

COMPATIBLE WITH
**DCC
RPG**

CATHEDRAL OF THE UNDYING

A LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE

By C. AARON KREADER



studio 9[®]
games



CATHEDRAL OF THE UNDYING



*Cathedral
of the Undying*
Copyright © 2022 Studio 9 Games

www.studio9inc.com

COMPATIBLE WITH
**DCC
RPG**

*Written & Illustrated
by C. Aaron Kreader*
*Editors: Heidi Parsons & Thorin
"Son Ov Thrain" Thompson*

Cathedral of the Undying

This product is based on the **Dungeon Crawl Classics Role Playing Game**, published by Goodman Games. This product is published under license. **Dungeon Crawl Classics** and **DCC RPG** are trademarks of **Goodman Games**. All rights reserved. For additional information, visit www.goodman-games.com or contact info@goodman-games.com.

Note to the Judge: In this adventure, PCs are likely to die and rise up again in a partially undead state. In testing, when this didn't occur early, players thought the challenge hopelessly difficult, but when the horrific transmutation into the undead *did* occur early, it often led to a disastrous sense of bravado. Let the dice fall and allow the death and undeath to occur if the fates of funky dice will it.

Background and the Blackmoon

Ages ago, the earliest Cathedral dedicated to Justicia was built in an era of blood and turmoil. Unbeknownst to the priests, it was also the site of a druidic stone circle charting the phases of the moon in reverence to Shul. The grounds were located on a geographic nexus of potent ley lines, tactically positioned by wise cosmic dreamers. Centuries later, the standing stones were used as building supplies by early priests of Justicia to fashion their original Cathedral bell tower. When Shul's priests arrived for their seasonal rituals, a conflict arose. This was resolved by savvy leadership. They struck a deal. On special holidays, the priests of Shul moved into the Cathedral to create a shared mystical space. The Festival of the Blackmoon is chief among these and occurs every few years. During this celebration, the world of the dead draws closer to the world of the living. For a brief time, the priests of Shul call forth their ancestors and connect those who have passed to the beyond with the living. The faithful of Justicia stand aside in reverence. For hundreds of seasons, this pact has made the unique site all the more powerful.

But agents of the Hidden Lord have carefully infiltrated the ceremonies to systematically, subtly pervert the rituals over the course of centuries in preparation for an auspicious moment. The celestial conjunction on this year's Festival of the Blackmoon provides that opportunity via a rare total solar eclipse! With its power the agents are flooding the site with necromantic energy—plunging the great Cathedral of Justicia into perpetual twilight. Trapped outside the bounds of time, the site has become an abomination to Justicia and Shul. If the dark ritual is not stopped, the sacred site

will be lost in the chaotic folds of the Hidden Lord, a place forever undead—not destroyed, but not existent. From a distance this perverted state causes the entire area to appear smudged out and darkened. Even in daylight, it is a shadowed hillock topped with a foggy structure. On the property, the dead stir and rise in an altered state of being.

Undeath Ritual Effects

The priests of the Hidden Lord have spoiled this sacred site with a perpetual connection to the realm of the dead. This affects rules around **death and dying** and **magic use**. In addition, it prevents anyone crossing into the grounds from being able to exit until the ritual has ended.

Death and Dying

Keep a secret account of how many times each PC dies. Then check below to see how they are affected.

First death: The PC arises after 1d4 rounds with 1hp as unholy necrotic worms bind their wounds.

