

THE SAGA

October 2023



Lore Issue
Setting up an Adventure
2 Adventurer's Guilds
The Salt Catacombs Dungeon
and more.

THE SAGA

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A banner for the Table of Contents featuring a dark, moody background with silhouettes of trees and a bright, glowing sun or moon in the sky. The text "Table of Contents" is written in a large, bold, yellow font with a black outline.

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A SagaBorn Roleplaying Game Compatible Product

This month the Saga is going to be a little different. I finished the SagaBorn Core Rulebook Kickstarter in the Spring and just finished the Creature Compendium Kickstarter in September. These two projects, on top of my day job, have added up to my time being very limited. Who knew that making and selling elf ears as a day job could take up so much time?

But I don't think I have skimmed on content; it is just going to be a very lore-heavy zine. The next big release is going to be a worldbook, so my focus has really been on that instead of thinking of better ways to run the game. So I hope you enjoy the issue as we explore a little more of the Dark Return.

Oh, and Happy Halloween to all you ghouls and ghosts out there!

-MIKE

SETTING UP AN ADVENTURE

It used to take me forever to get an adventure together and ready to go, let alone get one ready for publication. I have streamlined this process quite a bit and now have a method that works well for SagaBorn adventures.

In the last zine, I talked about ready-to-go NPCs. They had three important descriptions - History, What They Want, and a Secret. I set up an adventure the same way, but the key descriptions are different. For adventures, I use Theme, Hooks, Obstacles, and Solutions.

I try to keep things as open as possible. A quick summary can keep me on track and make it easier to know where I want the adventure to go. A mistake I made in my early game career was imagining scenes that happened within the adventure. This leads to many issues of wanting to see those scenes unfold, and we all know that players never do what the StoryGuide thinks they will. So now I focus on the things I can control, the world and the NPCs in it. In my current design flow, I spend most of the time just thinking of how everything, except the players, works within the world. Let me run you through a quick example of a recent adventure I just wrapped up.

First, I start with a simple theme like - dungeon crawl, social challenge, or heist. I wanted this to be a heist. I knew the Ministry had put a lockdown on the Den, the old home of the adventurer's guild. I also knew that there was a protected vault underneath the place, filled with artifacts, books, and more.

Theme: A heist of the Den.

Next, I focus on why they want to do this, what will help them accomplish the task, and what stands in their way.

HOOKS

First, they need someone or something to push them towards breaking into the place. I knew they were headed to the library, so I had a helpful Librarian hire them to get some books out of the vault. Never relying on one hook and wanting a little more tension, I also had Martyn, the owner of the Den, show up and discover their intent. He would then propose they break in for him and fool the Librarian with some fake books. I do my best not to try to think how the players will react, I just formulate these two avenues and maybe get some rough ideas of the consequences of them taking either path.

Hooks:

- A librarian wants to pay 2000 gp to break in and steal some books.
- Martyn, owner of the building, offers to pay 3000 gp, and will help forge some books to fool the librarian.

OBSTACLES

There was a time when I fell back on two easy obstacles, combat and traps. Luckily my design has grown, and now combat is normally only an obstacle if the other routes have been exhausted. For this adventure, I wanted to show that the city of Kowal had become a dangerously oppressive place, to give the heroes a reason to fear and dislike the current rulers, the Uthgard Empire. So here are the obstacles I came up with.

Obstacles:

- The vault in the Den is locked by a hidden door that has three keys and six cyphers (puzzles). The door is also trapped, and if any of the above fail, the traps will be set off.
- A small group of Uthgardians from the Ministry will be living in the den and will also be trying to break into the vault.

SOLUTIONS

Solutions are answers to how the heroes may accomplish the tasks. I try to have many of these, allowing for multiple ways for the players to move forward.

