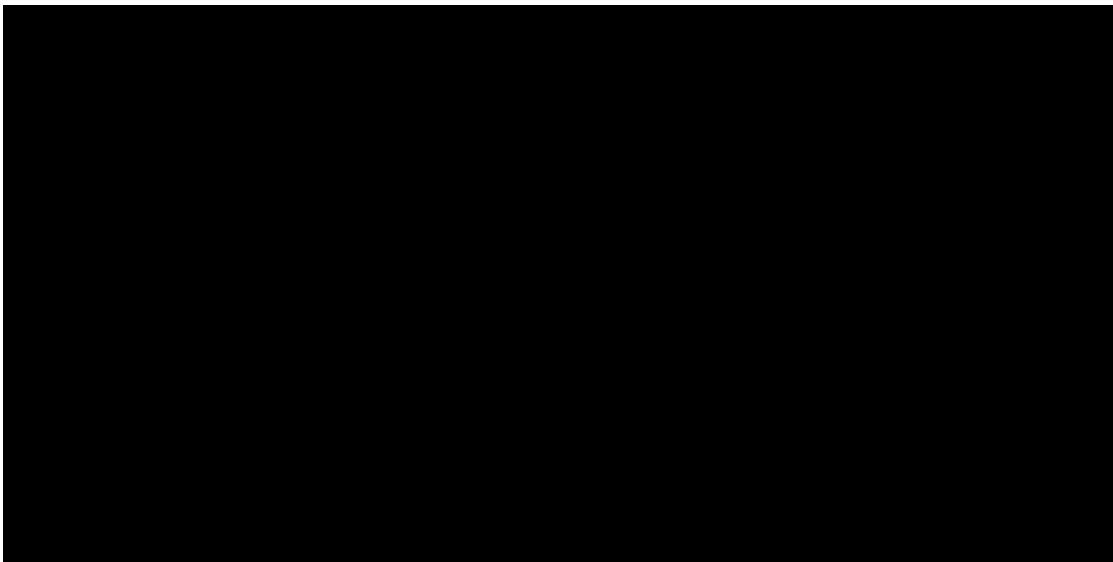
## INTERVIEW: PATRICK ROTHFUSS

Fantasy author Patrick Rothfuss is Acquisitions Incorporated's greatest living intern and one of today's most celebrated geeks. He tells Matt Chapman how that wasn't always the case.

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**Y**ou may have seen him onstage at PAX, swashing his buckle alongside the other celebrity gamers that make up the Acquisitions Inc. team. You may have read his novels, including his series *The Kingkiller Chronicle*. Yet there's a certain irony to Patrick Rothfuss's current standing in the geek community. Forget playing D&D in front of a crowd of thousands, when he started out he couldn't even get a game with a few friends.

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*Acquisitions Incorporated – PAX Prime 2015 D&D Game*

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“These days being a geek isn’t really stigmatised but I’m from the generation one back, where it was a little bit stigmatised. And I probably have the distinction of being one of the few kids back then who wasn’t cool enough to hang out with people who played D&D,” he tells *Dragon+*. “I learnt about D&D in the fifth grade when I saw these kids playing it one day at school. I was like, ‘Wow can I play that?’ And they were like, ‘No.’”

*“ It’s like going into Taco Bell and them saying you’re not dressed well enough.”*

( [listen](#) to excerpt)

While it might seem like recent history, at the time there was also no internet to speak of, which meant no [Adventurer’s League page](#) to type your postcode into and find local games, and no helpful resources like Meetup.com.

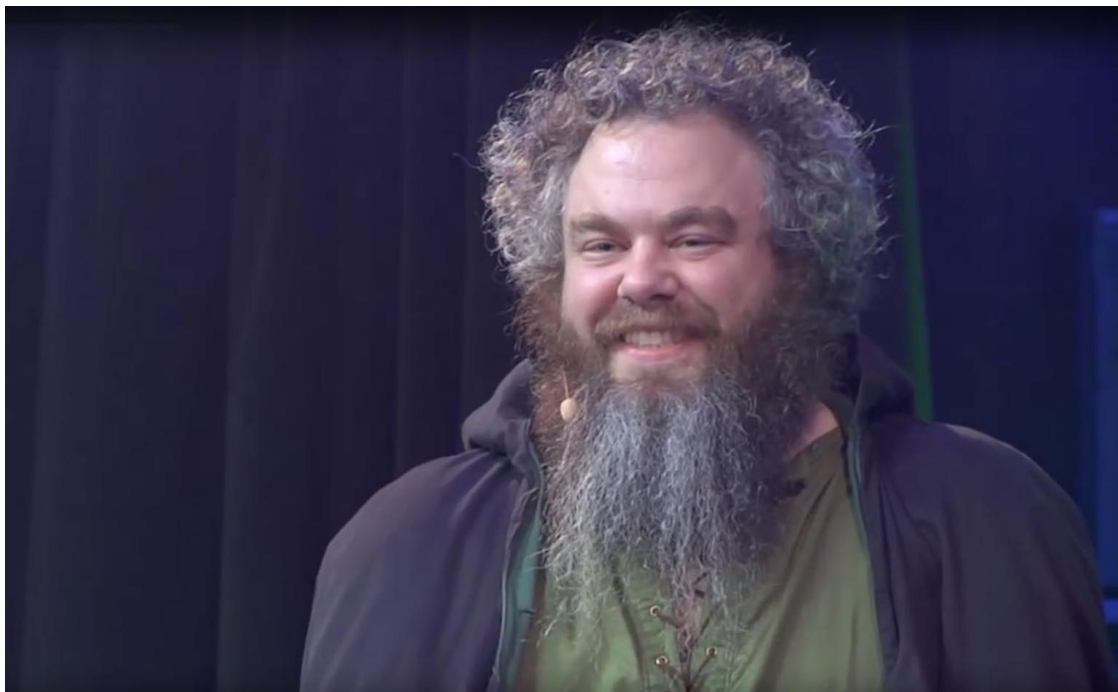
“It is hard for people to understand these days that you did not instantaneously have access to a community that fits you. Maybe if you were lucky you could find out if there was a game store in your town, or you could have gone to a library. There were a lot of real-world places I could have gone to make connections. Eventually I found some people and I did play,” he remembers.

*“I don’t mean to paint it as this horrifying dark time but it was a different world.”*

( [listen](#) to excerpt)

Despite not being accepted by those first gamers, and having to ride solo until he did eventually join a party of adventurers, Rothfuss says gaming has always played a key role in his writing. He marks his efforts to write a computer game as his first attempt at writing something that was more significant than a school assignment. When he did attempt a novel, his experience with roleplay and D&D naturally had a huge influence on his work.

“My first high school novel was based on D&D characters that I played with my friends, and of course that was one of the main problems with it. It was the equivalent of somebody telling you the story of that crazy party they went to, and you don’t understand, but ‘I guess you had to be there,’” he says.



“That’s the good thing and the bad thing about role playing and aspiring writers. If you create and play a character, you’ve taken a big step towards being a writer. If you are a DM that means you’ve created a bunch of characters and are thinking about a story, which means you’ve taken four huge steps into becoming an aspiring



novelist. It means you are effectively a writer or a story maker.”

The downside, he counters, is that that so many things simply don’t translate well from the table to the book, which he maintains is a really hard lesson to learn. “You’re playing these games and you love this character and you love this experience and it’s so wonderful but it ends up being a prime example of ‘Oh I guess you had to be there.’ And the very definition of a successful novel is, ‘No, you did not have to be there!’ That’s why I eventually scrapped my high school novel. Writing it and screwing it up was so educational, and abandoning it was also an essential part of my evolution as a writer.”

## LIFE LESSONS

Rothfuss studied chemical engineering and clinical psychology, among other things, and we’re keen to know if that kind of practical information makes it into his writing. He’s quick to suggest that anything a writer does is likely to inform their work, although that doesn’t mean writers are usually found writing about their own lives.

“Tolkien loved language and so language is a huge part of the world he created and a huge part of the stories that he told. People will literally speak in a language that you do not know when you’re reading *The Lord of the Rings*. One of the big things that happens in those books is when they’re trying to get into Moria: ‘Speak friend and enter.’ It’s a misunderstanding about language.

“Why he did that? He did it because he was a real geek for language and he was also a geek for Scandinavian mythology that hugely informed the story he was writing. The problem is that a lot of people used Tolkien as almost like a schematic for what a fantasy novel should be.”

*“The best fantasy novels are the ones created by people who fly their own particular geek colours very proudly.”*

(listen to excerpt)



Despite being an award-winning author who's topped the *New York Times* bestseller list, Rothfuss comes across as being remarkably grounded. That practical outlook actually dates back to the very start of his career. Initially, he wanted to make text adventure computer games, which he viewed as being sort of like a novel. But he didn't write to be famous, he started writing because he "thought it would be neat."

"At that point I knew that planning on getting a book published was like planning on winning the lottery, and that's not a career choice. At one point I heard these statistics, that for every 250 people thinking about writing a novel, one starts. Of every 250 people who start a novel, one finishes. Of every 250 people who finish a novel, one of them sells it. And out of 250 people who sell a novel, one person manages to make it their day job. I'll go one step further with my own math and say that out of every 250 people who do this as their day job, there's probably one who ends up being anything close to what a person would consider rich.

"Back then I knew those odds and I knew I probably wouldn't be published, so I didn't worry about it. I just wrote and worked on the book for fourteen years before it ever hit the shelves and that was very freeing. I was just enjoying writing and in some ways publication wrong footed me, because it was really unanticipated."



His life as an author brought him into contact with the Penny Arcade team, having read their web comics since “pretty much when it started” and having watched them grow up into a pillar of the geek community. Bumping into them at conventions, he found himself talking about them online and he saw that they were talking about him online, making the connection inevitable.

“One of us called the other and we just knew each other,” he says, “and maybe we bumped into each other at San Diego Comic Con, I can’t honestly remember where we met. But I knew about Acquisitions Incorporated, although I’d never been to PAX, because that’s more of a gaming convention and I went to book conventions.”

His big break came when there was a scheduling conflict with Wil Wheaton and a seat at the table opened up. Being invited to the celebrity D&D game arguable every other D&D game aspires to be was an honour (even if the position was as an intern, a running joke about his character that he attributes to Wheaton). Yet the gig carried a certain amount of fear for Rothfuss, as he found himself joining a table where everyone was “professionally funny.”



“These are people who are humorous for a living, and Wil is a professional actor. That doesn’t always mean you’re funny off the cuff or you’re good at improvisation, but Wil is! I was not only stepping into a situation with really experienced gamers, but really experienced professionally funny people, and I was filling in for the most professional improviser of them. So yeah it was hugely intimidating. I was really spooked sitting down at the table that I would not be able to keep up with the humorous banter.”

Happily, his introduction to the game took place on the podcast, rather than in front of thousands of screaming fans. While he was nervous, he still remembers it as being a great experience.

*“I’ve played with some really good DMs and Chris Perkins is the far end of the bell curve.”*

( [listen](#) to excerpt)

Rothfuss’s choice of character certainly helped embed him into the Acquisitions Inc. team. Looking at the group, which consisted of a cleric, a fighter and a mage, he thought it would be fun to throw a thief into the mix. Knowing the game would also be combat heavy, he wanted that character to be more of “a swash buckler, a sort of artful dodger.”

“For me one of the hardest parts of the character is the name. I think I might have been doing a revision at the time and so I stole a name and that person out of one of my books. He shows up for just one



scene in *Name of the Wind* and he's this world-savvy experienced traveller, although what's funny is that he's a librarian.

“In the *Name of the Wind* the people who work in the archives are called scrivs and someone sees him very briefly and says, ‘That guy’s a scriv!?’ He’s a different sort of scriv, they’re not alphabetising things they go out and acquire books. It’s a hard world and they’re a different animal entirely. This was somebody who’s used to adventure, used to fighting, used to making his own way and the name Viari is a great swashbuckling name.”



The conversation turns back to Rothfuss’s early days, when being a geek wasn’t something society embraced. Now, as he rightfully points out, if anybody starts to quibble about whether geek culture has become mainstream, people can point to every financially successful movie in the last five years. He namechecks an author friend called Myke Cole, who writes military fantasy (and being a coastguard and having worked in military intelligence “looks like the sort of person who’d thuggishly intimidate a geek back in the day,” he admits with a laugh). Mike attributes D&D to his career choices: having loved being a paladin, he wanted to be a good person and protect people.

“It was really funny,” Rothfuss says, “I saw him on Twitter the other day saying, ‘I wonder how many people who used to beat me up for being a geek as a kid are adding pictures of light sabres to their profile pictures on Twitter?’ And I thought about that and I thought wow it is a huge cultural shift.”

Things have certainly come on in leaps and bounds since his days at school, when Rothfuss wasn't allowed to join the D&D gang.

“The world has changed so much that you can sit in a stadium filled with five thousand people who will roar with excitement when you roll dice,” he says. “It’s so bizarre and such a shift in culture, to say nothing of a shift in my position in society. To say that the person no one would play with before is now not just allowed but invited to come and play with the cool kids, the whole concept of what is cool has radically shifted.”

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*Learn more about Patrick Rothfuss*

[VISIT HIS WEBSITE](#)

[VIEW HIS BOOKS](#)



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## Imagining the Ampersand

Dragon+ cover artist Chuck Lukacs shares his pride at creating Ravenloft's Tarokka deck, which now sadly ages him a year every time the cards are dealt!

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**A** watercolor raven perched on a graveyard fence post. An elaborate key clutched in its beak. The moon hanging full to illuminate the key's unusual design. This issue's reimagining of the Dungeons & Dragons Ampersand is a powerful image, but, as artist Chuck Lukacs reveals, it was almost a very different vision.

“Originally I wanted to do a version of Strahd from Ravenloft. That was the initial concept, where the Ampersand would be shown in the surface of the moon,” he tells *Dragon+*. “This would have been a portrait. But now I realize why they didn't go for that idea, as we're seeing so much of Strahd as things are being released.”

Lukacs has a long history with D&D, both as a fan and an

illustrator. He first began playing in high school, using the original Gary Gygax manuals that had only been out for a couple of years, in the game's pre-TSR days. Having dropped *Dungeons & Dragons* to focus on trying to be a musician, he picked it back up in college and



Chuck Lukacs

“mostly played second edition and some of the 2.5 manuals that Todd Lockwood illustrated.”

Being an artist, he namechecks other cover artists in the same way most other players would reference writers. He talks about “the great Jeff Easley covers” and his sadness at having “missed out on the Clyde Caldwell covers and the Stephen Fabian deck of Tarokka cards.”

“Whereas we didn’t play Ravenloft specifically,” he remembers. “I adored all the artwork for it. I got to see it through college because a buddy of mine had all these modules around.”



Your D&D work stretches back quite a way and continues today, including a painting in the fifth edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*. How did you first come to work on D&D?

It was for *Dragon* magazine, back when Paizo printed the magazines.



Around that time I got my first couple of gigs in water-based media, so you'll see some inks that are, admittedly, fairly embarrassing at this point in my career, in the early magazines. And then they tried me out on half-page and quarter-page spots in the modules, and a couple of full pages. Working on D&D has been a little hit and miss throughout my career, and I think the only cover I did before this one was a beholder for *Dungeon* magazine.

How did the Ampersand image evolve for this issue's cover?

A brilliant art director, illustrator, and concept guy, Richard Whitters, who I worked with on the Tarokka deck, came up with the idea of the raven holding the key. I think it's a tattoo design as well. When I was doing my little bit of research, it might have some symbolism. But I went off Richard's lead and that's what it ended up being.



What was it like to recreate the Tarokka deck and have you seen an actual set of those cards yet? I haven't seen the finished cards yet, but hopefully they'll send me a couple of decks. I saw a gif file on the web the other day, which was spewing the cards out and showing them in rapid succession. I think I age a year every time I see that play out! It took quite a long time to get preliminary sketches completed for all 54 cards, as I was teaching at the same time. But there weren't too many revisions and, as I did the finals, I think the biggest

challenge was finding the time to sit down and do it. Whereas it took a long time to do, I like the results and I'm proud of the project.