Second death: After 1d4 rounds, necromantic energy floods the corpse of the PC, who arises with full hit points. They are now partially undead. They retain control over their own thoughts, have a personalized path to redemption, and an ability—depending on the PC's alignment:

Lawful: (GHOST!) *A ghost of your former self peels away from your body, translucent and floating in mid air. In spirit form you are now partially incorporeal. You cannot hold any items not already in your possession for more than 2 rounds. 1 in 4 hits pass right through you, doing no damage. You cannot pass any of your current items to anyone else.*

Ghost Redemption: *If you right the evils of this place and stop the madness within the Cathedral, you earn the privilege to return to the living—assuming your body is not destroyed or lost!*

Neutral: (WIGHT!) *You arise, breathless and unfeeling, your skin as pale as frost. The strength of the grave surges in your veins (gain 1d8 STR—max of 24). You hate the light, but can see in the dark very well (100' range). Strong lights or lights close to you cause blindness for 1d8 rounds and stun you for 1 round.*

Wight Redemption: *You must find and save the Cathedral High Priest and be exorcised (DC 12 Will save) or forever be a wight. The ritual takes 1 full turn.*

Chaos: (GHOUL!) *You rise up with bulging eyes, huge claws, and a crazed hunger for flesh. You gain 1 HD of hit points in your new form. Consuming fresh brains heals 1d4 damage, and your hands are sharpened claws (1d6 damage). This is now your preferred weapon. Attempting to use any other weapon, attack, or spell in the heat of combat requires a DC 10 Will save.*

Ghoul Redemption: *You must consume the brains of 3 recently killed living beings (not undead) to earn the strength to restore your life.*

All PCs who are partially undead, whether ghosts, wights, or ghouls, suffer the following:

- The PC can be turned as an undead of equal level.
- Cleric spells cast on or by an undead PC have -1D on casting die.
- Luck cannot be burned nor can it be gained.
- Undead PCs are pariahs in society, destined to be run out of town, killed, or turned by a local cleric unless a DC 13 disguise check is made or strong concealing magic is used. Powerful perfumes and elaborate costumes may also help.

Third death: The PC arises after 1d4 rounds as a mindless crypt creature (zombie) with one purpose—destroy the living! Allow the PC to play out their killing spree or do it yourself—Judge's choice. PCs killed in this form no longer return.

Magic Use

All magic use and spells cast within the Cathedral grounds are perverted in a few critical categories. Refer to the alterations below to see how spells are affected.

Magical Healing: Spells to restore health cast by a cleric or other spellcasters must flow within rules bound by undead forces housed in the Cathedral. For every point of damage healed, the caster must sacrifice an equal amount of life either from themselves or a willing subject within reach. Without this blood sacrifice, the spell simply fails.

Turning: Undead (excluding PCs who are partially undead) are empowered here, and therefore attempts to turn undead suffer -1D.

Summoning: The proximity to the plane of the dead and undying is so close that portals and summoning spells inadvertently reach into the grave, bringing forth 1d4 undead whose hate for the living makes them aggressive towards the closest living being. Roll 1d3 to determine what is summoned: (1) skeletons, (2) zombies, or (3) ghouls.

Necromancy and the Dead: Necromancy spells and spells associated with the dead gain +2 to the spell check. However, they are also overwhelmingly potent. Any spell check result of natural 1 causes an instant, gruesome death to the caster, whose vascular system bursts with uncontrolled necrotic force.

The Festival Begins

At the start of the adventure, a priest of the Hidden Lord (posing as a priest of Shul) appears to have escaped the horror. Presumably to plead for aid, she approaches clerics of Shul first, Justicia second, calling on their sense of righteousness to cleanse this defiled site. Her true purpose is to spread more chaos and death, so even PCs impartial to an appeal of virtue are tempted with wealth. She claims that the High Priests of both Shul and Justicia would grant great bounties to have the site sanctified once again.

The usual excitement of the Blackmoon celebration is amplified by the appearance of a solar eclipse. This brings a larger than usual host of lunar hermits, moon fanatics and augur witches eager to sell forecasts, issue omens, or cast harvest futures. The eager participants all relish these sacred days when the world of the dead is said to draw closest to the living and whisper secret messages from the grave. Picking your way through excited townsfolk, fortune-tellers, and priests, you are stopped by a peculiarly frantic madwoman. Her muck-covered tunic punctuates her urgent pleading. Gasping, eyes wide, she catches her breath and clutches your robe. "I beg you. Hear me out!"