Solutions:

- Martyn hears of the heist, finds the heroes, and offers them a way into the vault that the Ministry does not know about. He gives them a key to a Waygate, which opens a dangerous path through the In-between and into the vault.
- Dwygar is a dworv in the city that helped build the vault door. He would know a bit about the cyphers and be able to give clues.
- The innkeeper of the Darkwinter Tavern was close to Martyn and may be able to give them the layout of the Den.
- Sascha, a storekeeper located right next to the Den may be able to give insight into the comings and goings inside the Den currently.
- The Companions, a local guild with less than reputable business practices, may know of another way in through the sewer, but at what cost?

And with that, I have enough to get my players in action at the table. Another tip that works well for me is not to overload myself with too much. This short outline is enough to build on for any far-out ideas my players come up. I always find that a rough sketch is easier to follow at the table than a 800-word detailed story.

SagaBorn Inklings

QUICK REVIEW OF RPG SOUNDS

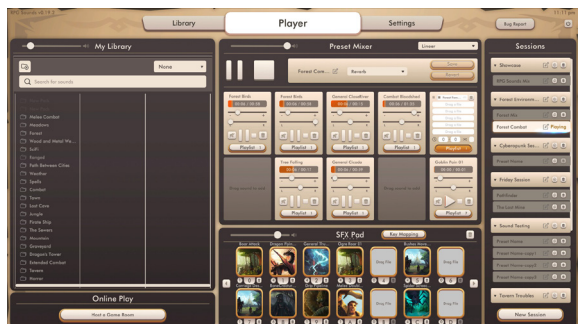
So I am always trying to find new ways to bring immersion to the tabletop. Ways to help my players fall deep into the game. Music and sound are always important, especially as the spooky season is upon us.

I have tried many different things over the years to bring music and effects to my table, but they have always had issues. Too expensive. Too limited. Bad user interface. And then I found RPG Sounds. A simple program for a good price. And it does everything I need. It came with some basic soundscapes, but it is easy to import your own MP3s and effects. It is also very easy to search your database and add to a scene.

It even allows you to broadcast via a URL to players in case you are running games online. This free feature has come in handy, setting the mood for those online games that are notoriously hard to get moody.

There has not been an update in over a year, but everything runs just fine on all my machines, so maybe updates are not needed.

For the selling price of Free, I would recommend anyone at least give a run at their table.



Codex Dominum

SagaBorn Expanded



BASIC MONSTERS

While the “Big Dragon” game has a long history of large monster books and detailed creature stats, playing other indie games has taught me that for many stories, these detailed and overly complex creatures can often be replaced by a simpler formula that is easier for a gamemaster to manage.

The first time I ran Cyberpunk Red, it blew my mind how much I could get done with their basic three baddies mook, lieutenant, and boss. Three basic NPCs with minimal changes to equipment and a different description seemed to serve the game just fine. And anyone who has ever run D&D knows that reskinning a well-known monster can add a whole new level of play for those around the table. So why not have a more basic chart of stats and just add abilities to them?

Yes, I know DMG has a chart like this, but it seems more of an afterthought and not a real design choice. While some games seem to be doubling down on more complex systems, I think you can still build a game with tactical battles but a less complicated system design.

Prebuilt monsters and NPCs will always be great, but what if the stats were more standardized and it was the descriptions and abilities that made creature books compelling to have?

With this in mind, I have made the following chart as a standard monster progression for SagaBorn, but it can also be used for other d20 games.

CR	Hit Points	Armor Class	Attack Bonus	Damage	Ability Modifier	Saves / Skills	Talent Points	Special Abilities	Ability Save DC
1/8	3	10	-1	1	0	+0	1	1	9
1/4	6	10	0	2	0	+1	1	1	10
1/2	10	11	+1	3	+1	+1	1	1	11
1	15	12	+2	5	+1	+2	2	1	12
2	20	13	+3	7	+1	+2	2	1	13
3	30	14	+5	9	+2	+3	3	2	13
4	40	15	+7	12	+2	+3	3	2	14
5	55	16	+9	14	+2	+3	4	2	14
6	70	17	+10	16	+3	+4	4	3	15
7	85	18	+12	18	+3	+4	5	3	15
8	100	19	+13	20	+3	+4	5	3	15
9	115	20	+15	22	+4	+4	6	4	16
10	130	20	+16	24	+4	+4	6	4	16
11	145	21	+17	28	+4	+4	6	4	16
12	160	22	+18	32	+4	+5	7	4	17
13	175	23	+19	36	+4	+5	7	5	17
14	190	24	+20	40	+5	+5	7	5	17
15	215	25	+21	42	+5	+5	8	5	18
16	230	26	+23	46	+5	+6	8	5	18
17	250	27	+24	50	+5	+6	8	5	18
18	275	28	+25	56	+6	+7	9	6	19
19	300	29	+26	60	+6	+7	9	6	19
20	350	30	+27	66	+6	+7	10	6	20