How would you describe the cards?

I'm really proud of the retro-digital style that both Richard [Whitters] and I came up with for the Tarokka deck, which is reminiscent of my traditional wood engraving work. I'd been looking through Stephen Fabian's work, an old school D&D illustrator who did the original version of the deck, who's incidentally a little bit reminiscent of

Frank Kelly Freas, an illustrator in the '50s, who did the cover for Queen's *Welcome to the New World* album, with the robot. Well I tried to mix a little bit of Fabian's tonal work, with my work as a wood engraver, and meld the two styles together, and that's what we came up with. So you'll see these heavy 'engraved' lines,

but also where I approached the hands and the faces, especially in the female characters, it goes rather painterly and digital at that point. So it's a nice mix of techniques, both traditional and digital.

Do you enjoy teaching?

The semester just started at the Pacific Northwest College of Art, and I love it. It's really rewarding and I love to see the lightbulb go off in students' heads, for them to finally get a particular technique, or a bit of content they've been working on. I love when I can make that happen for somebody else. Sometimes I'll be struggling in my own project professionally and it's a lot easier to fix a student's problem than it is for me to fix problems in my own work.

It's also building on the illustration community locally and nationally. And I don't have any kids, so it kind of fulfills that job as well. I feel I'm doing a little bit of parenting. Artistic parenting, in any case.



Does your illustration work inform your teaching?

I have interviews in class with other sci-fi and fantasy illustrators, art directors and editors. *Magic: The Gathering*'s Cynthia Sheppard was nice enough to give us some time, and the next artist I'm looking to interview is Jim Fitzpatrick, who is an Irish illustrator. We've been talking on and off on email for years and he's just a phenomenal illustrator. I recognized him from his work on the Thin Lizzy album covers. But it took me a good year before I realized he was the guy who did the famous Che Guevara image. For my generation of illustrators, he's just a legend. He's fine about doing the interview, but I'm worried about me going a little bit too fanboyish.





You work across a lot of different mediums. Do you have a favorite?

All traditional. I really love oils and unfortunately the trend is that there's not enough time for oils, which is a real drag. I always tell students in this increasingly digital world, being able to show the evidence of that traditional process will help you be seen as an individual amongst a crowd. You can see it in some of the newer artists who are getting hired for *Magic: The Gathering* work, their history lies in tradition and they're bringing that to digital.



Ghostly Changeling ©Wizards of the Coast

My favorites always revolve around traditional materials. If I had my druthers, if I was independently wealthy, I would probably be in the book arts. Something like William Morris in Britain, with the pre-

Raphaelite movement, taking it back a couple of hundred years to a stage of arts and crafts that is just too expensive to do any more. But that's if I was a wealthy man.



(Select to view)

The space and shape of *Magic: The Gathering* cards makes them a very specific canvas to work on. Has that ever held you back from a particular idea?

There's the scale issue with *Magic*. Sometimes you get a big crowd scene and it's hard to illustrate when you know it's only going to print about two inches big. But printing's also never been better, with today's digital printing. There's not too much that I would want to put in a painting that couldn't get in there. Similarly, when I was developing the Tarokka cards, I tried to keep the art frame as big as possible, so I could avoid that issue and make them a little easier on the eye.

Is it true you also created your own board game, called *Fantasy Genesis*?

*Fantasy Genesis* is a word association game that I came up with in college. I'm actually currently working on a deal where it might get a second manifestation. It's somewhat reminiscent of surrealist games, like *Exquisite Corpse* and those free association games. It uses a complex series of lists that will juxtapose certain words next to each other. And it's got 40-plus black and white tutorials on the mixing and morphing of everything from humanoids and creatures to anything you could possibly think of in the whole universe. So maybe the two words next to each other are 'rust' and 'penguin', so you would sketch a rusty penguin. And that's not code. Hopefully you're not going to Google 'rusty penguin' and find something awful!



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# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

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## Dungeons, Dragons & Disabilities

Elsa S. Henry makes the case for inclusivity in D&D, explaining how disabled characters, players and DMs help make your fantasy world even more immersive.

---

**T**he first time I rolled for initiative I was probably eleven years old. I can't remember when, but I can remember the where. The cool breeze coming off Puget Sound, the rolling of the waves in the distance, as my new friend at camp told me about Dungeons & Dragons. Our characters were thinly veiled caricatures of ourselves, and my companion's storytelling stumbled when I announced that I wanted to shoot the dragon with an arrow.

“But... you're blind. You can't see well enough even to shoot a bullseye with a bow and arrow!” Even though I'd rolled a natural 20, and this was just a game, he told me that we had to go by the limits of what people think a blind person can or cannot do. This was my first



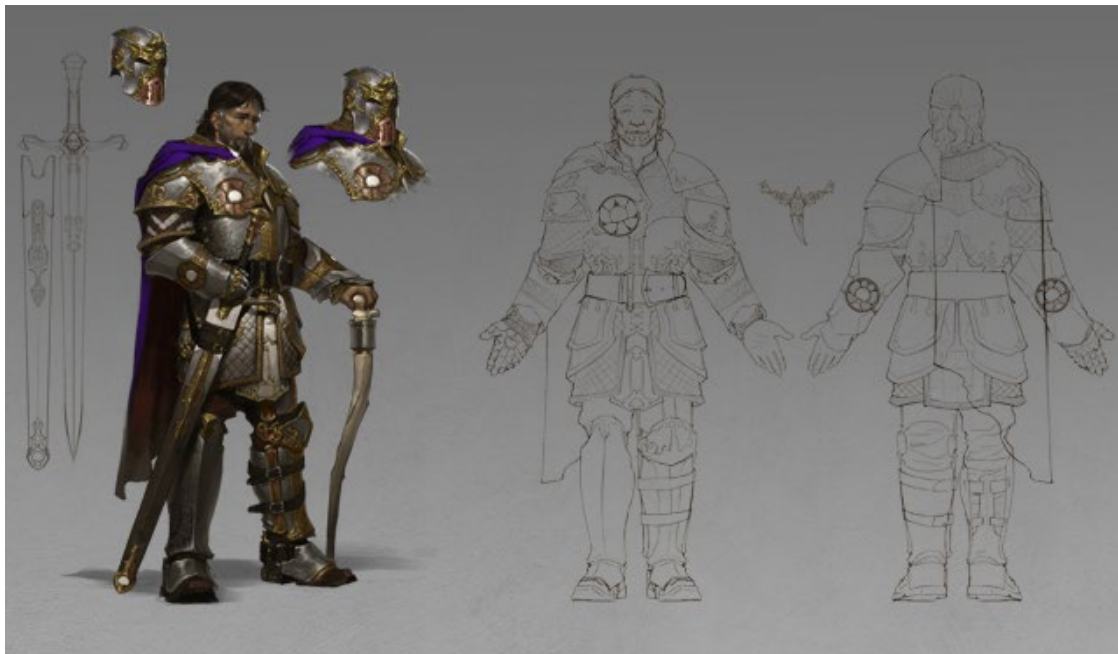
exposure to rules that said I couldn't do whatever I wanted with my imagination because of implicit assumptions about disability.

## D&D INCLUSIONS

1. Make asking about accommodations standard at your table and make sure to know the right questions to ask. The experts are the ones with disabilities who have been playing the game!
2. Acknowledge disabilities as a part of the world of Dungeons & Dragons rather than using it as flavor text to make NPCs creepy or funny.
3. Use large-print dice to make all games accessible.
4. Assume that injuries could impact characters in the long term during a campaign.
5. Include disabilities as options for new characters for roleplaying experience.
6. Read up on accessibility tips.

Disability isn't about being flawed or being broken; disability is a way of being. Players have to be able to see themselves in the things they play, or else they find themselves erased from the places they want to be. This affects not just the game world, but the real world. When a game doesn't include characters with disabilities, people with disabilities don't meet the real world expectations of who will want to play that game.

I'm a disabled game designer and going to a convention often means fighting misconceptions: yes, blind and deaf people play D&D; yes, people with wheelchairs do attend gaming cons. There is a large enough disabled audience in gaming that braille versions of D20 dice are produced, and some conventions have accessibility coordinators. The practical side of this conversation is simple: when disabilities exist in a setting, then we're invited into the real world dialogue about that topic.



(Select to view)

## INCLUSION BREEDS IMMERSION

Games such as Dungeons & Dragons need inclusion not just because people with disabilities play those kind of games, but because without the presence of characters with disabilities we forget they exist in the worlds we create. Developing disabilities in playscapes is important, as it helps make the game more immersive.

Perhaps you're thinking you don't want to play a paladin with a limp. Yet we don't exactly go easy on our characters in D&D. They sustain damage, experience trauma, and take injuries they cannot reasonably live with. A character you've been playing for a number of years may never have recovered from that trip to steal gold from a dragon, and not roleplaying that their life and body has been altered suggests a lack of change and growth. Not everyone wants to play a game with that level of realism, but it presents an interesting question:

*What happens to someone whose life changes in a D&D campaign?*

*That question can be answered with roleplay, by player choices and with guides:*

**The Modifier Podcast**

**64oz Games**

## illuminating Spaces on The Illuminerdy

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A disability is not a health point, it's how a character navigates the world. A blind warrior might use a staff rather than a sword, pointy on one end and ready to destroy enemies at the first sound of danger. A character with a prosthetic arm or leg is less likely to succumb to the bite of a poisonous creature, because, of course, that limb is immune.

We don't only have to look at this issue from a real world perspective. The various D&D races might have their own kinds of disabilities tied to their racial traits, which are not currently being roleplayed or explored. A dwarf who has lived underground for centuries may not see well in the light. An elf who is incredibly tall and thin might have lungs which collapse on impact. Opening up the possibilities to what some might consider imperfections creates new avenues to new stories that haven't been told before.

## PLAYING D&D WHILE BLIND: A SHORT PRIMER

Let's turn to the practicalities of playing D&D with a disability. Roleplaying games thrive on the information both players and DM's have about the characters, and in D&D there's quite a lot of it to deal with. When I'm playing, my low vision means I'm already using +14 reading glasses and large-print dice, but the character sheets pose a problem. To help me out, I often hand type a large sheet containing the basic character data.

My favorite tip comes from Mackan Anderson's blog post, where he shares his tricks for running a D&D game. His system for counting hit points is ingenious and I've adapted it to my own needs: I use two small prep bowls with marbles in them. One represents my remaining health, the other is for points lost. This is vastly simpler than having to scribble on a character sheet I can barely read.

Character sheets are an information resource for both the player and the DM. When I'm the Dungeon Master, I'll often ask my players to



match my character sheets (and sometimes even my dice). Why? Because an equal playing field is important in a game built upon imagination, as is trust.

When you're playing with a blind or low-vision DM, they have to trust you to give them accurate information. A sighted DM can theoretically call someone out for cheating, but with a blind DM it's all about trust. We have to rely on the players to get the information to us in a clear and concise way, but we also need players to give us the information to run the game.

Any DM—no matter their sight, hearing, or lack thereof—should be able to run a game with players more or less abled than they are. This is why it's important to learn about how players with disabilities can join you at your table, because finding new people to game with sometimes means reaching outside the perceived audience.



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Representing characters with disabilities in our gameplay is important. I'm not saying you're a bad person for not having done it before, as not everyone has heavy exposure to people with disabilities, or views them as being playable in a game. But I encourage you to step outside your comfort zone and give it a shot.

Run a game where the dwarves, hobbits and gnomes in your setting have the same struggles as 'little people' in the real world.

Finding a seat in the tavern isn't so easy when the only spots open are on barstools! Being an elf isn't just about being tall and proud and carrying a bow and arrow; think about the challenges of being built that way. Perhaps an orc who is missing an eye needs to find their way around the world differently than all the other orcs. How does a ranger or a paladin who also happens to be deaf communicate with

their fellow adventurers? It doesn't matter what class or race you've chosen, any D&D character can be disabled.

Telling these stories both creates a deeper sense of the world and builds a new relationship to that world. It also lets disabled people see themselves in the world they play in—a world we've already been playing in for years.

Braille D20 image by Richard Gibbs of [64oz. games](#), who sell [braille dice](#) and accessibility kits for many games.

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BACK TO TOP



Bring a snifter of brandy, some wooden stakes, some d20s and prepare for an evening in...



START

I have been sent to you to deliver this message! If you be creatures of honor, you will come to the aid of my master in Barovia! Follow this map through the Svalich woods to the conveniently isometric Ravenloft castle! We plead for thy bloo—I mean help, O fighter, fighter, paladin, "yakuza," magic-user, thief, bard, cleric, cleric, shugenja and fighter/magic-user/cleric!



Where Castle Dracula meets Castle Greyhawk

1 PARTY ACCEPTS STRANGER'S INVITATION TO DINE WITH BARON STRAHD IN MYSTERIOUS CASTLE. ALONG THE WAY, THEY STOP IN VISTANI CAMP TO HAVE THEIR FORTUNES TOLD IN "DECK OF RAVENLOFT," AKA "DECK OF THWARTING PEOPLE WHO'VE READ THE MODULE."

2 PARTY TAKES MAIN ROAD TO RAVENLOFT, EXCEPT FOR YAKUZA, WHO INSISTS ON TAKING THE CASTLE "BY SURPRISE." ONCE THE REST OF THE PARTY IS GONE, YAKUZA SWITCHES INTO HIS SECRET

12 PARTY RESCUES GERTRUDA, A NAIVE VILLAGE MAIDEN WHO HAS READ TOO MANY VAMPIRE ROMANCE NOVELS.

13 PARTY NOTICES TO THEIR SHOCK THAT HELGA CASTS NO REFLECTION IN BATHROOM MIRROR! SHUGENJA, THINKING SHE IS A JIANG-SHI, NAILS JUJUBE SEEDS INTO HER ACUPUNCTURE POINTS AND SPLASHES HER WITH BLACK DOG'S BLOOD. CLERIC OF ST. CUTHBERT, THINKING SHE IS A DEMON, SMACKS HER WITH AN IRON FRYING-PAN AND SPRINKLES HER WITH POPPYSEED CRACKERS. FINALLY, FIGHTER DECAPITATES HER WITH A CROSSERANG AND FILLS HER MOUTH WITH GARLIC. FIGHTER EXPLAINS THE FACT SHE DIED PROVES SHE'S A VAMPIRE.