If there are any clerics in the group, she first directs her appeals toward them. Clerics will notice, despite the muck, she wears the garb of a priest of Shul.

"The greatest Cathedral of Justicia, known to some as a sacred site to the moon god, has come under a foul curse this day! It would usually be a center of focus tonight, where even Shul priests are allowed access. But as preparations were under way, some sinister force crossed over from the grave. The high priest, monks, and laymen are all under siege. I was fortunate to be in the gardens and only just es-

caped. No doubt, by Shul, my life was shielded that I might summon aid." She falters and almost passes out. With one hand she points down the road she came, with the other she clutches her side. "Make haste, and pray my sacrifice was not in vain." She falls to one knee, utterly exhausted and out of breath. You realize a crowd has gathered around her and suddenly she is being carried aloft toward a shaded tent of Shul. Her head lolls as she fades in and out of consciousness. Her last words leave you with a chill, "Save the High Priest, before he too becomes one of the undying!"

Cathedral of Shadow

The Cathedral lies on a hillock 4 miles outside the festival site—known well to any priest in the group and to any participant of the festival. Once the short journey is made, read or paraphrase the following:

It is close to sunset as you make your way to the Cathedral. A great shadow shrouds the area, though no cloud can be spotted. Every fiber of your being urges you to turn back. Your eyes water and your gaze falters. You find only mild comfort in looking away. Something deeply unnatural has possessed this place and reaches out to uproot your reason.

As you enter the grounds, nothing seems out of place save the overwhelming darkness that rolls like a fog and fills you with trepidation and dread. It melts away the edges of your sanity, but why and how you cannot say. A wide path leads through ancient, ornate gates and up to the great temple.

The way continues up a short set of stone stairs toward the Cathedral's double-door main entry, and splits to either side of the structure, presumably to the rectory and ancient bell tower and gardens. The darkness smears details from this distance, as if the entire Cathedral is being smudged out of existence. You bite down your urge to flee and mutter prayers for courage with each advancing step.

Area A—Runic Entry: You approach the main entry, where symbols have been hastily painted with a dark liquid directly onto the stone steps. Your eyes meet the markings and a deeply repulsive feeling shocks your system.

These runic markings repulse mortals. Undead will not feel the effects, but the living must make a Will save (DC 25) to cross over the stairs and enter through the double doors.

Area B—Darfay's Garden: This side of the Cathedral is overgrown with vines and tall grass, each doing their part to surround two large cellar doors and a very old statue of

a priest. High, darkened windows as narrow as your hand prevent you from seeing anything within.

A cleric of Shul (or any cleric on a DC 13 INT check) will note:

The statue is a keen depiction of the formative High Priest Darfay, who bound the early diverging sects of Shul under one united force. He is usually portrayed as a dour figure. That makes this statue of him exceedingly rare if not unique, because he is sculpted winking and wry.

Show PCs **Handout 1**. This statue was installed ages ago during the initial infiltration by the Hidden Lord's agents posing as priests of Shul. Over time, it has allowed agents easy access to the inner sanctum. If a PC pulls the sculpted beads, the entire statue lurches forward to reveal a crawl space to **Area E1**.

The tunnel is meant to allow one person to enter at a time. A latch also opens the statue from below, exactly as the beads do from above. Both activate a weighted timer contraption to automatically reseal the heavy statue back into place a few moments after it is opened. If a thief successfully checks for traps (DC 10), the weighted contraption is discovered. Counteracting the timer (remove traps DC 10) is accomplished by holding the latch under the statue in place to prevent it from closing on its own. Otherwise, the third PC to pass into the crawlway must make a Reflex save (DC 17) or get crushed (3d12 damage) as the statue tilts back to close.

The tunnel exits at **Area E1**, which is also opened by pulling a latch as mentioned above. This opens up under the statue in **Area E1** with a counterweighted mechanism that seals it once the third PC enters. This bears the same dangers listed above—unless the latch is held in place until all PCs exit the tunnel.