HD: 1/2 CR rounded up

Stats - includes STR, DEX, CON, and WIS

MONSTER SPECIAL ABILITIES

Constrict A tentacle crawler can constrict a grappled opponent as a free action. This does 1d4+6 damage to the grappled opponent.

Damage Reduction The monster has 1 DR to all damage.

Disease The monster inflicts a disease when it successfully causes damage to an opponent. See the disease chart in the Core rulebook. Disease Save CR should not exceed the monster's CR+10.

Fast Healing The monster regains HP per round equal to their CR.

Fear Any creature within 30' or who can see the monster must save vs Fear. If they are within 30', they must succeed at a Will Save with a DC equal to 10+ the monster's CR or flee. If they are further than 30' away, but can still see the fear demon, they must succeed at a DC 8 Will Save or be Panicked.

Grab/Grapple If the monster successfully lands an attack, it attempts to start to grapple as a free action. The monster must succeed at a Heroic Action to grapple an opponent. A successful hold does not deal any extra damage, but a grappled opponent has speed reduced to zero, does not threaten any spaces around them, and loses their DEX bonus to AC. A grappled character can free themselves with a successful Heroic Action.

Improved Grab If the monster hits with a melee attack, it may attempt to grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Poison The monster inflicts a poison when it successfully causes damage to an opponent. See the poison chart in the Core rulebook. Disease Save CR should not exceed the monster's CR+10.

Scent This ability lets a creature detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell.

Stealthy The monster gains a bonus to sneaking and hiding equal to their CR.

Swallow If a monster has grappled an opponent, it can then swallow the opponent as a free action (if Medium or smaller in size) at the beginning of its turn. It can only have one victim swallowed at a time. Once swallowed the victim takes 1d6 acid damage per round.

Throw If the monster has someone grappled, it may throw them a distance equal to its size. This does 1d6 damage per 5' thrown.

Trample As a full-round action, a monster can move up to twice its speed and overrun any opponent at least one size category smaller than itself. Any creature caught in the path is subject to the trample attack. Trample does provoke attacks of opportunity but at a -4 to the attack. If the trampled character does not make an attack of opportunity, they can attempt a DC 19 Reflex save to take half the damage.

Trip As a Heroic Action, a monster may try to trip its opponent, pulling them to the ground. They receive a +2 bonus to a trip action, and it is treated as a Heroic Action using the monster's DEX bonus. If a defender fails, they become prone that round.

Tremor Sense A creature with tremor sense automatically senses the location of anything that is in contact with the ground and within range. Aquatic creatures with tremor sense can also sense the location of creatures moving through water.

TRACK THE ORIGINS OF OUR HOBBY IN:

MONSTERS, ALIENS, AND HOLES IN THE GROUND

A GUIDE TO TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAMES FROM D&D TO MOTHERSHIP

STU HORVATH

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

2



Tales' Wizards. Box set, circa 1981. Linn Wood and Brian White. Cover by White. Year



Steps of Raymond E. Frenk's long running series of novels, *The Dragon Civil*, some of which draw on that long ago RPG campaign. But in the late '70s, the name was associated with cutting edge RPG city designs. Their first book, *Cities: A GameMaster's Guide to Dungeons and Dragons Adventures for Fantasy Games* (1978), takes the Judges Guild method of creating a city experience through nested random tables and refines it, creating a massive set of practical street encounters.