14 HYPNOTIC PORTRAIT TRANSFIXES SHUGENJA. REST OF PARTY IGNORES HIM AT FIRST, THINKING HE'S JUST TRYING TO ACT CULTURED.

15 PARTY SLAYS COVEN OF WICKED WITCHES. MAGIC-USER ADOPTS THREE BLACK CATS.

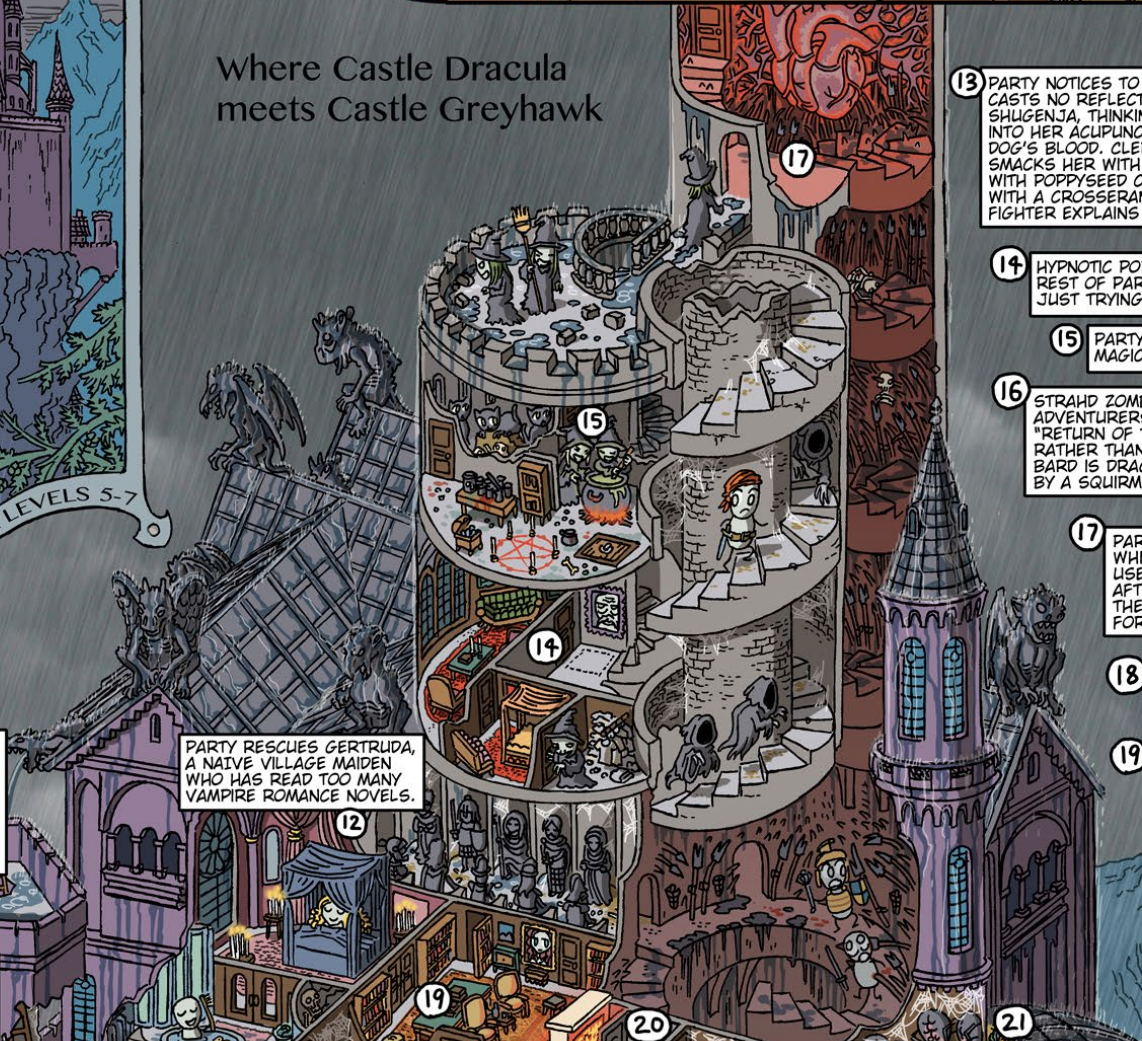
16 STRAHD ZOMBIES ATTACK PARTY ON ROOFTOP. ADVENTURERS DISCOVER TO THEIR HORROR THAT THEY ARE "RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD" STYLE UNKILLABLE ZOMBIES RATHER THAN "DAWN OF THE DEAD" STYLE HEADSHOT ZOMBIES. BARD IS DRAGGED OVER THE 190' TALL PARAPET BY A SQUIRMING PILE OF ABDOMINAL FASCIA.

17 PARTY CROSSES BRIDGE INTO NORTH TOWER, WHICH IS ACTUALLY A LIVING ORGANISM WHICH USES WALL-MOUNTED HALBERDS AS INTESTINAL VILLI. AFTER AN INTENSE THORACOTOMY, PARTY KILLS THE TOWER AND STEALS THE HOLY SYMBOL FORMERLY PROTECTED BY ITS IMMUNE SYSTEM.

18 PARTY HASTILY LEAVES ONCE-LIVING TOWER BEFORE IT CAN VOID ITS BOWELS AFTER DEATH.

19 WHILE THUNDER RUMBLES OUTSIDE, PARTY REGROUPS IN THE STUDY OVER PORT AND CIGARS (LEMONADE FOR GERTRUDA). MAGIC-USER NOTICES THE PORTRAIT OF STRAHD'S LOST LOVE, TATYANA. HALF-ORC FIGHTER EATS STRAHD'S 300-YEAR-OLD WEDDING CAKE.

CLERIC OF ST. CUTHBERT ATTEMPTS TO HAVE AN OLD-FASHIONED BOOKBURNING WITH WITCHES' TOME, BUT BOOK IS SO EVIL HE HAS A HEART ATTACK JUST TOUCHING IT AND COLLAPSES IN THE FIREPLACE. CLERIC OF WEE JAS PANICS AND CASTS "STICKS TO SNAKES" ON THE HEARTH, FILLING ROOM WITH BURNING SNAKES.





NINJA IDENTIFY AND ATTEMPTS TO CLIMB THE 1000' VERTICAL CLIFF TO THE CASTLE IN THE POURING RAIN.

3 MEANWHILE, THE REST OF THE PARTY ENJOYS A HISTORIC HORSEDRAWN CARRIAGE TOUR. ON THE WAY THERE, THEY PASS AN ARMY OF 100 GHOSTLY ADVENTURERS, DOOMED TO ETERNALLY ATTEMPT TO BEAT THE ADVENTURE THEY WERE UNABLE TO FINISH IN LIFE.

HELGA THE MAID ASKS TO JOIN THE PARTY, OFFERS TO TAKE FIRST WATCH WHEN THEY CAMP.

4 BARON STRAHD WELCOMES PARTY TO DINING HALL AND BEGINS A SPEECH, BUT VAMPIRE-HATING FIGHTER JUMPS ON THE TABLE AND THROWS HOLY WATER AND CROSSRANGS AT HIM BEFORE HE CAN FINISH. STRAHD VANISHES IN A MOCKING LAUGH, LEAVING THE HALL EMPTY EXCEPT FOR SOME NICE BAKLUNISH REDS AND WHITE FANGED BAY CAVIAR.

10 MOTIVATED BY THE DESIRE TO SLASH PAYROLL, STRAHD'S ACCOUNTANT TELLS PARTY THAT A POWERFUL UNDEAD-KILLING HOLY SYMBOL IS IN THE NORTH TOWER.

MAIN PARTY'S ENTRY

5 LEAVING THE DINING ROOM, PARTY IS ATTACKED BY 8 GARGOYLE STATUES.

6 SHUGENJA RETURNS TO ENTRYWAY TO GET HIS SANDALS, AND IS ATTACKED BY 4 DRAGON STATUES.

7 ADOPTING A "DESTROY ALL STATUES ON SIGHT" POLICY, PARTY TAKES 35 MINUTES TO GO DOWN 70' LONG CORRIDOR. NOISE OF DESTRUCTION ATTRACTS 12 LIFE-DRAINING WRAITHS.

8 CLERICS & SHUGENJA'S "TURN UNDEAD" POWER MAKES REST OF PARTY HAPPY TO ENDURE ENDLESS DEBATES OVER THE MERITS OF POLYTHEISM, MONOTHEISM, ANIMISM AND FISH WORSHIP.

9 CLERIC OF ST. CUTHBERT PICKS UP HOLY ICON INEXPLICABLY LEFT BEHIND IN PLAIN SIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF STRAHD'S CASTLE.

TRIVIA: The tallest medieval fortification IRL (not counting religious buildings) is the Chateau de Vincennes (170 feet). Ravenloft is 360 feet high.

20 AFTER FLAMES DIE DOWN, THIEF NOTICES A SECRET DOOR IN THE FIREPLACE BEHIND CLERIC'S CORPSE.

21 SECRET DOOR LEADS TO STRAHD'S TREASURE CHAMBER. PARTY LOOTS THE TREASURE, INCLUDING THE VAMPIRE-KILLING SUNSWORD, WHICH MAGICALLY LEAPS ACROSS THE ROOM INTO PALADIN'S HANDS NEARLY BRAINING FIGHTER IN THE PROCESS.

22 SATISFIED WITH THEIR HALL, PARTY LEAVES CASTLE ONLY TO FIND IT SURROUNDED BY A PORTCULLIS OF GREEN SLIME, A 1000' CHASM, AN ARMY OF BLOODTHIRSTY WORMS AND THEIR OWN INABILITY TO BREATHE OUTSIDE AIR DUE TO STRAHD'S CURSE. PARTY RETURNS TO CASTLE.

23 SIX HOURS AFTER HE STARTED, NINJA FINALLY CLIMBS INTO TOMB WINDOW, ONLY TO BE BLOCKED BY MAGIC BARRIER THAT ONLY LAWFUL GOOD CHARACTERS CAN PASS. AFTER ATTEMPTING TO HIDE IN THE CORPSE OF A GOOD CHARACTER AND WIGGLE THROUGH, NINJA GIVES UP, CLIMBS THE REMAINING 100' AND SNEAKS INTO CASTLE ELEVATOR.

24 THIEF, INVESTIGATING ELEVATOR SHAFT, IS CAUGHT ON TOP WHEN NINJA RISES UP FROM BASEMENT AND IS CRUSHED ON ROOF. ELEVATOR DOORS OPEN REVEALING NINJA.



27 FRUSTRATED BY CASTLE'S DEATHTRAPS, PARTY TAKES ACCOUNTANT HOSTAGE. ANNOYED ACCOUNTANT USES THE STAFF INTERCOM (A ROPE) TO SUMMON 16 FLESH-EATING WIGHTS, WHO CONSUME SHUGENJA.

28 CONTINUAL UNDEAD ATTACKS BEGIN TO TAKE A TOLL ON PARTY'S EXPERIENCE/LIFE FORCE. HALF-ORC FIGHTER LOSES 3 LEVELS, REDUCING HIM FROM A MYRMIDON TO A SWORDSMAN. PALADIN LOSES 1 LEVEL, LOSING HER CHEVALIER HORSE RENTAL PRIVILEGES.

29 "PRISONER" (ACTUALLY A WEREWOLF) ASKS TO BE RELEASED FROM CELL, BUT ACCOUNTANT SLIPS UP BY REFERRING TO HIM AS AN "EMPLOYEE" AND SAYING HE NEEDS TO SUBMIT HIS BUSINESS EXPENSES.

30 PARTY FIGHTS ZOMBIES IN FLOODED TORTURE CHAMBER. FIGHTER/MAGIC-USER/CLERIC OF POSEIDON CASTS "LOWER WATER" SPELL, REVEALING TORTURE EQUIPMENT SO GRISLY THE REST OF PARTY ASKS HIM TO RAISE THE WATER AGAIN.

31 SURVIVING HEROES, GERTRUDA, HOSTAGE ACCOUNTANT AND DROOLING FOOTMAN DISCOVER ROOM OF FOUR-ARMED KILLER IRON GOLEMS. "YAKUZA" USES NINJA ART KAYAKU-JUTSU TO BLOW UP GOLEM WITH EXPLOSIVES, UNNECESSARILY USING FOOTMAN AS DELIVERY SYSTEM.

32 PARTY OPENS LOCKED CHEST TO FIND A DECK OF MANY THINGS.

33 PARTY ENTERS STRAHD'S CATACOMBS, A VERITABLE ADVENT CALENDAR OF DEATH. EVERYONE BREAKS UP FURNITURE INTO WOODEN POLES AND STARTS KICKING OPEN DOORS AND STAKING EVERYTHING.

35 PALADIN DRAWS SUNSWORD AND BOLDLY STRIDES TOWARDS STRAHD'S TOMB, RIGHT INTO TRAP WHICH TELEPORTS HER NAKED INTO A ROOM FULL OF STARVING WIGHTS.

36 SIMULTANEOUSLY, A WIGHT IS TELEPORTED INTO PALADIN'S PLACE, WEARING ALL HER WEAPONS AND ARMOR, ALARMED TO FIND ITSELF HOLDING A HOLY RELIC, WIGHT RUNS OVER TO THE WINDOW AND THROWS THE SUNSWORD DOWN 1000' CLIFF.

37 FIGHTER/MAGIC-USER/CLERIC, WIELDING HOLY SYMBOL, ALSO WALKS INTO TELEPORT TRAP JUST IN TIME TO SEE PALADIN GET EATEN. HE HASTILY CASTS "FEIGN DEATH." WIGHTS, WHO PREFER LIVING VICTIMS, PUT HIM IN THEIR SARCOPHAGUS/MEAT LOCKER TO EAT LATER.

38 STRAHD APPEARS IN A CLOUD OF 3,000 BATS, REVEALING THAT HE INVITED THE PLAYERS TO HIS LAIR TO STEAL THEIR IDENTITIES AND CONQUER NEW DOMAINS OUTSIDE RAVENLOFT. STRAHD POLYMORPHS INTO A DUPLICATE OF HUMAN FIGHTER (18-YEAR-OLD VERSION, NOT 98-YEAR-OLD VERSION) AND LAUGHS EVILLY WHILE KILLING YAKUZA AND HALF-ORC FIGHTER.

39 MAGIC-USER SLIPS BEHIND A PILLAR AND POLYMORPHS HERSELF INTO STRAHD'S LONG-LOST LOVE TATYANA, BUT JEALOUS GERTRUDA REVEALS THE DECEPTION. STRAHD SLAPS MAGIC-USER ON THE WRIST THREE TIMES, DRAINING SIX LEVELS AND SAVING HER TO DRINK LATER.

40 CLERIC OF WEE JAS, THE LAST ONE ALIVE, STANDING, YOUNGER THAN 98 AND NOT BURIED UNDER A 300 LB. STONE SARCOPHAGUS, THREATENS TO FEED HIMSELF TO GIANT SPIDERS (LEAVING NASTY BLOOD AFTERTASTE) UNLESS STRAHD CHALLENGES HIM AT BLACKJACK. AMUSED, STRAHD AGREES.

41 UNBEKNOWNST TO STRAHD, CLERIC OF WEE JAS SUBSTITUTES "DECK OF MANY THINGS" FOR REGULAR CARD DECK. STRAHD DRAWS "RUIN" AND "BALANCE" CARDS, CAUSING HIM TO IMMEDIATELY GO BANKRUPT (ACCOUNTANT INFORMS HIM BEFORE LEAVING) AND THEN BECOME LAWFUL GOOD. IN REPENTANCE FOR HIS SINS, LAWFUL GOOD STRAHD TAKES GERTRUDA BACK TO HER MOM, KILLS ALL THE WIGHTS AND THEN COMMITS SEPPUKU.

42 THRILLED, CLERIC OF WEE JAS DRAWS A CARD FOR HIMSELF, BUT DRAWS THE "FLAMES" CARD AND IS EATEN BY ASMODEUS. NONAGENARIAN FIGHTER MANAGES TO "DRAW" OVER TO THE DECK AND DRAGS THE WIDOWER

25 "YAKUZA" APOLOGIZES FOR MISHAP AND EXPLAINS HIS APPEARANCE BY TELLING THE PARTY HE FOUND THE NINJA SUIT, KATANA AND TEKAGI-SHIKO IN STRAHD'S TOMB. THE PARTY IS FILLED WITH NEW AWE AND FEAR AT STRAHD'S MULTI-CLASSING ABILITY.

26 PARTY DECLINES OFFER OF "FOURTH MEAL" FROM STRAHD'S ZOMBIE-EATING HOARDER FOOTMAN.

34 EVIL GHOST HITS FIGHTER TWICE, AGING HIM 80 YEARS.

NINJA'S ENTRY

FINISH





MANAGES TO CRAWL OVER TO THE VEIL AND DRAWS THE THRONE CARD, THIS ALTERING REALITY SO HE IS OWNER OF THE CASTLE.

BY JASON THOMPSON (@MOCKMAN)

43

MAGIC-USER, DRAINED BACK TO 1ST LEVEL, SPENDS HER SHARE OF THE WEALTH RE-TAKING HER B.A. AT WIZARD COLLEGE.

44

FIGHTER BECOMES NEW KING OF BAROVIA WITH FIGHTER/MAGIC-USER/CLERIC AS HIS VIZIER.

the temple of Poseidon must be built bigger! BIGGER!