Cellar doors: These lead down rotted wooden steps into **Area B1**. The scent of a musty, damp earthen cellar wafts up from these doors.

Area B1—The Cellar: Damp, swollen wooden stairs groan as you descend into an earthen wine cellar. The entire area is packed with crude wooden supports holding up a low ceiling. The smells of blood and soil give you the feeling of being buried.

In the darkness, you can barely make out several bloody bodies on the floor. It is clear that a battle recently occurred here.

All around you are shattered furnishings. On one side of the chamber, a makeshift barricade blocks off a portion of the basement. On the other, the combat seems to have spilled over into a deep space where cries for help echo out of the darkness.





Cultists of the Hidden Lord ambushed a group of clerics here. The dead all wear the robes of laymen of Shul, despite the fact that three of them were disciples of the Hidden Lord. Careful inspection of the bodies reveals those three each have a dagger with a snaky curved blade, as well as a tattoo of a mask. The ritual is stirring all of them back to life. A couple of rounds after the PCs enter, the dead arise and attack.

Newborn Zombies (7): Init -2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d4+1); AC 9; HD 4d6; hp 15; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP undead resistances; SV Fort +5, Ref -3, Will +3; AL C.

Area B2—Natural Spring: *Cold air and cries for help issue from within this damp cavern-like wing of the basement.*

Within the chamber is an old stone basin filled with water, possibly sourced from a deep natural spring. A few buckets are stacked near the water. In the corner, a hooded priest gropes at his cowl and flails at a cone-shaped, leathery, eyeless thing that moves towards the wall. The man screams in agony, fear, or both.

The priest within is being asphyxiated by a vombis leech which has dropped over his head. Another crawls back to its perch on the ceiling. The priest likely turns into a vombis zombie as the PCs reach him—4 rounds after his initial cries for help were heard. More vombis leeches, in an array of pale colors, cling to the cavern's roof. They wait to ambush whoever enters. However, they are hard to spot because the ceiling rises up where the entry slopes down. Only if the PCs purposely inspect the ceiling will they notice odd cone

shapes above. Otherwise, the leeches drop down on those entering the room (+4 on first surprise attack).

Vombis Leeches (10): Init -1; Atk bite +0 (+4 if undetected) melee (0); AC 10; HD 1d6+1; Hp 5; MV 15'; Act 1d20; SP cranium bore (see core book p431); SV Fort +1, Ref -2, Will Immune; AL N.

Cranium bore: 1d8 damage per round that the leech remains in place after initial drop-down attack succeeds. After 4 successive rounds the brain is consumed, slaying the target and transforming it into a vombis zombie.

Vombis Zombie (1): Init +1; Atk unarmed strike +1 melee (1d6+2); AC 13; HD 2d8+1; hp 12; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will Immune; AL N.

The water here is cool and refreshing with a strong mineral flavor, but it provides no supernatural benefits.

Area B3—The Barricade: *This end of the cellar seems to be blocked by a hastily crafted barrier of broken furniture.*

If PCs dismantle or shove the barricade aside, the action provokes the frightened friars of Justicia within. They jab with spears from between gaps in the makeshift wall. Each friar makes a surprise attack 1d20 +5 (1d8+1 dam).

They are wracked with fear and scream out during combat; "It's attacking here! Over here!", "Kill it quick, it's trying to trick us again," and "Don't listen to it—use your holy symbols!"

The friars have +2 AC due to cover from their barricade, which takes 3 rounds to break through. They also possess 6 flaming oil flasks at the ready. The oil does 1d6 dam plus 1d3 dam/round until the target uses an action to put it out by making a DC 13 Ref save. Each oil blast affects all PCs in a 10' area.

If PCs stay calm, form a convincing argument, and make a DC 18 Personality check, they convince the friars to hold their assault. With a successful parley, the friars could provide a 4th level replacement PC or combat support for a weakened party (Judge's discretion). Otherwise, feeling cornered, they will fight to the death.