The process is split between two parties—the GM rolls on the table to determine the part of town the characters are in; the players who is on the street, then the GM fills on the corresponding chart to see what those people are doing. Many of those encounters are just location—character bumps into X. Some other books for improvising adventures—X is looking for hire someone to do Y. Some are complications or dramatic scenes, like an assassination attempt. And the talent is to roll often, like every 15 minutes or so in real time.

These rapid-fire, but often inconsequential encounters, create the illusion of a metropolitan chaos, where player characters are but a handful out of thousands of

...point, it's the "We see the World" of RPGs. If you know, "We see the World" was actually a good song.

Midwest Press was formed out of a group of D&D enthusiasts at the University of California, San Diego that started publishing RPG materials in 1975. Today, Midwestern is best known as one of the set-

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DARK RETURN

INTO THE WORLD

PLACES AND GROUPS OF KOWAL

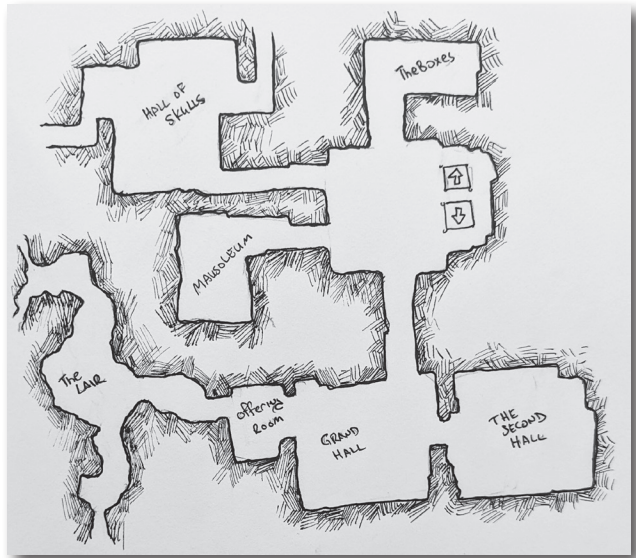
THE SALT CATACOMBS

Over 700 years ago, Aesther Grundthron surmised that deep beneath the soil of Kowal was a wealth as valuable as gold, salt. She looked at fossils found in the local rock and evidence of salt water found in a few deep caves. She became obsessed and devised a way to drill straight down until she found the “dry ocean” of salt. She was not wrong and found a layer of salt that would make her and her family rich. The only issue was that the salt was over 1000 feet below the surface. Her drill had reached this depth, and she had also designed a lift system that could be powered by an orrilot. Large quantities of salt allowed Kowal and other parts of Eastern Uthgard to no longer rely on the expensive and distant salt plains of Tiren. This led to a vast gathering of wealth for the free dworvs of Grundthorn clan. As they flaunted their wealth and power, the Baron of Kowal looked for ways to curb this monopoly. His engineers found two other sites where salt could be mined closer to the surface, ending the Grundthorn stranglehold on the salt mining of Kowal.

In the following years, as their salt production slowed, they began to rent spaces in the mine as secure storage. They provided a place and security for objects that others wanted to keep secret and safe. This lasted for another hundred years until a descendant, greedy for the riches of the past, began to sell slime of the rarest items to underground smugglers. When this was discovered, the family was shamed, and the mines sat empty and useless for decades.

In 5402, the first massive plague ravaged the lands of the east.

The amount of dead overwhelmed the city, and the council looked for a way to dispose of the mass quantity of bodies. The Grundthorn family once again turned their mine into another business practice. The large open spaces and tunnels provided room for the bodies



of the deceased, and the salt preserved them, creating the halls of mummies as the citizens of Kowal laid their dead to rest here. As the years passed, the family refined their services and became the cheapest ay to lay a loved one to rest. The old salt warehouse became a place of remembering and mourning, a church with no god, only memory of the lost.