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# Streaming Highlights

The D&D crew wraps up the Rage of Demons storyline in its weekly livestream, while vlogger ProJared proves that December really is the most wonderful time of the year by launching D&December.



---

## THE OFFICIAL DUNGEONS & DRAGONS PODCAST



Gaming minds collide as Greg Tito and Trevor Kidd hear from Chris Perkins and Tracy Hickman on the Official D&D Podcast. *Subscribe on iTunes now!* The guests talk about the return to the gothic world of Ravenloft in D&D's latest adventure, Curse of Strahd.

[LISTEN NOW](#)  
[SUBSCRIBE NOW](#)

Then Tito and Shelly Mazzanoble chat with Mike Mearls and Chris Lindsay about the latest D&D innovation, the Dungeon Masters Guild! The team discusses what it was like to open up the Forgotten Realms and bring this new marketplace for D&D material to life. Leave a rating or submit a review with feedback to tell us who you'd love to listen to on the next D&D podcast!

[LISTEN NOW](#)

---

## NEVERWINTER: UNDERDARK

Demons have invaded the world of Neverwinter! Take your place in this free-to-play action MMORPG, alongside iconic characters such as Drizzt Do'Urden, Thibbledorf Pwent and more. This latest expansion includes an exclusive new story written by author R.A. Salvatore – where players face some of the most ferocious demons in the Dungeons & Dragons franchise, as they undertake quests that will lead them to Bruenor Battlehammer's legendary helmet.



---

## D&DECEMBER

Vlogger ProJared fulfills a lifelong dream (which is set to become an annual tradition!) and dedicates a whole month of airtime to his gaming passion: Dungeons & Dragons. Enjoy his lively introduction and then dig into the playlist of his video content, which has something for everyone: from complete D&D newbs and rules addicts to video gamers and those who love a good story.

---

## D&D OUT OF THE ABYSS



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## Tavern Tales

Introducing the Dungeon Masters Guild, plus your chance to download the preview adventure to Curse of Strahd.

---

**L** launched back in January as a way to publish and purchase content, the Dungeon Masters Guild is now the hub for distributing D&D Adventurers League content as well. In the past, organized play through the D&D Adventurers League, as well as access to the adventures produced for the program, has been confined to gaming stores and conventions. But now everyone can participate in the fun!

Starting with the next season, anyone can download a free D&D Adventurers League kit from this new resource and organize an event, opening up the Forgotten Realms to everyone. The Adventurers League is how fans of D&D congregate, play through weekly adventures keyed into the major storylines, and track their



character's exploits.

To hear Mike Mearls and Chris Lindsay from the D&D team talk more about the creation of the Dungeon Masters Guild, check out the official D&D podcast.

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*Check out the*  
OFFICIAL D&D PODCAST

**LISTEN NOW**

---

Wizards of the Coast has also listened to D&D fans who wanted more bite-sized adventures to pick up and play in a pinch. They can now download PDFs of the adventures released periodically for a just a few dollars. Check out what's available right now from previous Adventurer's League seasons by visiting the [Dungeon Masters Guild](#). You can also find some AL adventures for free in previous Tavern Tales in *Dragon+*.

---

## RAVENLOFT ADVENTURE PREVIEW



The new season of the D&D Adventurers League, which ties into the *Curse of Strahd* storyline, starts in March 2016. In part one of *Misty Fortunes and Absent Hearts*, strange things are afoot in the Moonsea region. The factions have called together all those willing and able to

investigate odd occurrences in the area surrounding Phlan. Dark whispers and unseen terrors lurk in the misty shadows that exist between this world and someplace much more sinister. Can players unveil the horrors before it is too late?

## CURSE OF STRAHD PREVIEW ADVENTURE

### DEATH HOUSE

You can run *Curse of Strahd* for 1st-level characters with the help of this optional mini-adventure, which is designed to advance characters to 3rd level. Players creating 1st-level characters can use the haunted one character background in appendix A, or they can pick backgrounds from the *Player's Handbook* as normal.

Before the characters can explore the haunted townhouse known as Death House, you need to guide them to the village of Barovia. The "Creeping Fog" adventure hook in chapter 1 works best, as it introduces few distractions. Once the characters arrive in Strahd's domain, steer them to the village. For the duration of this introductory adventure, any attempt by the characters to explore other locations in Strahd's domain causes the mists of Ravenloft to block their path.

### A CLASSIC RETOLD

*Curse of Strahd* is a retelling of the original *Ravenloft* adventure, which was published in 1983 by TSR, Inc. In the years since, the original has gained a reputation as one of the greatest DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventures ever, and it went on to inspire the creation of a campaign setting of the same name in 1990: Ravenloft, home of the Domains of Dread.

Module 16: *Ravenloft*, written by Tracy and Laura Hickman, broke new ground by presenting a D&D adventure that was as much story-driven as location-based, featuring a villain who was complex and terrifying. Castle Ravenloft, with its amazing three-dimensional maps, remains to this day one of the most iconic and memorable of all D&D dungeons.

This preview introduces characters to the land of Barovia. The *Curse of Strahd* book includes the original adventure, as well as expanded material developed in consultation with Tracy and Laura Hickman. It expands what we know about the lands around Castle Ravenloft and sheds new light on the dark past of the castle's lord. The lands of Barovia are from a forgotten world in the D&D multiverse, and this adventure gives glimpses into that world. In time, cursed Barovia was torn from its home world by the Dark Powers and bound in mist as one of the Domains of Dread in the Shadowfell.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

In the event that begins the adventure, the fates of Strahd and the adventurers are entwined as the characters are invited or forced into his domain. Different ways to get the adventurers to Barovia are described in the sections that follow. Use whichever one you favor.

The *Curse of Strahd* adventure contains other adventure hooks. For the purpose of this introductory adventure, you can use "Creeping Fog," in which the charac-

ters are traveling a lonely road through the woods when the fog engulfs them, spiriting them away to the land of Barovia.

### CREEPING FOG

This scenario assumes that the characters are camping in a forest when the fog engulfs them. They are quietly borne to the edge of Barovia.

The woods are quiet this night, and the air grows chill. Your fire sputters as a low mist gathers around the edges of your camp, growing closer as the night wears on. By morning, the fog hangs thick in the air, turning the trees around you into gray ghosts. Then you notice these aren't the same trees that surrounded you the night before.

No matter which direction they go, the characters come to a lonely dirt road that cuts through the woods, leading to just outside the village of Barovia.

### WHERE CAN I FIND CURSE OF STRAHD?

*Curse of Strahd* is available in hobby stores that are part of the Wizards Play Network on March 4. It's also available online and at other retailers starting on March 15. You can pre-order it today on Amazon.com.



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According to Chris Lindsay, D&D Product Marketing Specialist and Guildmaster, the new season concerns a power that has been awakened from within The Amber Temple (see chapter fourteen of *Curse of Strahd*).

“Esmae Amarantha, Strahd’s most powerful witch, has exercised a new found power to expand her master’s domain to encompass lands outside of Barovia,” he tells *Dragon+*. “Being totally dedicated to the vampire, she has allowed Strahd to direct her efforts, which have found a foothold in the Forgotten Realms, more specifically in a small region of the Moonsea. The Adventurers League season for *Curse of Strahd* will involve our heroes seeking the death of this particular witch in order to free the Moonsea from the vampire’s reach.”

The fourteen-part season begins with *Suits of the Mist* (DDEX4-01C), which has been optimized for first level characters by writer Shawn Merwin. It will be followed by:

**The Beast** (DDEX4-02),

**The Executioner** (DDEX4-03),

**The Marionette** (DDEX4-4),

**The Seer** (DDEX4-05C),

**The Ghost** (DDEX4-06C),

**The Innocent** (DDEX4-07C),

**The Broken One** (DDEX4-08C),

**The Tempter** (DDEX4-09C),

**The Artifact** (DDEX4-10C),

**The Donjon** (DDEX4-11C),

**The Raven** (DDEX4-12C),

**The Horseman** (DDEX4-13C)



and **The Darklord** (DDEX4-14C).

At the conclusion of *Misty Fortunes and Absent Hearts*, the bonds connecting the two worlds begin to fade and characters can choose to return to the Moonsea region or remain in Barovia to play through *Curse of Strahd*.



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# DEATH HOUSE

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# DEATH HOUSE

You can run *Curse of Strahd* for 1st-level characters with the help of this optional mini-adventure, which is designed to advance characters to 3rd level. Players creating 1st-level characters can use the haunted one character background in appendix A, or they can pick backgrounds from the *Player's Handbook* as normal.

Before the characters can explore the haunted townhouse known as Death House, you need to guide them to the village of Barovia. The “Creeping Fog” adventure hook in chapter 1 works best, as it introduces few distractions. Once the characters arrive in Strahd’s domain, steer them to the village. For the duration of this introductory adventure, any attempt by the characters to explore other locations in Strahd’s domain causes the mists of Ravenloft to block their path.

## LEVEL ADVANCEMENT

In this mini-adventure, the characters gain levels by accomplishing specific goals, rather than by slaying monsters. These milestones are as follows:

- Characters who gain access to the secret stairs in the attic (area 21) advance to 2nd level. The stairs appear only under certain circumstances.
- Characters advance to 3rd level once they escape from the house (see the “Endings” section).

## HISTORY

Death House is the name given to an old row house in the village of Barovia (area E7 on the village map). The house has been burned to the ground many times, only to rise from the ashes time and again—by its own will or that of Strahd. Locals give the building a wide berth for fear of antagonizing the evil spirits believed to haunt it.

The wealthy family that built the house practiced the dark arts. Through seduction and indoctrination, they expanded their cult to include a small yet nefarious circle of friends. When word got out, the rest of the village turned a blind eye to the house and the nightly debaucheries happening within it.

The cult tried to summon malevolent extraplanar entities with no success. The cultists also preyed on visitors, sacrificed them in bizarre rituals, and hosted morbid banquets to feast on their corpses. When nothing came of these ritualized murders, the cultists’ activities became thinly disguised excuses to indulge their lurid fantasies. The ranks of the cult thinned as members began to lose interest in the debacle.

Then Strahd von Zarovich arrived.

The cultists regarded Strahd as a messiah sent to them by the Dark Powers. Drawn to Strahd like moths to a flame, they pledged their devotion for a promise of immortality, but Strahd turned them away, deeming the cult and its leaders unworthy of his attention. The cultists withdrew to Death House in despair.

The cult’s habit of trapping and devouring wayward visitors proved to be its downfall. On one occasion, the cult snared a band of adventurers whom Strahd had lured to his domain to be his playthings. A black car-

riage arrived at Death House soon thereafter, and from out of its black heart stepped the vampire himself. The cultists tried to impress Strahd. In response, he slaughtered them for slaying his playthings. Centuries later, the cultists’ spirits haunt the dungeons under the house. The building itself, it seems, is unwilling to let the cult be forgotten.

## ROSE AND THORN

The characters are pulled into Strahd’s domain by the mists of Ravenloft. Forced to follow a lonely road (area A), they eventually arrive at the village of Barovia (area E). Once they reach the village, read:

The gravel road leads to a village, its tall houses dark as tombstones. Nestled among these solemn dwellings are a handful of closed-up shops. Even the tavern is shut tight.

A soft whimpering draws your eye toward a pair of children standing in the middle of an otherwise lifeless street.

The children are ten-year-old Rosavalda (“Rose”) and her seven-year-old brother, Thornboldt (“Thorn”). Thorn is weeping and clutching a stuffed doll. Rose is trying to hush the boy.

If the characters approach the children or call out to them, add the following:

After shushing the boy, the girl turns to you and says, “There’s a monster in our house!” She then points to a tall brick row house that has seen better days. Its windows are dark. It has a gated portico on the ground floor, and the rusty gate is slightly ajar. The houses on either side are abandoned, their windows and doors boarded up.

Characters who question the children learn the following information:

- The children don’t know what the “monster” looks like, but they’ve heard its terrible howls.
- Their parents (Gustav and Elisabeth Durst) keep the monster trapped in the basement.
- There’s a baby (Walter) in the third-floor nursery. (Untrue, but the children believe it.)

Rose and Thorn say that they won’t go back in the house until they know the monster is gone. They can be convinced to wait in the portico (area 1A) while the characters search the house. Although they appear to be flesh-and-blood children, Rose and Thorn are actually illusions created by the house to lure the characters inside. The children don’t know that they’re illusions but vanish if attacked or forced into the house.



The children died of starvation centuries ago after their insane parents locked them in the attic and forgot about them. They were too young and innocent to understand that their parents were guilty of heinous crimes. Their parents told them stories about a monster in the basement to keep the children from going down to the dungeon level. The “terrible howls” they heard were actually the screams of the cult’s victims.



THORNBOLDT  
“THORN” DURST

ROSAVALDA  
“ROSE” DURST

## THE MISTS

Characters who remain outside the house can see the mists close in around them, swallowing up the rest of the village. As more buildings disappear into the mists, the characters are left with little choice but to seek refuge in the house. The mists stop short of entering the house but engulf anyone outside (see chapter 2, “The Lands of Barovia,” for information on the mists’ effect).

## AREAS OF THE HOUSE

The following areas correspond to labels on the map of the house on page 216.

### 1. ENTRANCE

A wrought-iron gate with hinges on one side and a lock on the other fills the archway of a stone portico (area 1A). The gate is unlocked, and its rusty hinges shriek when the gate is opened. Oil lamps hang from the portico ceiling by chains, flanking a set of oaken doors that open into a grand foyer (area 1B).

Hanging on the south wall of the foyer is a shield emblazoned with a coat-of-arms (a stylized golden

### DEATH HOUSE’S FEATURES

Death House is aware of its surroundings and all creatures within it. Its goal is to continue the work of the cult by luring visitors to their doom. Various important features of the house are summarized here.

The house has four stories (including the attic), with two balconies on the third floor—one facing the front of the house, the other facing the back. The house has wooden floors throughout, and all windows have hinges that allow them to swing outward.

The rooms on the first and second floors are free of dust and signs of age. The floorboards and wall panels are well oiled, the drapes and wallpaper haven’t faded, and the furniture looks new. No effort has been made to preserve the contents of the third floor or the attic. These areas are dusty and drafty, everything within them is old and draped in cobwebs, and the floorboards groan underfoot.

Ceilings vary in height by floor. The first floor has 10-foot-high ceilings, the second floor has 12-foot-high ceilings, the third floor has 8-foot-high ceilings, and the attic has 13-foot-high ceilings.

None of the rooms in the house are lit when the characters arrive, although most areas contain working oil lamps or fireplaces.

Characters can burn the house to the ground if they want, but any destruction to the house is temporary. After 1d10 days, the house begins to repair itself. Ashes sweep together to form blackened timbers, which then turn back into a sturdy wooden frame around which walls begin to materialize. Destroyed furnishings are likewise repaired. It takes 2d6 hours for the house to complete its resurrection. Items taken from the house aren’t replaced, nor are undead that are destroyed. The dungeon level isn’t considered part of the house and can’t repair itself in this fashion.

windmill on a red field), flanked by framed portraits of stony-faced aristocrats (long-dead members of the Durst family). Mahogany-framed double doors leading from the foyer to the main hall (area 2A) are set with panes of stained glass.

### 2. MAIN HALL

A wide hall (area 2A) runs the width of the house, with a black marble fireplace at one end and a sweeping, red marble staircase at the other. Mounted on the wall above the fireplace is a longsword (nonmagical) with a windmill cameo worked into the hilt. The wood-paneled walls are ornately sculpted with images of vines, flowers, nymphs, and satyrs. Characters who search the walls for secret doors or otherwise inspect the paneling can, with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, see serpents and skulls inconspicuously woven into the wall designs. The decorative paneling follows the staircase as it circles upward to the second floor.

A cloakroom (area 2B) has several black cloaks hanging from hooks on the walls. A top hat sits on a high shelf.