Friars (4): Init +1; Atk spear +5 melee (1d8+1 dam); AC 14 (16 behind barricade); HD 4d8; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP healing 1d6 (4/day), turn undead (4/day), harm spell 1d8+2 magic dam 100' range DC 13 Will for half dam (1/day); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +6; AL L.

Within the chamber, the floor is damp with spilled wine and the walls are lined with casks of port. Behind a large, ancient case is a portion of discolored wall. Picking at the wall reveals it is made of balsa wood and easily swings open into a secret passage (to **Area L**) created by agents of the Hidden Lord. The friars have no knowledge of this secret passage.

Area C—Churchyard: *A chilly mist rolls over this narrow churchyard, making the details of the headstones difficult to make out. Your breath rolls out in vapors as you pull your cloak tight. The cold air smells of rich earth and mold.*

Unless special precautions are taken, PCs must make a DC 13 Reflex save to safely move across this area. Roll 1d10 to determine the fate of those who fail:

1-4: Open Grave: *You fall face first into an open grave—pain shoots through your body.* 1d6 damage.

5: Grave Thing: *You stumble over a foul thing emerging from its place of rest.* The grave thing gains a surprise attack at +2 to hit before initiative is rolled. The PC is prone.

6-9: Toe Jam: *You stub your foot on a low headstone that is almost invisible in the fog and tumble head first into another.* 1 damage + another 1d4 damage unless wearing a helmet (that helmet is now ruined).

10: Deep Grave: *As you fall into an open grave, your hands reach out to catch your fall, but only grasp at air. Your stomach rises in your belly with that uneasy awareness of a long fall. As you crash and tumble down the slopped floor of the grave, you realize it angles down even farther into a subterranean tunnel.* 2d6 damage. If followed, passage **C1** leads to **Area L**.



The churchyard has 20 headstones. Of these, 10 are missing occupants—gaping holes reveal broken caskets without remains. Each casket is buried 10' deep. One of these is extremely deep and leads to **Area L**. Of the remaining 10 headstones, 8 are undisturbed—the corpses within are still working their way to the surface, and 2 are emerging and are halfway stuck in the soil.

All the headstones indicate the hosts within are various vicars and high priests of Shul and Justicia dating back generations. A thief would know that these personages are likely buried with items of great value.

Grave Things (Undead Vicars) (2): Init +3; Atk claw +3 melee (1d6 dam + grave rot); AC 13; HD 5d8; hp 22; MV 20' (1 round required to escape grave); Act 1d20 + 1d20; SP grave rot (rash appears, DC13 Fort save or it spreads, doing 1 AGI dam/hour, once a PC reaches 3 AGI, the victim collapses and dies), immune to mind control, *sleep*, and *paralysis*; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AL C.

Initially, only 2 grave things have emerged. The remaining 8 reach the surface and attack PCs who linger here. Each grave thing has 3d10 gp in fine jewelry, rings, etc.

Area D—Hedge Maze: *A well-maintained hedge maze zigzags just under thick dark fog, giving the walls an impression of infinite height. The thorny hedge branches writhe and creak with life.*

The maze is magical, so that even if mapping it, the PCs become confused and confounded. Using twine or marking also causes nonsensical results, such as finding the other end of the string or marks that disappear or suddenly appear in places not marked.

Hacking at the hedge causes the branches to regenerate within 5 rounds. It takes 3 rounds to make a man-sized hole in the hedge. Doing so also causes the hedge to lash out at attackers. The thorn branch melee attack is at 1d20+4 (1d3 dam). In addition, the thorns are coated with toxins that burn the skin. Those hit must make a DC 15 Fort save or take 1d8 damage the following round. Finally, hacking through the hedge grants no advantage in navigating the maze's magical passageways.