In the current days, the family is overseen by Thalia Grundthorn and her teran husband, Malix. Over the years, the family has grown increasingly odd and isolated. While they are still used for their funeral rites and burial services, many find them strange and unpleasant.

For the low price of a single gold coin, anybody can be laid to rest within the Salt Catacombs.

Thalia is a practicing wylder, though she keeps her powers well hidden. Malix is well-studied and knowledgeable, which is where their relationship started. Malix is particularly interested in the occult and the Navirim. He has become obsessed with prolonging his life and Thalia's lives and has begun the search for an upir.

Besides the couple, four other extended family members and their families live on the large hilly parcel of land.

THE WANDERERS

About 500 years ago, while the world was yet reeling from the Great War, the Wanderers were formed in the city of Bordon to help bring the people together again. They became known as saviors and heroes as they brought news, recovered old technology, and comforted people with hope for a greater good in a dark time. Now, the Wanderers still do much of the same, but as the lands have become less dangerous, they have started exploring deeper and deeper into the darker places of Uteria, bringing back horrifying tales and strange magical artifacts.

The Wanderer's Coin

When a person is accepted into the Wanderers they receive the Wanderer's Coin. This is shown at any Wanderer Guildhouse to gain access to a warm meal and a place to sleep.



LIBRARIANS - LIBRARY OF KOWAL

Kowal Library

The Kowal Library is a public library that allows any citizen access to books. They are always looking to purchase or find new or old books.

It is also home to the Society of Librarians.

The library of Kowal is many things to many people. It is a public repository of knowledge, free for citizens to peruse and read. It is the main printing press of the Eastlands, making books more readily available to all. And to a secret few, it is also a group that collects, catalogs, and experiments with magic.

The first floor of the Library hosts the public books, the printing press, and offices. The second floor holds the shelves of rare books and historical artifacts. Below that are the vaults and dormitories, their contents only known to the Society.

The Gathering of the Society

Twice a year, in a hidden level beneath the library of Kowal, a secret society meets to exchange knowledge, artifacts, and magic spells under the pretense of collecting histories. Their aim is to bring magic back to its former power, before its disappearance so many centuries ago, trusting this amount of power only to themselves.

Highly skilled treasure hunters in their employ scour the lands searching for traces of artifacts and ancient tomes, bringing back all they can find to be studied. If a book is deemed to have magical value, it is kept hidden below. If the book is of mundane value, it goes into the public library above.

But little do many of its members know, there is a level even deeper, where the books are not only studied, but experiments are conducted by a faction of Librarians committed not only to restoring magic, but advancing it. Their motto is to commit no harm, but their ambitions often rule, and little has been spared in the research into magic.

History

The Library of Kowal was formed by a group of monks who were once part of the Unelesia Church. As the church grew more rigid in their practices, the Library grew separated. As time went on, the Library became less and less involved in religious institutions.

Becoming a member

Becoming a member of the Library costs 10 gp and a signature. The new trustee will be issued a bronze coin which will be imprinted with their fingerprint which they will also leave an impression for matching in the member's book. This allows the member to check out a single printed book from the first floor, and to visit the top floor which holds rare and one-of-a-kind tomes.

PEOPLES OF THE DARK RETURN

FAUNS

Written by Beera "Ale" Longtoe

Well, now. What can I say? I felt the need to wander earlier than most, and I left the vale long ago in search of my place in the world. As I traveled amongst the humans, I never quite fit in. They were too boorish and insensitive for me. Though I did spend some time with the Druids of Borden. Those guys are pretty swell. That's where I learned my true love. Writing!

Well, I started with just a journal. But soon, I felt the need to keep track of all the wondrous people, places, and things I found. And maybe even pass along some knowledge to other peoples of this vast land.

That led me here. Years after heading into the wilds, I stumbled into my family away from family. Those two-toed sweet creatures called fauns. When I ran across my first settlement of these nature-loving beings, I knew I had found the best the world had to offer.