### 3. DEN OF WOLVES

This oak-paneled room looks like a hunter’s den. Mounted above the fireplace is a stag’s head, and positioned around the outskirts of the room are three stuffed wolves.



Two padded chairs draped in animal furs face the hearth, with an oak table between them supporting a cask of wine, two carved wooden goblets, a pipe rack, and a candelabrum. A chandelier hangs above a cloth-covered table surrounded by four chairs.

Two cabinets stand against the walls. The east cabinet sports a lock that can be picked with thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. It holds a heavy crossbow, a light crossbow, a hand crossbow, and 20 bolts for each weapon. The north cabinet is unlocked and holds a small box containing a deck of playing cards and an assortment of wine glasses.

#### TRAPDOOR

A trapdoor is hidden in the southwest corner of the floor. It can't be detected or opened until the characters approach it from the underside (see area 32). Until then, Death House supernaturally hides the trapdoor.

### 4. KITCHEN AND PANTRY

The kitchen (area 4A) is tidy, with dishware, cookware, and utensils neatly placed on shelves. A worktable has a cutting board and rolling pin atop it. A stone, dome-shaped oven stands near the east wall, its bent iron stovepipe connecting to a hole in the ceiling. Behind the stove and to the left is a thin door leading to a well-stocked pantry (area 4B). All the food in the pantry appears fresh but tastes bland.

#### DUMBWAITER

Behind a small door in the southwest corner of the kitchen is a dumbwaiter—a 2-foot-wide stone shaft containing a wooden elevator box attached to a simple rope-and-pulley mechanism that must be operated manually. The shaft connects to areas 7A (the servants' quarters) and 12A (the master bedroom). Hanging on the wall next to the dumbwaiter is a tiny brass bell attached by wires to buttons in those other areas.

A Small character can squeeze into the elevator box with a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. The dumbwaiter's rope-and-pulley mechanism can support 200 pounds of weight before breaking.

### 5. DINING ROOM

The centerpiece of this wood-paneled dining room is a carved mahogany table surrounded by eight high-backed chairs with sculpted armrests and cushioned seats. A crystal chandelier hangs above the table, which is covered with resplendent silverware and crystalware polished to a dazzling shine. Mounted above the marble fireplace is a mahogany-framed painting of an alpine vale.

The wall paneling is carved with elegant images of deer among the trees. Characters who search the walls for secret doors or otherwise inspect the paneling can, with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, see twisted faces carved into the tree trunks and wolves lurking amid the carved foliage.

Red silk drapes cover the windows, and a tapestry depicting hunting dogs and horse-mounted aristocrats chasing after a wolf hangs from an iron rod bolted to the south wall.

The silverware tarnishes, the crystal cracks, the portrait fades, and the tapestry rots if removed from the house.

### 6. UPPER HALL

Unlit oil lamps are mounted on the walls of this elegant hall. Hanging above the mantelpiece is a wood-framed portrait of the Durst family: Gustav and Elisabeth Durst with their two smiling children, Rose and Thorn. Cradled in the father's arms is a swaddled baby, which the mother regards with a hint of scorn.

Standing suits of armor flank wooden doors in the east and west walls. Each suit of armor clutches a spear and has a visored helm shaped like a wolf's head. The doors are carved with dancing youths, although close inspection and a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the youths aren't really dancing but fighting off swarms of bats.

The red marble staircase that started on the first floor continues its upward spiral to area 11. A cold draft can be felt coming down the steps.

### 7. SERVANTS' ROOM

An undecorated bedroom (area 7A) contains a pair of beds with straw-stuffed mattresses. At the foot of each bed is an empty footlocker. Tidy servants' uniforms hang from hooks in the adjoining closet (area 7B).

#### DUMBWAITER

A dumbwaiter in the corner of the west wall has a button on the wall next to it. Pressing the button rings the tiny bell in area 4A.

### 8. LIBRARY

The master of the house used to spend many hours here before his descent into madness.

Red velvet drapes cover the windows of this room. An exquisite mahogany desk and a matching high-back chair face the entrance and the fireplace, above which hangs a framed picture of a windmill perched atop a rocky crag. Situated in corners of the room are two overstuffed chairs. Floor-to-ceiling bookshelves line the south wall. A rolling wooden ladder allows one to more easily reach the high shelves.

The desk has several items resting atop it: an oil lamp, a jar of ink, a quill pen, a tinderbox, and a letter kit containing a red wax candle, four blank sheets of parchment, and a wooden seal bearing the Durst family's insignia (a windmill). The desk drawer is empty except for an iron key, which unlocks the door to area 20.

The bookshelves hold hundreds of tomes covering a range of topics including history, warfare, and alchemy. There are also several shelves containing first-edition collected works of poetry and fiction. The books rot and fall apart if taken from the house.



### SECRET DOOR

A secret door behind one bookshelf can be unlocked and swung open by pulling on a switch disguised to look like a red-covered book with a blank spine. A character inspecting the bookshelf spots the fake book with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. Unless the secret door is propped open, springs in the hinges cause it to close on its own. Beyond the secret door lies area 9.

## 9. SECRET ROOM

This secret room contains bookshelves packed with tomes describing fiend-summoning rituals and the necromantic rituals of a cult called the Priests of Osybus. The rituals are bogus, which any character can ascertain after studying the books for 1 hour and succeeding on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

A heavy wooden chest with clawed iron feet stands against the south wall, its lid half-closed. Sticking out of the chest is a skeleton in leather armor. Close inspection reveals that the skeleton belongs to a human who triggered a poisoned dart trap. Three darts are stuck in the dead adventurer's armor and ribcage. The dart-firing mechanism inside the chest no longer functions.

Clutched in the skeleton's left hand is a letter bearing the seal of Strahd von Zarovich, which the adventurer tried to remove from the chest. Written in flowing script, the letter reads as follows:

*My most pathetic servant,*

*I am not a messiah sent to you by the Dark Powers of this land. I have not come to lead you on a path to immortality. However many souls you have bled on your hidden altar, however many visitors you have tortured in your dungeon, know that you are not the ones who brought me to this beautiful land. You are but worms writhing in my earth.*

*You say that you are cursed, your fortunes spent. You abandoned love for madness, took solace in the bosom of another woman, and sired a stillborn son. Cursed by darkness? Of that I have no doubt. Save you from your wretchedness? I think not. I much prefer you as you are.*

*Your dread lord and master,  
Strahd von Zarovich*

### TREASURE

The chest contains three blank books with black leather covers (worth 25 gp each), three spell scrolls (*bless*, *protection from poison*, and *spiritual weapon*), the deed to the house, the deed to a windmill, and a signed will. The windmill referred to in the second deed is situated in the mountains east of Vallaki (see chapter 6, "Old Bonegrinder"). The will is signed by Gustav and Elisabeth Durst and bequeathes the house, the windmill, and all other family property to Rosavalda and Thornboldt Durst in the event of their parents' deaths. The books, scrolls, deeds, and will age markedly if taken from the house but remain intact.

## 10. CONSERVATORY

Gossamer drapes cover the windows of this elegantly appointed hall, which has a brass-plated chandelier

hanging from the ceiling. Upholstered chairs line the walls, and stained-glass wall hangings depict beautiful men, women, and children singing and playing instruments.

A harpsichord with a bench rests in the northwest corner. Near the fireplace is a large standing harp. Alabaster figurines of well-dressed dancers adorn the mantelpiece. Close inspection of them reveals that several are carvings of well-dressed skeletons.

## 11. BALCONY

Characters who climb the red marble staircase to its full height come to a dusty balcony with a suit of black plate armor standing against one wall, draped in cobwebs. This suit of **animated armor** attacks as soon as it takes damage or a character approaches within 5 feet of it. It fights until destroyed.

Oil lamps are mounted on the oak-paneled walls, which are carved with woodland scenes of trees, falling leaves, and tiny critters. Characters who search the walls for secret doors or otherwise inspect the paneling can, with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, notice tiny corpses hanging from the trees and worms bursting up from the ground.

### SECRET DOOR

A secret door in the west wall can be found with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. It pushes open easily to reveal a cobweb-filled wooden staircase leading up to the attic.

## 12. MASTER SUITE

The double doors to this room have dusty panes of stained glass set into them. Designs in the glass resemble windmills.

The dusty, cobweb-filled master bedroom (area 12A) has burgundy drapes covering the windows. Furnishings include a four-poster bed with embroidered curtains and tattered gossamer veils, a matching pair of empty wardrobes, a vanity with a wood-framed mirror and jewelry box (see "Treasure"), and a padded chair. A rotting tiger-skin rug lies on the floor in front of the fireplace, which has a dust-covered portrait of Gustav and Elisabeth Durst hanging above it. A web-filled parlor in the southwest corner contains a table and two chairs. Resting on the dusty tablecloth is an empty porcelain bowl and a matching jug.

A door facing the foot of the bed has a full-length mirror mounted on it. The door opens to reveal an empty, dust-choked closet (area 12B). A door in the parlor leads to an outside balcony (area 12C).

### DUMBWAITER

A dumbwaiter in the corner of the west wall has a button on the wall next to it. Pressing the button rings the tiny bell in area 4A.

### TREASURE

The jewelry box on the vanity is made of silver with gold filigree (worth 75 gp). It contains three gold rings (worth 25 gp each) and a thin platinum necklace with a topaz pendant (worth 750 gp).



### 13. BATHROOM

This dark room contains a wooden tub with clawed feet, a small iron stove with a kettle resting atop it, and a barrel under a spigot in the east wall. A cistern on the roof used to collect rainwater, which was borne down a pipe to the spigot; however, the plumbing no longer works.

### 14. STORAGE ROOM

Dusty shelves line the walls of this room. A few of the shelves have folded sheets, blankets, and old bars of soap on them. A cobweb-covered **broom of animated attack** (see appendix D) leans against the far wall; it attacks any creature approaching within 5 feet of it.

### 15. NURSEMAID'S SUITE

Dust and cobwebs shroud an elegantly appointed bedroom (area 15A) and an adjoining nursery (area 15B). Double doors set with panes of stained glass pull open to reveal a balcony (area 15C) overlooking the front of the house.

The bedroom once belonged to the family's nursemaid. The master of the house and the nursemaid had an affair, which led to the birth of a stillborn baby named Walter. The cult slew the nursemaid shortly thereafter. Unless the characters already defeated it in area 18, the nursemaid's spirit haunts the bedroom as a **specter**. The specter manifests and attacks when a character opens the door to the nursery. The specter resembles a terrified, skeletally thin young woman; it can't speak or be reasoned with.

The bedroom contains a large bed, two end tables, and an empty wardrobe. Mounted on the wall next to the wardrobe is a full-length mirror with an ornate wooden frame carved to look like ivy and berries. Characters who search the wall for secret doors or otherwise inspect the mirror can, with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, notice eyeballs among the berries. The wall behind the mirror has a secret door in it (see "Secret Door" below).

The nursery contains a crib covered with a hanging black shroud. When characters part the shroud, they see a tightly wrapped, baby-sized bundle lying in the crib. Characters who unwrap the blanket find nothing inside it.

#### SECRET DOOR

A secret door behind the mirror can be found with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. It pushes open easily to reveal a cobweb-filled wooden staircase leading up to the attic.

### 16. ATTIC HALL

This bare hall is choked with dust and cobwebs.

#### LOCKED DOOR

The door to area 20 is held shut with a padlock. Its key is kept in the library (area 8), but the lock can also be picked with thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.

### 17. SPARE BEDROOM

This dust-choked room contains a slender bed, a nightstand, a small iron stove, a writing desk with a stool, an empty wardrobe, and a rocking chair. A smiling doll in a lacy yellow dress sits in the northern window box, cobwebs draping it like a wedding veil.

### 18. STORAGE ROOM

This dusty chamber is packed with old furniture (chairs, coat racks, standing mirrors, dress mannequins, and the like), all draped in dusty white sheets. Near an iron stove, underneath one of the sheets, is an unlocked wooden trunk containing the skeletal remains of the family's nursemaid, wrapped in a tattered bedsheet stained with dry blood. A character inspecting the remains and succeeding on a DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check can verify that the woman was stabbed to death by multiple knife wounds.

If the characters disturb the remains, the nursemaid's **specter** appears and attacks unless it was previously defeated in area 15.

#### SECRET DOOR

A secret door in the east wall appears only when certain conditions are met; see area 21 for more information.

### 19. SPARE BEDROOM

This web-filled room contains a slender bed, a nightstand, a rocking chair, an empty wardrobe, and a small iron stove.

### 20. CHILDREN'S ROOM

The door to this room is locked from the outside (see area 16 for details).

This room contains a bricked-up window flanked by two dusty, wood-framed beds sized for children. Closer to the door is a toy chest with windmills painted on its sides and a dollhouse that's a perfect replica of the dreary edifice in which you stand. These furnishings are draped in cobwebs. Lying in the middle of the floor are two small skeletons wearing tattered but familiar clothing. The smaller of the two cradles a stuffed doll that you also recognize.

The Durst children, Rose and Thorn, were neglected by their parents and locked in this room until they starved to death. Their small skeletons lie in the middle of the floor, plain as day, wearing tattered clothing that the characters recognize as belonging to the children. Thorn's skeleton cradles the boy's stuffed doll.

The toy chest contains an assortment of stuffed animals and toys. Characters who search the dollhouse and succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check find all of the house's secret doors, including one in the attic that leads to a spiral staircase (a miniature replica of area 21).

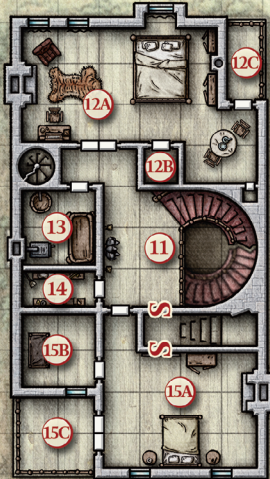
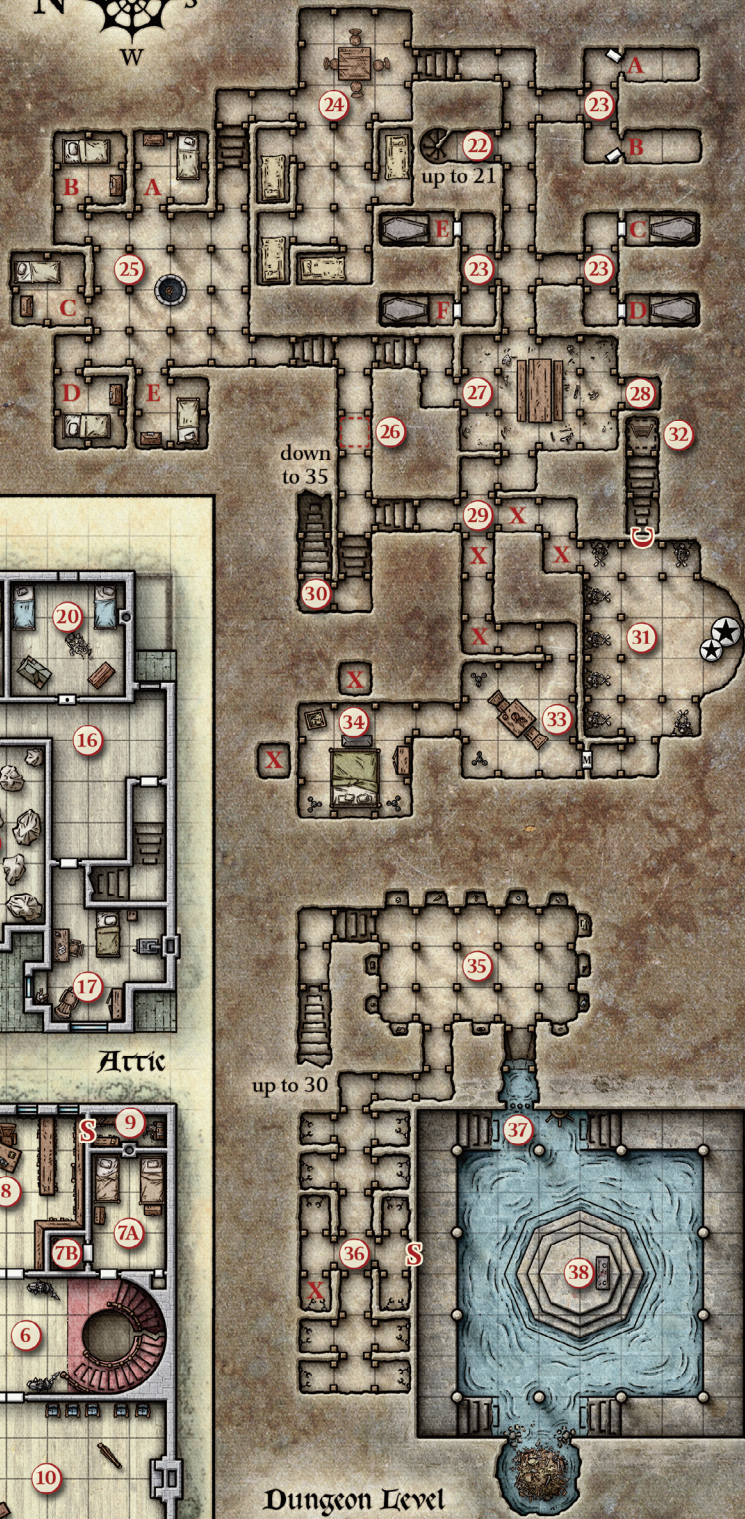