Crossing the maze requires a DC 15 Will save. A lawful cleric focusing on their god to navigate the maze may add +2 on their Will save. Clerics who succeed in casting *second sight*, *true name*, or *divine aid* (DC 10) also find a correct path. Any failed roll results in the traveler in the lead ending up back where they started. Successful rolls result in arriving at

the tower entrance **Area K**, or if returning from **Area K**, the traveler returns to the Cathedral entrance. PCs who climb the fence, fly or jump over the hedge into the fog immediately split the party and no added benefit to navigation is achieved. Returning, the flying or jumping PC finds the party is no longer in the same location, and the surroundings appear different. PCs lost in this manner face the same challenges, with one exception: if they cross the maze successfully, roll 1d3 to see where they end up: (1) Cathedral entrance (**Area D**); (2) Bell Tower (**Area K**); or (3) Churchyard (**Area C**)—if they end up here, the maze closes behind them, barring easy access back to the maze.

Area E—Attendant's Chambers:

Before the door is opened, read or paraphrase:

As you approach a stout, stained, well-used wooden portal, a gruff voice from behind the door bellows "Go away!"

The voice within is Chonko's—the servant and cook to the priests of the Cathedral. He is struggling with a powerful spirit that has partial possession of his mind—filling him with violent thoughts and urges.

Usually mild and helpful, the old cook has sequestered himself shortly after the noon meal, when he almost ran a kitchen knife across the high priest's throat. He entertains no conversation ventured by the PCs.

PCs listening at the door will hear muttering and an occasional violent struggle. The door is unlocked but blocked with furniture. It requires a DC 15 STR check to push it open.

Once opened, read or paraphrase:

A trashed living quarter contains a pitiful figure curled up against the wall. He is covered in sweat and filth. He grins madly and slowly rises to meet you.

The evil spirit is now in full control and beaming with glee at the violence to come. He shifts from side to side, shivering and non-responsive. Clerics notice he is dressed as a temple servant and his livery contains symbols of Justicia. Once anyone gets close, he lurches forward and attacks with fury and superhuman strength.

Possessed Chonko (1): Init +5; Atk slam +5 melee (1d6+2) plus spectral throw; AC 11; HD 1d8 (spirit 6d8); hp 6 (spirit 30); MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP spectral throw pushes 10' (1d6) & knocks prone (DC 13 Fort save negates), corporal flesh (after sustaining 6 dam, all further dam appears lethal (enough

to remove body parts) after an additional 30 dam the spirit bursts from the body (1d3 STR dam to all targets in room), magical resistance half damage; SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +10; AL N.

If the spirit is successfully turned, it leaves the host body and flees. Chonko is so beloved by Justicia that should he survive this encounter, all PCs gain +1 Luck.

Within the room are the following: a modest cot, mop, bucket, broom, small cooking stove, desk with drawer, and clothing chest. In his drawer is a square brass key. This key opens **Area F**. In his clothing chest is an old, dusty set of prayer beads. This gift from an old cleric of Justicia is a blessed relic. Clerics will recognize the mark of Justicia by the emblem of swords on each bead. If held, it adds +2 to one roll in a combat that occurs within 1 turn of the prayer beads being used. This can occur once per day.

Area E1—Statue of Darfay the Stoic: *A classic stoic depiction of the infamous High Priest Darfay resides in this hallway. Aside from the cruelty of time, no damage is visible to the figure despite him being an iconic priest of Shul in a Cathedral dedicated to Justicia—perhaps save for a roughed-up nose.*

Show players **Handout 2**. When the nose is turned, a counterweight releases, allowing the statue to be tilted back from a hinge at the base. The statue can then be pushed back to expose a tunnel leading to **Area B**. This statue operates exactly like its sister statue in **Area B**.

Area F—Bedchamber of High Priest Malubran:

This room is locked. The lock can be opened with the key from **Area E**, or a DC 20 pick lock check.

A short foyer opens into a simple living space in good order. It is adorned with a master-crafted desk, simple yet comfortable-looking bed, and stout well-made chair. Of note in the chamber is a large portrait of what must be the current High Priest of Justicia. His hand is raised in pious welcome.