During my time with the Druids, I picked up a little about how they like to write their encyclopedic tomes, and I have based this account accordingly (with my own flair of course)

-Ale

General things about Fauns

Many fauns move unnoticed through Atheles as they resemble terans more closely than any of the other races. They are closer to the same height as terans, though they may be a little shorter and a little hairier.

Fauns have black or brown hair, pointed ears, and small horns. They don't have cloven hooves like satyr, but unlike terans, they only have two toes.

They have a close affinity to nature, and their community reflects that. They live in smaller communities, often hidden away in forest glens or on wooded mountainsides. They raise goats and turkeys for food, as well as an assortment of berries and vegetables.

They hold their whole tribe close, as if they are blood family, though many can trace ancestry to others outside of their tribe. Due to their small communities, it is very important at tribe gatherings for tribe members to connect, and sometimes join in partnerships with fauns from other tribes.

They have tried their best to keep to themselves throughout the history of Atheles, save during the Great War when many joined with the Aradani to fight against the hordes of the north.

In the current day, they have become more active in teran settlements and have begun to interact with the other races of the world.

Physical description (and style!)

Fauns stand about 6 feet tall on average and resemble terans save for small horns that protrude from their foreheads. They are slightly more hairy than terans, but often not enough to mark them as outsiders in teran settlements. They tend to have dark hair, dark eyes, and brown skin, but are as wonderfully varied as most species.

They wear clothing that helps them blend into their surroundings, often soft leathers and linens. In the colder seasons, they wear furs and wool. The style of their clothing is delicate. They pay close attention to stitching and seams, following the body's form. Often, you can see the influence of tree roots and branches in their

embroidered clothing. They use dyes from the berries and soil, so the coloring of their clothing is often warm and muted.

Where to find them

Faun communities are small and, as such, have always found corners of the world that are less populated. They are more abundant in the eastern lands, finding home in the vast forests and plains.

Known history (or at least what they told me)

Fauns have myths of a pilgrimage from a vast desert land, they were led to Uteria by Lunare, who introduced them to the elves. They learned the elven language, and, over the years, mixed their own with elven until they had a hybrid language.

During the Eldar War, they were almost eradicated by the Eldar as an “unclean” race. When Kaldrath was victorious, he saw the peaceful fauns as useless and largely ignored them. They kept to themselves and learned ways to hide from others during this dark time.

During the Aradan War, the fauns turned to help, as they had thrived for many years under the protection of the Aradan kingdom. These fauns joined the “Elves of Aradan” and fought to the end of the war.

Society, culture, and other fun stuff.

Faun tribes are ruled by a council.

Unlike other cultures in Atheles, fauns do not classify themselves with a binary gender or sex. In fact, they often have a hard time understanding most teran’s strict gender definitions and especially their gender politics. They have adopted a neutral pronoun of “de,” which is probably based on the elven pronoun “ze.”

This idea is hard to relate in the common tongue, as common is so heavily rooted in terans desire for rigid rules and definitions. A

faun may be physically defined as female according to teran views, but fauns see them as a singular person or being. They are just faun. Now as they age, that young faun may choose to be referred to as he or she as the outside world's influence has slowly crept in, but they refer to all as de, unless one specifically asks to be referred to in a teran binary term.

Due to this, fauns have a myriad of words to describe what terans boil down to masculine, feminine, gay, or straight. This has echoes in all parts of faun culture and society, from art to government.

Beliefs

Faun culture revolves around the idea of tribe, rather than blood family. This does not mean they don't keep up with family trees, but their loyalty is to their tribe.

As such, they do not conform to the teran standard of sworn marriage as the only way to raise or denote a family. Within all faun cultures, there are a myriad of partnerships, from single couples sworn to each other to close groups comprising many individuals who share a domicile and familial closeness beyond what the tribe offers. Terans often portray fauns as debaucherous and frivolous, which is due to a misunderstanding of faun culture's views of partnership and romance.

The follow the elven pantheon of deities, but they also have a strong belief in local, less powerful spirits and denizens of the forest and soil. The "zche" of everything living is connected, and some people or places gather more zche than others. This means even when a living thing has passed on, the zche is left behind which slowly returns back into the eternal system of growth.