Front View



# Death House



Third Floor



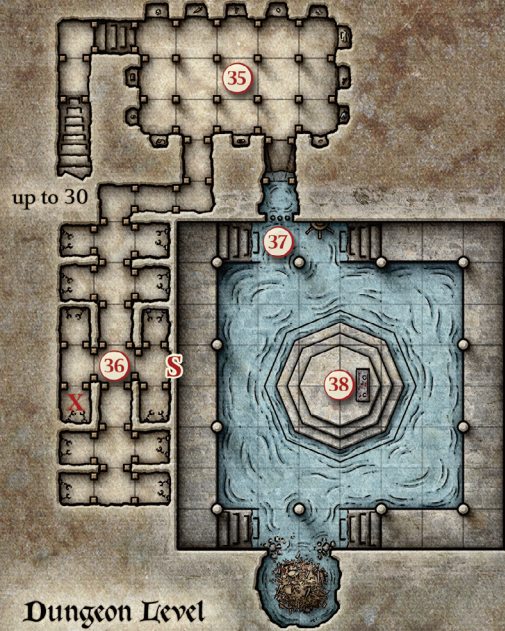
Attic



First Floor



Second Floor



Dungeon Level

One square = 5 feet



## ROSE AND THORN

If either the dollhouse or the chest is disturbed, the ghosts of Rose and Thorn appear in the middle of the room. Use the **ghost** statistics in the *Monster Manual*, with the following modifications:

- The ghosts are Small and lawful good.
- They have 35 (10d6) hit points each.
- They lack the Horrifying Visage action.
- They speak Common and have a challenge rating of 3 (700 XP).

The children don't like it when the characters disturb their toys, but they fight only in self-defense. Unlike the illusions outside the house, these children know that they're dead. If asked how they died, Rose and Thorn explain that their parents locked them in the attic to protect them from "the monster in the basement," and that they died from hunger. If asked how one gets to the basement, Rose points to the dollhouse and says, "There's a secret door in the attic." Characters who then search the dollhouse for secret doors gain advantage on their Wisdom (Perception) checks to find them.

The children fear abandonment. If one or more characters try to leave, the ghost-children attempt to possess them. If one of the ghosts possesses a character, allow the player to retain control of the character, but assign the character one of the following flaws:

- A character possessed by Rose gains the following flaw: "I like being in charge and get angry when other people tell me what to do."
- A character possessed by Thorn gains the following flaw: "I'm scared of everything, including my own shadow, and weep with despair when things don't go my way."

A character possessed by the ghost of Rose or Thorn won't willingly leave Death House or the dungeon below it. Both ghosts can be intimidated into leaving their hosts with a successful DC 11 Charisma (Intimidation) check made as an action.

A ghost reduced to 0 hit points can reform at dawn the next day. The only way to put the children's spirits to rest is to put their skeletal remains in their tombs (areas 23E and 23F). The children don't know this, however.

## DEVELOPMENT

If the party lays the children's spirits to rest, each character gains inspiration (see "Inspiration" in chapter 4, "Personality and Background," of the *Player's Handbook*).

## 21. SECRET STAIRS

A narrow spiral staircase made of creaky wood is contained within a 5-foot-wide shaft of mortared stone that starts in the attic and descends 50 feet to the dungeon level, passing through the lower levels of the house as it makes its descent. Thick cobwebs fill the shaft and reduce visibility in the staircase to 5 feet.

The secret door and shaft don't exist until the house reveals them, which can happen in one of two ways:

- The characters find Strahd's letter in the secret room behind the library (area 9).

## DUNGEON FEATURES

The dungeon level underneath Death House is carved out of earth, clay, and rock. The tunnels are 4 feet wide by 7 feet high with timber braces at 5-foot intervals. Rooms are 8 feet tall and supported by thick wooden posts with crossbeams. The only exception is area 38, which has a 16-foot-high ceiling supported by stone pillars. Characters without darkvision must provide their own light sources, as the dungeon is unlit.

As the characters explore the dungeon, they see centuries-old human footprints in the earthen floor leading every which way.

- The characters find the replica secret door in the attic of the dollhouse (area 20).

Once the house wills the secret door into existence, characters find it automatically if they search the wall (no ability check required). Characters who descend the spiral staircase end up in area 22.

## 22. DUNGEON LEVEL ACCESS

The wooden spiral staircase from the attic ends here. A narrow tunnel stretches southward before branching east and west.

### GHOSTLY CHANTING

From the moment they arrive in the dungeon, the characters can hear an eerie, incessant chant echoing throughout. It's impossible to gauge where the sound is coming from until the characters reach area 26 or 29. They can't discern its words until they reach area 35.

## 23. FAMILY CRYPTS

Several crypts have been hewn from the earth. Each crypt is sealed with a stone slab unless noted otherwise. Removing a slab from its fitting requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check; using a crowbar or the like grants advantage on the check.

### 23A. EMPTY CRYPT

The blank stone slab meant to seal this crypt leans against a nearby wall. The crypt is empty.

### 23B. WALTER'S CRYPT

The stone slab meant to seal this crypt leans against a nearby wall. Etched into it is the name Walter Durst. The crypt is empty.

### 23C. GUSTAV'S CRYPT

The stone slab is etched with the name Gustav Durst. The chamber beyond contains an empty coffin atop a stone bier.

### 23D. ELISABETH'S CRYPT

The stone slab is etched with the name Elisabeth Durst. The crypt contains a stone bier with an empty coffin atop it. A **swarm of insects** (centipedes) boils out of the back wall and attacks if the coffin is disturbed.

### 23E. ROSE'S CRYPT

The stone slab is etched with the name Rosavalda Durst. The chamber beyond contains an empty coffin on a stone bier.



If Rose's skeletal remains (see area 20) are placed in the coffin, the child's ghost finds peace and disappears forever. A character possessed by Rose's ghost when this occurs is no longer possessed (see also the "Development" section in area 20).

### 23F. THORN'S CRYPT

The stone slab is etched with the name Thornboldt Durst. The chamber beyond contains an empty coffin on a stone bier.

If Thorn's skeletal remains (see area 20) are placed in the coffin, the child's ghost finds peace and disappears forever. A character possessed by Thorn's ghost when this occurs is no longer possessed (see also the "Development" section in area 20).

## 24. CULT INITIATES' QUARTERS

A wooden table and four chairs stand at the east end of this room. To the west are four alcoves containing moldy straw pallets.

## 25. WELL AND CULTIST QUARTERS

A 4-foot-diameter well shaft with a 3-foot-high stone lip descends 30 feet to a water-filled cistern. A wooden bucket hangs from a rope-and-pulley mechanism bolted to the crossbeams above the well.

Five side rooms once served as quarters for senior cultists. Each contains a wood-framed bed with a moldy straw mattress and a wooden chest to hold personal belongings. Each chest is secured with a rusty iron padlock that can be picked with thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.

### TREASURE

In addition to some worthless personal effects, each chest contains one or more valuable items.

- 25A.** This room's chest contains 11 gp and 60 sp in a pouch made of human skin.
- 25B.** This room's chest contains three moss agates (worth 10 gp each) in a folded piece of black cloth.
- 25C.** This room's chest contains a black leather eyepatch with a carnelian (worth 50 gp) sewn into it.
- 25D.** This room's chest contains an ivory hairbrush with silver bristles (worth 25 gp).
- 25E.** This room's chest contains a silvered shortsword (worth 110 gp).

## 26. HIDDEN SPIKED PIT

The ghostly chanting heard throughout the dungeon gets discernibly louder as one heads west along this tunnel. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals an absence of footprints. Characters searching the floor for traps find a 5-foot-long, 10-foot-deep pit hidden under several rotted wooden planks, all hidden under a thin layer of dirt. The pit has sharpened wooden spikes at the bottom. The first character to step on the cover falls through, landing prone and taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall plus 11 (2d10) piercing damage from the spikes.

## 27. DINING HALL

This room contains a plain wooden table flanked by long benches. Moldy humanoid bones lie strewn on the dirt floor—the remains of the cult's vile banquets.

In the middle of the south wall is a darkened alcove (area 28). Characters who approach within 5 feet of the alcove provoke the creature that lurks there.

## 28. LARDER

This alcove contains a **grick** that slithers out to attack the first character it sees within 5 feet of it. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score under 12 is surprised by it. The alcove is otherwise empty.

## 29. GHOULISH ENCOUNTER

The ghostly chanting heard throughout the dungeon is noticeably louder to the north. When one or more characters reach the midpoint of the four-way tunnel intersection, four **ghouls** (former cultists) rise up out of the ground in the spaces marked X on the map and attack. The ghouls fight until destroyed.

## 30. STAIRS DOWN

It's obvious to any character standing at the top of this 20-foot-long staircase that the ghostly chants originate from somewhere below. Characters who descend the stairs and follow the hall beyond arrive in area 35.

## 31. DARKLORD'S SHRINE

This room is festooned with moldy skeletons that hang from rusty shackles against the walls. A wide alcove in the south wall contains a painted wooden statue carved in the likeness of a gaunt, pale-faced man wearing a voluminous black cloak, his pale left hand resting on the head of a wolf that stands next to him. In his right hand, he holds a smoky-gray crystal orb.

The room has exits in the west and north walls. Chanting can be heard coming from the west.

The statue depicts Strahd, to whom the cultists made sacrifices in the vain hope that he might reveal his darkest secrets to them. If the characters touch the statue or take the crystal orb from Strahd's hand, five **shadows** form around the statue and attack them. The shadows (the spirits of former cultists) pursue those who flee beyond the room's confines.

The skeletons on the wall are harmless decor.

### CONCEALED DOOR

Characters searching the room for secret doors find a concealed door in the middle of the east wall with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check. It's basically an ordinary (albeit rotted) wooden door hidden under a layer of clay. The door pulls open to reveal a stone staircase that climbs 10 feet to a landing (area 32).



### TREASURE

The crystal orb is worth 25 gp. It can be used as an arcane focus but is not magical.

## 32. HIDDEN TRAPDOOR

The staircase ends at a landing with a 6-foot-high ceiling of close-fitting planks with a wooden trapdoor set into it. The trapdoor is bolted shut from this side and can be pushed open to reveal the den (area 3) above.

### DEVELOPMENT

Once the trapdoor has been found and opened, it remains available to characters as a way into and out of the dungeon level.

## 33. CULT LEADERS' DEN

The door in the southwest corner is a **mimic** in disguise. Any creature that touches the door becomes adhered to the creature, whereupon the mimic attacks. The mimic also attacks if its takes any damage.

A chandelier is suspended above a table in the middle of the room. Two high-backed chairs flank the table, which has an empty clay jug and two clay flagons atop it. Iron candlesticks stand in two corners, their candles long since melted away.

## 34. CULT LEADERS' QUARTERS

This room contains a large wood-framed bed with a rotted feather mattress, a wardrobe containing several old robes, a pair of iron candlesticks, and an open crate containing thirty torches and a leather sack with fifteen candles inside it. At the foot of the bed is an unlocked wooden footlocker containing some gear and magic items (see "Treasure" below).

Two **ghasts** (Gustav and Elisabeth Durst) are hidden in cavities behind the earthen walls, marked X on the map; they burst forth and attack if someone removes one or more items from the footlocker. The ghasts wear tattered black robes.

### TREASURE

Characters searching the footlocker find a folded *cloak of protection*, a small wooden coffer (unlocked) containing four *potions of healing*, a chain shirt, a mess kit, a flask of alchemist's fire, a bullseye lantern, a set of thieves' tools, and a spellbook with a yellow leather cover containing the following wizard spells:

1st level: *disguise self*, *identify*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *protection from evil and good*

2nd level: *darkvision*, *hold person*, *invisibility*, *magic weapon*

These items were taken from adventurers who were drawn into Barovia, captured, and killed by the cult.

## 35. RELIQUARY

The ghostly chant emanating from area 38 fills this room. Characters can discern a dozen or so voices saying, over and over, "He is the Ancient. He is the Land."

The cult amassed several "relics" that it used in its rituals. These worthless items are stored in thirteen niches along the walls:

- A small, mummified, yellow hand with sharp claws (a goblin's hand) on a loop of rope
- A knife carved from a human bone
- A dagger with a rat's skull set into the pommel
- An 8-inch-diameter varnished orb made from a nothic's eye
- An aspergillum carved from bone
- A folded cloak made from stitched ghoulish skin
- A desiccated frog lashed to a stick (could be mistaken for a *wand of polymorph*)
- A bag full of bat guano
- A hag's severed finger
- A 6-inch-tall wooden figurine of a mummy, its arms crossed over its chest
- An iron pendant adorned with a devil's face
- The shrunken, shriveled head of a halfling
- A small wooden coffer containing a dire wolf's withered tongue

The southernmost tunnel slopes down at a 20-degree angle into murky water and ends at a rusty portcullis (area 37).

## 36. PRISON

The cultists shackled prisoners to the back walls of alcoves here. The prisoners are long gone (their bones litter the floor in area 27), but the rusty shackles remain.

### SECRET DOOR

A secret door in the south wall can be found with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check and pulls open to reveal area 38 beyond.

### TREASURE

Hanging on the back wall of the cell marked X on the map is a human skeleton clad in a tattered black robe. The skeleton belongs to a cult member who questioned the cult's blind devotion to Strahd. Characters who search the skeleton find a gold ring (worth 25 gp) on one of its bony fingers.

## 37. PORTCULLIS

This tunnel is blocked by a rusty iron portcullis that can be forcibly lifted with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. Otherwise, the portcullis can be raised or lowered by turning a wooden wheel half-embedded in the east wall of area 38. (The wheel is beyond the reach of someone east of the portcullis.) The floor around the portcullis is submerged under 2 feet of murky water.

## 38. RITUAL CHAMBER

The cult used to perform rituals in this sunken room. The chanting heard throughout the dungeon originates here, yet when the characters arrive, the dungeon falls silent as the chanting mysteriously stops.



The chanting stops as you peer into this forty-foot-square room. The smooth masonry walls provide excellent acoustics. Featureless stone pillars support the ceiling, and a breach in the west wall leads to a dark cave heaped with refuse. Murky water covers most of the floor. Stairs lead up to dry stone ledges that hug the walls. In the middle of the room, more stairs rise to form an octagonal dais that also rises above the water. Rusty chains with shackles dangle from the ceiling directly above a stone altar mounted on the dais. The altar is carved with hideous depictions of grasping ghouls and is stained with dry blood.