Fiction

by Michael Bielaczyc

POSSESSED

Kowal, 5703, a back alley in the Westgarden district.

Quin leaned up against the cold stone wall; she clutched and pressed her wet tunic against her belly. Pain shot through her torso, but she didn't want to look down. Screams erupted through the open window above her head, the light flooding out across the alley to show the struggle inside, unfolding as if it were a shadow puppet play. A scream turned into a gurgle, only to be drowned out by an otherworldly scream of ecstasy.

If only I had been on time. Damn, Carin for being late to the dropoff. The job had seemed simple. Pick up some silver box from Tiren. Sneak it into the city past the Red Guard. Deliver it to the purchasers. Get a fat pouch of gold. Go have an ale and repeat with some other trinket. When I knocked on that sodding wood door on this damn quiet street and saw what was happening inside, I should have turned tail and left.

Quin stifled a cough and felt a trickle of blood run down her face. Inside the house, orders were being shouted. The cavalry had arrived. Sodding Red Guard. Don't know what is worse, those demons that were let loose, or these zealots who run around in their shiny armor pretending to be righteous as they hunt witches. But if they had been a bit earlier, maybe I wouldn't be dying in this alley.

Quin could only imagine what was happening inside the house. The buyers inside that house had been doing something, summoning something when Quin had walked in. They had eagerly pawed at the silver box, said it was needed before "it" escaped. "It" being the large shadowy figure looming inside a chalk circle in the other room. Seven candles held the circle in light, but that shadow did not show any features. That shadowy

figure looked like it swallowed the light. Another movement. A green mist lifted up from behind the shadowy creature and flitted about inside that same runic circle as a bird might when trapped inside a room.

“We can’t hold it much longer. There are two!” Shouted a robed figure.

I should have turned and run, damn it. There would be gold another day. She gave a small chuckle. She knew it was curiosity more than gold that moved her deeper into that horrific scene. What’s more exhilarating than walking straight into a house that has not one, but two trapped demons?

There was a heavy knock at the back door. A short woman in a robe turned and grasped for the silver box. With a slight misstep of their foot, one of the seven candles toppled. It was all a blur after that. The shadowy creature reached out, grabbed the small robed figure, and ripped her head completely off. The green mist began to fly around the room, knocking over more candles and tossing books in the air. And then the Red Guard rushed in as the back door crumpled in under their pounding. A crash from behind, the front door fell in.

I was so damned enraptured that I didn’t notice the Reds coming in behind me. A sword to the gut. That’s a bad way to go.

The battle after that was a mishmash of splattered blood and screams. Instinct had kicked in, and she crawled to the nearest exit, a small window, and pulled herself out of the cursed house.

And now I lay under that window, bleeding out. And I didn’t even get paid.

The world started to blur, the alley falling back, the end of a long dark tunnel. And then a soft voice stirred her.

I can help you. I can help you live. A soft voice whispered.

It felt strange, alien, but comforting.

Just let me in, and we can escape together.

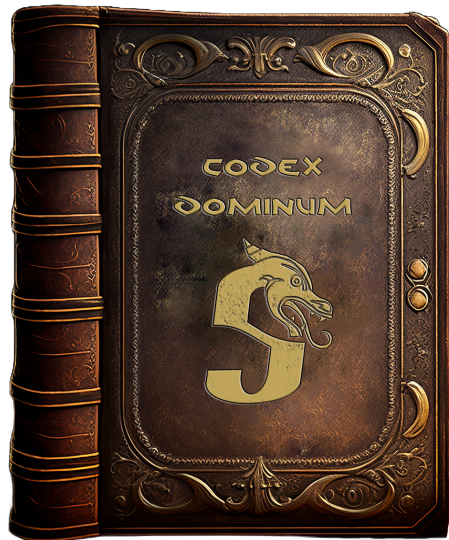
She looked down, just vaguely aware of a green mist wrapping around her body. A pang of fear ran up her spine, but what choice? End the adventure here, or?

She paused just a moment but then nodded. The mist swirled and snaked into her mouth; it felt like a warm gulp of tea on a cold night. The pain stopped in her stomach, and her head no longer throbbed. The sound of battle still clashed inside the house. The soft voice, now inside their head, whispered, “Now run.”

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CREATURE COMPENDIUM

VAMPIRIC VARAG

Each day this world seems to grow darker and more twisted. The varag, a life-draining beast of a monster, was already the thing of nightmares. Now it seems that in some rare cases, they have attained the abilities of the upir, allowing it to regenerate in another way. These vampiric varags also amass a horrid following of their mindless victims, undead fodder for it to send against its foes.

-Etahn Belbane

Vampiric Varag

Challenge Rating: 6

Size: Large

Type: Humanoid (Giant)

Initiative: +1

Defense

Hit Points: 74 (7HD: 7d8+36)

Armor Class: 18, touch 10, flat-footed 17 (+1 DEX, +7 Natural Armor, -1 Size)

Saves: Fort +12 Ref +3 Will +3

Weaknesses: Acid, fire

Offense

Speed: 30 ft.

Base Attack: +4

Melee: 2 Claws +8 (1d6+6) and Bite +3 (1d8+6),

Ranged: -

Special Attacks: Rend (2d6+9),

Sanity Effects: First Encounter 1/1d6, Life Drain 1/1d6

Statistics

Abilities: STR +6, DEX +1, CON +6, INT -2, WIS -1, CHA -2

Skills: Acrobatics +1, Athletics +8, Awareness +4, Endurance +6, Knowledge -3, Persuasion -3, Survival -1, Thievery +1

Talents: 2 points or recommended: Unbreakable Will, Alertness

Special Qualities: Regeneration 5 (Acid and Fire), Defiling Regeneration (Regeneration 10 if actively ravaging), Incorporeal, Life Drain

Ecology

Environment: Forest, Marshes

Organization: Solitary or Gang (2-3)

Treasure: Standard

Hold Breath Varags often lurk underwater near shorelines, lying in wait for their food to come to them, or just to strike out and kill for sport. A varag can hold its breath for a number of minutes equal to its Constitution score before it risks drowning.

Regeneration Damage dealt to a varag is treated as nonlethal damage. Varags automatically heal 5 nonlethal damage per round. Fire and acid deal lethal damage to varags, which doesn't go away. A regenerating creature that has been rendered unconscious through nonlethal damage can be killed with a coup de grace. The attack cannot be of a type that automatically converts to nonlethal damage.

Regeneration does not restore hit points lost from starvation, thirst, or suffocation. Varags can regrow lost portions of their bodies and can reattach severed limbs or body parts. Severed parts that are not reattached wither and die normally.

Defiling Regeneration When under heavy duress, or to slow down a number of foes in the immediate area, a varag can begin actively ravaging, doubling its regeneration rate. Damage of 5 is first dealt to all vegetation and small insects/critters in a 10-foot radius. Once the area has been ravaged and there is no life force left to drain from the earth, the energy begins draining from larger creatures in

the affected area, with 5 damage per round distributed evenly. A varag can be ravaging in this manner by concentrating, which counts as a move action. This ravaging will continue as a free action as long as there are living creatures in the area of effect.

Rend If a varag hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and rends their flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d6+9 points of damage.

Incorporeal Once per day, a varag can become a cloud of mist. In this form, they are immune to normal weapons, and they can travel (fly) at 50' per round. They can stay in this form for 1 hour.

Life Drain A varag can drain the energy from a victim. It must make a successful Heroic Action to pull the energy from its victim. It is the varag's opposed Will save roll vs. its victim's CHA ability mod. If the varag is successful, the victim takes 1d8 damage and the varag gains 1d8 health. The victim also must roll a DC 16 Horror Check (1/1d6)

Mindless Victims If a varag drains enough from its victim (drained below -10 HP), the victim loses all sense of being and becomes a mindless slave of the varag (treated as a zombie).





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