The water is 2 feet deep. The ledges and central dais are 5 feet high (3 feet higher than the water's surface), and the chamber's ceiling is 16 feet high (11 feet above the dais and ledges). The chains dangling from the ceiling are 8 feet long; the cultists would shackle prisoners to the chains, dangle them above the altar, cut them open with knives, and allow the altar to be bathed in blood.

Half embedded in the east wall is a wooden wheel connected to hidden chains and mechanisms. A character can use an action to turn the wheel, raising or lowering the nearby portcullis (see area 37).

The hole in the west wall leads to a naturally formed alcove. The half-submerged pile of refuse that fills it is a **shambling mound**, which the cultists dubbed Lorghoth the Decayer. It is asleep but awakens if attacked or if the characters summon the cultists but refuse to complete their ritual (see "One Must Die!" below). A character standing next to the mound can discern its true nature with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check.

### "ONE MUST DIE!"

If any character climbs to the top of the dais, read:

The chanting rises once more as thirteen dark apparitions appear on the ledges overlooking the room. Each one resembles a black-robed figure holding a torch, but the torch's fire is black and seems to draw light into it. Where you'd expect to see faces are voids.

"One must die!" they chant, over and over. "One must die! One must die!"

The apparitions are harmless figments that can't be damaged, turned, or dispelled.

Characters on the dais when the cultists appear must sacrifice a creature on the altar or face the cult's wrath; characters can ascertain what must be done with a successful DC 11 Intelligence (Religion) or Wisdom (Insight) check. To count as a sacrifice, a creature must die on the altar. The apparitions don't care what kind of creature is sacrificed, and they aren't fooled by illusions.

If the characters make the sacrifice, the cultists fade away, but their tireless chant of "He is the Ancient. He is the Land," echoes again in the dungeon. Strahd is aware

of the sacrifice, and Death House now does nothing to hinder the characters (see "Endings" below).

If the characters leave the dais without making the sacrifice, the cultists' chant changes: "Lorghoth the Decayer, we awaken thee!" This chant rouses the shambling mound and prompts it to attack. It pursues prey beyond the room but won't leave the dungeon. It can move through tunnels without squeezing and completely fills its space. At the start of the shambling mound's first turn, the chant changes again: "The end comes! Death, be praised!" If the shambling mound dies, the chanting stops and the apparitions vanish forever.

## ENDINGS

The mists of Ravenloft continue to surround Death House until the characters stand atop the dais and either appease or defy the cultists. Strahd is satisfied either way, prompting the mists to recede.

### THE CULT IS APPEASED

Death House harbors no ill will toward a party willing to sacrifice a life to appease the cult. Once the sacrifice is made, the characters are free to go. Upon emerging from the house, the characters advance to 3rd level.

### THE CULT IS DENIED

If the characters deny the cult its sacrifice and either destroy the shambling mound or escape from it, Death House attacks them as they try to leave. When they return upstairs, they must roll initiative as they discover several architectural changes:

- All the windows are bricked up; the bricked-up windows and the outer walls are impervious to the party's weapon attacks and damage-dealing spells.
- All the doors are gone, replaced by slashing scythe-blades. A character must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to pass through a blade-trapped doorway unscathed. A character who spends 1 minute studying the blades in a particular doorway can try to take advantage of a momentary gap in their repeating movements and make a DC 15 Intelligence check instead. Failing either check, a character takes 2d10 slashing damage but manages to pass through the doorway. Any creature pushed through a doorway must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take the damage. The blades can't be disarmed.
- Every room that contains a fireplace, an oven, or a stove is filled with poisonous black smoke. The room is heavily obscured, and any creature that starts its turn in the smoke must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 1d10 poison damage.
- The interior walls become rotted and brittle. Each 5-foot-section has AC 5 and 5 hit points, and can also be destroyed with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. Each 5-foot section of wall that's destroyed causes a **swarm of rats** to pour out and attack. The swarm won't leave the house.

Keep track of initiative as the characters make their way through the house. Once they escape, they advance to 3rd level, and the house does no more to harm them.





## Sage Advice

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### CHARACTER CREATION

#### How do you calculate a creature's Armor Class (AC)?

Chapter 1 of the *Player's Handbook* (p. 14) describes how to determine AC, yet AC calculations generate questions frequently. That fact isn't too surprising, given the number of ways the game gives you to change your AC!

Here are some ways to calculate your base AC:

- **Unarmored:** 10 + your Dexterity modifier.
- **Armored:** Use the AC entry for the armor you're wearing (see PH, 145). For example, in leather armor, you calculate your AC as 11 + your Dexterity modifier, and in chain mail, your AC is simply 16.
- **Unarmored Defense (Barbarian):** 10 + your Dexterity modifier + your Constitution modifier.

- **Unarmored Defense (Monk):** 10 + your Dexterity modifier + your Wisdom modifier.
- **Draconic Resilience (Sorcerer):** 13 + your Dexterity modifier.
- **Natural Armor:** 10 + your Dexterity modifier + your natural armor bonus. This is a calculation method typically used only by monsters and NPCs, although it is also relevant to a druid or another character who assumes a form that has natural armor.

## CHARACTER

These methods—along with any others that give you a formula for calculating your AC—are mutually exclusive; you can benefit from only one at a time. If you have access to more than one, you pick which one to use. For example, if you're a sorcerer/monk, you can use either Unarmored Defense or Draconic Resilience, not both. Similarly, a druid/barbarian who transforms into a beast form that has natural armor can use either the beast's natural armor or Unarmored Defense (you aren't considered to be wearing armor with natural armor).

What about a shield? A shield increases your AC by 2 while you use it. For example, if you're unarmored and use a shield, your AC is 12 + your Dexterity modifier. Keep in mind that some AC calculations, such as a monk's Unarmored Defense, prohibit the use of a shield.

Once you have your base AC, it can be temporarily modified by situational bonuses and penalties. For instance, having half cover gives you a +2 bonus to your AC, and three-quarters cover gives a +5 bonus. Spells sometimes modify AC as well. *Shield of faith*, for example, grants a target a +2 bonus to AC until the spell ends.

Magic items can also enhance your AC. Here are a few examples: *+1 chain mail* gives you an AC of 17, a *ring of protection* gives you a +1 bonus to AC no matter what you're wearing, and *bracers of defense* grant you a +2 bonus to AC if you're not wearing armor or using a shield.



## SPELLS AND ARMOR

### Does Unarmored Defense work with a spell like mage armor?

Unarmored Defense doesn't work with *mage armor*. You might be asking yourself, "Why don't they work together? *Mage armor* specifies that it works on a creature who isn't wearing armor." It's true that the target of *mage armor* must be unarmored, but *mage armor* gives you a new way to calculate your AC (13 + your Dexterity modifier) and is therefore incompatible with Unarmored Defense or any other feature that provides an AC calculation.

### How does *barkskin* work with shields, cover, and other modifiers to AC?

*Barkskin* specifies that your AC can't be lower than 16 while you are affected by the spell. This means you effectively ignore any modifiers to your AC—including your Dexterity modifier, your armor, a shield, and cover—unless your AC is higher than 16. For example, if your AC is normally 14, it's 16 while *barkskin* is on you. If your AC is 15 and you have half cover, your AC is 17; *barkskin* isn't relevant in this case, because your AC is now higher than 16.



(Select to view)

## Can you extend the duration of *armor of Agathys* by gaining more temporary hit points?

The spell is meant to work only as long as you have the temporary hit points that the spell grants. When those temporary hit points are gone, the spell is done.

Keep in mind that temporary hit points aren't cumulative (see PH, 198). If you have temporary hit points and receive more of them, you don't add them together, unless a game feature says you can. You decide which temporary hit points to keep. As an example, let's say you're a warlock with the Dark One's Blessing feature, which gives you temporary hit points when you reduce a creature to 0 hit points. You currently have 2 temporary hit points from *armor of Agathys*, you just slew a monster, and your Dark One's Blessing can now give you 4 temporary hit points. If you take those temporary hit points, they replace the ones from *armor of Agathys* and end that spell, so you might not want to take them and keep the spell going.

## Do the temporary hit points from *heroism* accumulate each round?

These temporary hit points aren't cumulative. The spell would tell you if you were meant to add them together. At the start of each of your turns, the spell, effectively, refreshes the number of temporary hit points you have from it; if you lost some or all of the temporary hit points, the spell gives them back to you.

### TAKING A SECOND LOOK AT A RULING

I'm constantly revisiting the rules of the game. As a DM, I use them in the games I run. As a designer and editor, I refer to them every week to ensure that future D&D books are on course. As the Sage, I consider them from different angles when new questions arrive in my inbox and on Twitter. This sometimes leads me to reconsider a ruling I've made.

In this installment of Sage Advice, there's an example of me revisiting a ruling. On Twitter, I recently gave a different explanation for how *barkskin* works and, by extension, how shields work. What I said was based on the game's text, but the text is sometimes inconsistent on how shields are treated. In my official ruling here in



Sage Advice, I've decided to counter what I said on Twitter about *barkskin* and shields to go with a simpler explanation—one that is also supported by the text and that more closely aligns with our design intent.

In the [Sage Advice Compendium](#), I've also changed my ruling on the Savage Attacker feat, which I originally addressed in November 2015. The original ruling was simply off-base—I read the feat too fast—so I've fixed it.

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## ERRATA

Earlier this year, we released the *Player's Handbook* errata document to correct and clarify some things in that book. Now we're releasing similar documents for the *Monster Manual* and the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

### OTHER RESOURCES

If you're interested in seeing what's changed and already have a copy of these books, we have prepared two short PDFs that list the changes (not including minor typo corrections):

[Monster Manual](#) Errata

[Dungeon Master's Guide](#) Errata

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeremy Crawford is the co-lead designer of fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons. He was the lead designer of the fifth edition *Player's Handbook* and one of the leads on the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. He has worked on many other D&D books since coming to Wizards of the Coast in 2007.

### HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have questions for a future installment of Sage Advice, please send them to [sageadvice@wizards.com](mailto:sageadvice@wizards.com), or reach him on Twitter ([@JeremyECrawford](#)), where he answers questions between installments of this column.



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# PLAYER'S HANDBOOK ERRATA

This document corrects or clarifies some rules in the fifth edition *Player's Handbook*. Recent printings of it include revised text that reflects the explanations here.

## RACES

### **Dwarven Combat Training (p. 20).**

Dwarves are proficient with the light hammer, not the throwing hammer.

**Drow Magic (p. 24).** Here “once per day” means you must finish a long rest to cast the spell again with the trait.

**Infernal Legacy (p. 43).** Here “once per day” means you must finish a long rest to cast the spell again with the trait.

## BARD

**Song of Rest (p. 54).** A creature regains the extra hit points only if it spends one or more Hit Dice at the end of the short rest.

## FIGHTER

**Feinting Attack (p. 74).** The advantage is lost if not used on the turn you gain it.

## MONK

**Deflect Missiles (p. 78).** The range of the monk's ranged attack is 20/60 feet.

**Eternal Mountain Defense (p. 81).** A monk must be 17th level, not 11th, to learn this discipline.

**Water Whip (p. 81).** This discipline requires an action, not a bonus action.

## PALADIN

**Divine Smite (p. 85).** You can expend any spell slot, not just a paladin spell slot.

## RANGER

**Ranger's Companion (p. 93).** Like any creature, the beast can spend Hit Dice during a short rest. If you are incapacitated or absent, the beast acts on its own, focusing on protecting you and itself. It never requires your command to use its reaction, such as when making an opportunity attack.

**Bestial Fury (p. 93).** When you command the beast to take the Attack action, the beast can attack twice or take the Multiattack action if it has that action.

## SORCERER

**Flexible Casting (p. 101).** The created spell slots vanish at the end of a long rest.

**Twinned Spell (p. 102).** To be eligible for Twinned Spell, a spell must be incapable of targeting more than one creature at the spell's current level.

**Elemental Affinity (p. 102).** The damage bonus applies to one damage roll of a spell, not multiple rolls.

**Wild Magic Surge (p. 103).** A surge can happen once per turn. If a surge effect is a spell, it's too wild to be affected by Metam-

agic. If it normally requires concentration, it doesn't require concentration in this case; the spell lasts for its full duration.

## WARLOCK

**Quick Build (p. 106).** *Ray of sickness* should be *charm person*.

**Pact of the Chain (p. 107).** When you let your familiar attack, it does so with its reaction.

**Pact of the Tome (p. 108).** The cantrips are considered warlock spells for you, and they needn't be from the same spell list.

**Eldritch Invocations (p. 110).** A level prerequisite in an invocation refers to warlock level, not character level.

**Book of Ancient Secrets (p. 110).** The rituals needn't be from the same spell list.

## WIZARD

**Your Spellbook (p. 114).** The spells copied into a spellbook must be of a spell level the wizard can prepare.

**Spellbook (p. 114).** A spellbook doesn't contain cantrips.

**Empowered Evocation (p. 117).** The damage bonus applies to one damage roll of a spell, not multiple rolls.

**Overchannel (p. 118).** The feature doesn't benefit cantrips.

## EQUIPMENT

**Ammunition (p. 146).** Loading a one-handed weapon requires a free hand.

**Reach (p. 147).** This property also determines your reach for opportunity attacks with a reach weapon.

**Two-Handed (p. 147).** This property is relevant only when you attack with the weapon, not when you simply hold it.

**Weapons (p. 149).** Unarmed strike doesn't belong on the Weapons table.

## MULTICLASSING

**Class Features (p. 164).** You gain the starting equipment of your first class only.

## FEATS

**Athlete (p. 165).** The third benefit should instead say climbing doesn't cost you extra movement.

**Grappler (p. 167).** Ignore the third benefit; it refers to a nonexistent rule.

**Magic Initiate (p. 168).** The feat's limit on casting the 1st-level spell applies only to the casting given by the feat.

**Martial Adept (p. 168).** The superiority die is added to any others you have, no matter when you gain them.

**Polearm Master (p. 168).** The bonus attack uses the same ability modifier as the main attack.

**Sentinel (p. 169).** Ignore “within 5 feet of you” in the second benefit.

**Tavern Brawler (p. 170).** The feat doesn't give you proficiency with unarmed strikes, since you're already proficient.

**Weapon Master (p. 170).** The chosen weapons must be simple or martial.

## USING ABILITY SCORES

**Hiding (p. 177).** The DM decides when circumstances are appropriate for hiding. Also, the question isn't whether a creature can see you when you're hiding. The question is whether it can see you clearly.

## ADVENTURING

**Suffocating (p. 183).** If you run out of breath or are choking, you can't regain hit points or be stabilized until you can breathe again.

**Vision and Light (p. 183).** A heavily obscured area doesn't blind you, but you are effectively blinded when you try to see something obscured by it.

**Long Rest (p. 186).** You regain at least 1 Hit Die when you finish a long rest.

## COMBAT

**Ready (p. 193).** You have until the start of your next turn to use a readied action.

**Melee Attacks (p. 195).** The rule on unarmed strikes should read as follows: “Instead of using a weapon to make a melee weapon attack, you can use an **unarmed strike**: a punch, kick, head-butt, or similar forceful blow (none of which count as weapons). On a hit, an unarmed strike deals bludgeoning damage equal to 1 + your Strength modifier. You are proficient with your unarmed strikes.”

## SPELLS

**Paladin Spells (p. 209).** The spell is *destructive wave*, not *destructive smite*.

**Wizard Spells (p. 211).** *Trap the soul* shouldn't appear on the spell list.

**Mass Cure Wounds (p. 258).** This spell's school is evocation, not conjuration.

**Mass Heal (p. 258).** This spell's school is evocation, not conjuration.

**Phantasmal Killer (p. 265).** The frightened target makes a save at the end of its turns, not the start.

**Polymorph (p. 266).** This spell can't affect a target that has 0 hit points.

**Revivify (p. 272).** This spell's school is necromancy, not conjuration.

**True Polymorph (p. 283).** This spell can't affect a target that has 0 hit points.

**Weird (p. 288).** The frightened target makes a save at the end of its turns, not the start.

## CREATURE STATISTICS

If in doubt, the *Monster Manual* version of a creature's stat block is authoritative.

# MONSTER MANUAL ERRATA

This document corrects and clarifies some text in the fifth edition *Monster Manual*. Recent printings of the book, starting with the third, include these changes.

## GLOBAL

**Damage Resistances/Immunities.** Throughout the book, instances of “nonmagical weapons” in Damage Resistances/Immunities entries have been replaced with “nonmagical attacks.”

## INTRODUCTION

**Vulnerabilities, Resistances, and Immunities (p. 8).** The second and third sentences now read as follows: “Particular creatures are even resistant or immune to damage from nonmagical attacks (a magical attack is an attack delivered by a spell, a magic item, or another magical source). In addition, some creatures are immune to certain conditions.”

**Spellcasting (p. 10).** The second paragraph ends with a new sentence: “The monster is considered a member of that class when attuning to or using a magic item that requires membership in the class or access to its spell list.”

**Legendary Creatures (p. 11).** This section has been tightened up to include the following new rules:

- The opening has a new second paragraph: “If a creature assumes the form of a legendary creature, such as through a spell, it doesn’t gain that form’s legendary actions, lair actions, or regional effects.”
- The final sentence of the “Legendary Actions” section is now two sentences: “It can forgo using them, and it can’t use them while incapacitated or otherwise unable to take actions. If surprised, it can’t use them until after its first turn in the combat.”
- The final sentence of the “Lair Actions” section is now three sentences: “On initiative count 20 (losing all initiative ties), it can use one of its lair action options. It can’t do so while incapacitated or otherwise unable to take actions. If surprised, it can’t use one until after its first turn in the combat.”

## MONSTERS A TO Z

To aid reference, the following revisions are listed in alphabetical order by monster name. If a change is to a stat block, the name of the stat block entry is given, along with whatever changed in it.

**Aarakocra (p. 12).** Languages: added Aarakocra.

**Acolyte (p. 342).** Senses: passive Perception 12 [was 10].

**Adult Brass Dragon (p. 105).** Fire Breath: Avg. damage is 45 [was 49].

**Ancient Black Dragon (p. 87).** XP: 33,000 [was 27,500].

**Ancient Blue Dragon (p. 90).** XP: 50,000 [was 32,500].

**Ancient Brass Dragon (p. 104).** XP: 25,000 [was 24,500].

**Ancient Bronze Dragon (p. 107).** XP: 41,000 [was 30,000].

**Ancient Copper Dragon (p. 110).** XP: 33,000 [was 27,500].

**Ancient Gold Dragon (p. 113).** XP: 62,000 [was 36,500].

**Ancient Green Dragon (p. 93).** XP: 41,000 [was 30,000].

**Ancient Red Dragon (p. 97).** XP: 62,000 [was 36,500].

**Ancient Silver Dragon (p. 116).** XP: 50,000 [was 32,500].

**Ancient White Dragon (p. 100).** XP: 25,000 [was 24,500].

**Ankheg (p. 21).** Bite: Avg. damage is 10 [was 9].

**Assassin (p. 343).** Saving throws: Dex +6, Int +4 [each was 1 higher]. Skills: Acrobatics +6 [was +7], Deception +3 [was +4], Perception +3 [was +4], Stealth +9 [was +11]. Senses: passive Perception 13 [was 14]. Sneak Attack: Avg. damage is 14 [was 13]. Shortsword and light crossbow: +6 to hit [was +7].

**Banshee (p. 23).** Saving throws: Cha +5 [was +4].

**Barlgura (p. 56).** Speed: 40 ft., climb 40 ft. [each was 30 ft.].

**Beholder Zombie (p. 316).** Condition immunities: added prone.

**Cloud Giant (p. 154).** Saving throws: Con +10 [was +9].

**Cult Fanatic (p. 345).** Senses: passive Perception 11 [was 10].

**Death Knight (p. 47).** Added an “Undead Nature” section to its description: “A death knight doesn’t require air, food, drink, or sleep.”

**Deva (p. 16).** Skills: Insight +9 [was +7].

**Diseased Giant Rat (p. 327).** Bite: +4 to hit, 4 (1d4 + 2) damage [each was 1 lower].

**Dragon Turtle (p. 119).** Saving throws: Dex +6, Con +11, Wis +7 [each was 1 lower]. Bite, Claw, and Tail: +13 to hit [was +12].

**Drider (p. 120).** Longbow: range 150/600 ft. [was 120/600].

**Drow Elite Warrior (p. 128).** Shortsword: reach 5 ft. [was 10 ft.].

**Druid (p. 346).** Quarterstaff: 6 (1d8 + 2) damage with *shillelagh* [was 1d8].

**Elephant (p. 322).** Gore: 19 (3d8 + 6) [was 3d8 + 5]. Stomp: 22 (3d10 + 6) damage [was 3d10 + 5].

**Empyrean (p. 130).** XP: 50,000 [was 32,500].

**Ettercap (p. 131).** Web: the webbing is vulnerable to fire damage and immune to bludgeoning damage.

**Flameskull (p. 134).** Speed: it can hover. Condition immunities: added prone.

**Flying Sword (p. 20).** Speed: it can hover.

**Ghost (p. 147).** Speed: it can hover.

**Goblin Boss (p. 166).** Javelin: +2 to hit, 3 (1d6) damage [each was 2 higher].

**Gold Dragon Wyrmling (p. 115).** Saving throws: Con +5 [was +6].

**Gynosphinx (p. 282).** Skills: Arcana +12, History +12 [each was 2 higher], Perception +8, Religion +8 [each was 1 higher]. Senses: passive Perception 18 [was 19]. Spellcasting: spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks [each was 1 higher]. Claw: +8 to hit [was 1 higher]. Teleport: up to 120 feet [was 12 feet].

**Guard (p. 347).** Spear: Added “or 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.”

**Half-Dragon (p. 180).** Cut the Saving Throws line and the Parry ability from the stat block. Added the following about challenge rating: “To avoid recalculating the creature’s challenge rating, apply the template only to a creature that meets the optional prerequisite in the Breath Weapon table below. Otherwise, use the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide* to recalculate the rating after you apply the template.”

Size	Breath Weapon	Optional Prerequisite
Large or smaller	As a wyrmling	Challenge 2 or higher
Huge	As a young dragon	Challenge 7 or higher
Gargantuan	As an adult dragon	Challenge 8 or higher

**Harpy (p. 181).** Luring song: “the target can take the Dash action on its turn to move ...” is now “the target must move on its turn ...”

**Horned Devil (p. 74).** Hit points: Avg. hit points is 148 [was 178]. We realized after the book went to print that we changed the wrong part of the entry—should be 178 (17d10 + 85).

**Intellect Devourer (p. 191).** Body thief: Appended this to the first sentence: “... that isn’t protected by protection from evil and good.” Later, “the host body drops to 0 hit points” is now “the host body dies.”

**Kraken (p. 197).** Saving throws: Str +17, Dex +7, Con +14, Int +13, Wis +11 [each was 1 higher]. Bite and Tentacle: +17 to hit [each was 1 higher].



**Kuo-toa Archpriest (p. 200).** Unarmed strike: 5 (1d4 + 3) [was 1d4 + 2].

**Magmin (p. 212).** Touch: “creature” is now “target.”

**Merrow (p. 219).** Senses: passive Perception 10 [was 12].

**Monodrone (p. 224).** Javelin: +2 to hit, 3 (1d6) damage [each was 1 higher].

**Night Hag (p. 178).** Innate spellcasting: spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks [each was 1 lower]. Claws: +7 to hit [was +6].

**Noble (p. 348).** Senses: passive Perception 12 [was 10].

**Orc War Chief (p. 246).** Greataxe: One target [was one creature], and avg. damage is 15 [was 14].

**Otyugh (p. 248).** Tentacle slam: Constitution saving throw [was Strength saving throw].

**Quaggoth (p. 256).** Senses: passive Perception 11 [was 10].

**Rakshasa (p. 257).** Limited magic immunity: the first sentence now reads, “The rakshasa can’t be affected or detected by spells of 6th level or lower unless it wishes to be.”

**Riding Horse (p. 336).** Hooves: +5 to hit [was +2].

**Solar (p. 18).** Slaying longbow: range 150/600 ft. [was 120/600].

**Swarm of X (p. 337–39).** Condition immunities: every swarm is immune to being grappled.

**Troll (p. 291).** Skills: Perception +2 [was +1]. Senses: Passive perception 12 [was 11].

**Vampire, Spellcaster (p. 298).** Spellcasting: spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks [each was 1 lower].

**Veteran (p. 350).** Heavy crossbow: 6 (1d10 + 1) damage [was 1d10].

**Warhorse (p. 340).** Hooves: +6 to hit [was +4].

**Water Elemental (p. 125).** Whelm: added the word “check” after “DC 14 Strength” in the final sentence.

**Will-o’-Wisp (p. 301).** Invisibility: the reference to “Life Drain” is now to “Consume Life.”

**Young Brass Dragon (p. 105).** Saving throws: Dex +3, Con +6, Wis +3, Cha +5 [each was 2 higher]. Skills: Perception +6 [was +10], Persuasion +5 [was +7], Stealth +3 [was +5]. Senses: passive Perception 16 [was 20]. Bite and Claw: +7 to hit [was +9].

# DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE ERRATA

This document corrects and clarifies some text in the fifth edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Recent printings of the book, starting with the third, include these changes.

## CHAPTER 1

**The Calendar of Harptos (p. 33).** Shieldmeet takes place after Midsummer, not Midwinter.

## CHAPTER 6

**Crafting a Magic Item (p. 129).** The first sentence under the Crafting Magic Items table now reads, "An item has a creation cost specified in the Crafting Magic Items table (half that cost for a consumable, such as a potion or scroll)."

## CHAPTER 7

**Attunement (p. 136).** The first paragraph ends with a new sentence: "If the prerequisite is to be a spellcaster, a creature qualifies if it can cast at least one spell using its traits or features, not using a magic item or the like."

**Magic Weapons (p. 140).** The section ends with a new paragraph: "If a magic weapon has the ammunition property, ammunition fired from it is considered magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage."

**Amulet of Health (p. 150).** The last sentence now reads as follows: "It has no effect on you if your Constitution is 19 or higher without it."

**Bag of Tricks (p. 154).** The second paragraph ends with a new sentence: "The creature vanishes at the next dawn or when it is reduced to 0 hit points."

**Belt of Giant Strength (p. 155).** The last sentence of the first paragraph now reads as follows: "The item has no effect on you if your Strength without the belt is equal to or greater than the belt's score."

**Gauntlets of Ogre Power (p. 171).** The last sentence now reads as follows: "They have no effect on you if your Strength is 19 or higher without them."

**Headband of Intellect (p. 173).** The last sentence now reads as follows: "It has no effect on you if your Intelligence is 19 or higher without it."

**Pearl of Power (p. 184).** The first sentence is now two sentences: "While this pearl is on your person, you can use an action to speak its command word and regain one expended spell slot. If the expended slot was of 4th level or higher, the new slot is 3rd level."

**Spell Scroll (p. 200).** Starting with its second sentence, the first paragraph now reads as follows: "If the spell is on your class's spell list, you can read the scroll and cast its spell without providing any material components. Otherwise, the scroll is unintelligible. Casting the spell by reading the scroll requires the spell's normal casting time. Once the spell is cast, the words on the scroll fade, and it crumbles to dust. If the casting is interrupted, the scroll is not lost."

**Wand of Paralysis (p. 211).** The third and fourth sentences now read as follows: "The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute."

## CHAPTER 8

**Combining Game Effects (p. 252).** This is a new subsection at the end of the "Combat" section: "Different game features can affect a target at the same time. But when two or more game features have the same name, only the effects of one of them—the most potent one—apply while the durations of the effects overlap. For example, if a target is ignited by a fire elemental's Fire Form trait, the ongoing fire damage doesn't increase if the burning target is subjected to that trait again. Game features include spells, class features, feats, racial traits, monster abilities, and magic items. See the related rule in the 'Combining Magical Effects' section of chapter 10 in the *Player's Handbook*."

**Poison (p. 257).** The description of ingested poison has a new sentence after the first: "The dose can be delivered in food or a liquid."

The other three poison types have new descriptions:

**Contact.** Contact poison can be smeared on an object and remains potent until it is touched or washed off. A creature that touches contact poison with exposed skin suffers its effects.

**Inhaled.** These poisons are powders or gases that take effect when inhaled. Blowing the powder or releasing the gas subjects creatures in a 5-foot cube to its effect. The resulting cloud dissipates immediately afterward. Holding one's breath is ineffective against inhaled poisons, as they affect nasal membranes, tear ducts, and other parts of the body.

**Injury.** Injury poison can be applied to weapons, ammunition, trap components, and other objects that deal piercing or slashing damage and remains potent until delivered through a wound or washed off. A creature that takes piercing or slashing damage from an object coated with the poison is exposed to its effects.

## APPENDIX A

**Mage Furnishings (p. 300).** A roll of 73 produces a sextant, not a sexton.

**Utensils and Personal Items (p. 300).** A roll of 89 or 90 produces a vase.

## APPENDIX B

In the "Monsters by Environment" section, the following experience point corrections have been made.

Monster	XP
Ancient Black Dragon	33,000 [was 27,500]
Ancient Blue Dragon	50,000 [was 32,500]
Ancient Brass Dragon	25,000 [was 24,500]
Ancient Bronze Dragon	41,000 [was 30,000]
Ancient Copper Dragon	33,000 [was 27,500]
Ancient Gold Dragon	62,000 [was 36,500]
Ancient Green Dragon	41,000 [was 30,000]
Ancient Red Dragon	62,000 [was 36,500]
Ancient Silver Dragon	50,000 [was 32,500]
Ancient White Dragon	25,000 [was 24,500]



## Next Issue: Dragon 07



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Join us in *Dragon+* Issue 7, as we shuffle the Tarokka deck and uncover the mystery behind Twitter's greatest fortune teller, Madam Eva. The good folks at Feel Train introduce us to this Vistani visionary, who has been handing out advice in chunks of 140 characters or less to those who retweet her message on the official D&D account.

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If digital gurus are your thing, it'll soon be time to fire up a video game, but make like a tabletop player! The mysterious mage, Respen Durothil, returns to the *Neverwinter* MMORPG later this year, bringing his Marvelous Game with him. His previous challenges have rewarded worthy winners with amazing items and Crystal Dice to spend. Yet Respen's Marvelous Game is unique within the world of *Neverwinter*, as it brings all the charm and comfort of a real tabletop game, by transforming your characters into figurines!



Meanwhile, if this month's look back at classic board games brought a smile to your face, you can bet the pressures of playing *Tyrants of the Underdark* will wipe it off. Unless, that is, you catch our in-depth dip into the rulebook, to learn the strategies that will see you tear

control of the Underdark from your enemies! Find all this and much, much more in *Dragon+* Issue 7!

Thanks for reading!

(Contents subject to change)



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A big thank you to the extended D&D family for their help with the creation of this issue.

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Prolific D&D artist, Wayne England, passed away on February 9, 2016. He illustrated the image on page 10 of this issue, as well as numerous paintings for third, fourth, and fifth edition D&D. Here are a few words about Wayne from D&D art director Kate Irwin:

“I have admired Wayne England from the first time I saw his work. In the days when artists mailed their originals for us to photograph, I could pour over his paintings, amazed at the tiniest brush stroke — amazed at the wonderful little things he added to a piece that might go unnoticed at first, but kept me coming back over and over. Having worked with him on around 150 paintings and drawings, I found him to be a total gentleman; kind, reliable, and hardworking. I think that is how he lived his life as well.”

You can find an album of some of our favorite Wayne Reynolds pieces on the Dungeons & Dragons Facebook page.

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