Show players **Handout 3**. The left hand of the painted figure is crafted to release a catch when pressed down. This pops the painting frame open at hidden hinges along its side, creating a secret entry to **Area J**. The portal allows Malubran direct passage into the sanctuary. Unless it is propped open, it is a one-way passage. The frame seals closed from within **Area J** after a few rounds.

Desk and Chair: A woodworker will admire the craft of the matching desk and chair. Both are stout, durable designs made from rare wood. They are excellent examples of top Shudder Mountain workmanship. The chair is a collectible worth 15gp, the desk 50gp. The desk is protected with a divine ward. Beings of lawful alignment are unaffected. PCs of neutral alignment simply cannot focus on the desk without making a DC 20 Will save, and chaotic PCs will feel a painful pang of orderliness when trying to search or open the desk drawers. Chaotic PCs must make a DC 15 Fort save or keel over dead from a powerful divine thwart. Within the desk is a silver key. This key opens **Area H** and also disarms the door trap—but *not* the trap within **Area H**.

Bed: A book of prayers is under the pillow. Within the book is a list of unknown names. A DC 12 decipher script determines this is a list of acolytes within the Cathedral, living and dead. There is also a handwritten prayer in the back of the book with a note above it stating: “Recite for safety.” The short prayer begins, “Is there any remover of difficulties...” Anyone stating they wish to memorize the short prayer must pass a DC 12 INT check. If successful, the prayer is committed to memory and will grant +1 AC and +1 on all saves for the duration of one combat or situation (i.e., to avoid a trapped chamber or walk a narrow pass over a lava pit).

Area F1—Waiting Room to the High Priest: *A low table, maroon couch and two thick padded chairs serve as the main furnishings in this relaxed space. As soon as you enter, the walls begin to exhibit signs of flooding, perhaps from a chamber above. The plaster bubbles and darkens as patches of water rapidly appear. A faint, otherworldly echo of mysterious music sends chills up your spine. You feel a powerful current running through this chamber—but the source is as yet invisible.*

What is usually a relaxing chamber for those waiting to meet with the High Priest Malubran has now been possessed by an otherworldly haunt. Staying here for more than 2 rounds provokes the poltergeist, which begins to terrorize the PCs. At that point, the signs of its presence come on sequentially:

Rounds 1 and 2: The wet walls continue to drip from some unknown source. The walls are freezing cold to the touch. The entire room continues to exude an eerie aura that brings unease to any PC sensitive to unseen forces.

Round 3: Two PCs at random (or those with the lowest Luck) experience the following: *You see a mesmerizing maiden nightmarishly trying to push her way out from the north wall as if it was suddenly an elastic substance.*

The PCs must make a DC 14 Will save or be stunned by the horror of the visage for 2 rounds.

Round 4: A piercing screech vibrates everything in the room. Your eyes and ears begin to bleed. Every PC in the room suffers 1d4 damage of sonic shock.

Round 5: The glass crystal table shatters, spraying razor-sharp shards everywhere. PCs must make a DC 14 Reflex save or take 1d6 damage. Stunned PCs automatically fail the save.

Round 6: Select a PC at random. The poltergeist attacks them to sate its hunger for chaos and death. The wall forms into a great hand and reaches out, pulling you into the wall. The poltergeist makes an opposing STR roll (1d20+3) with the PC. If it wins the roll, the PC dies due to an inability to occupy solid space in the wall. Their mangled pieces fall down from the ceiling in a spray of gore and broken bones. If the PC wins the opposing STR check, they escape the grip, but suffer 1d6 damage.

Leaving the chamber evades the haunt. The poltergeist can be turned at any point, but attacking walls and floors proves futile. Once the poltergeist claims a victim, it is satiated for 1 turn, after which it returns to claim another life.

Haunting Poltergeist: Init: +1; Atk varied see above; AC n/a; HD 9d4; hp 20; MV 40' fly; Act 1d20; SP telekinetic alteration of physical environment, cannot be struck by physical or magical damage, non-corporeal form, pure energy; SV Fort n/a, Ref +3, Will n/a; AL L.

Poltergeists are energy forms of pure negative force from another dimension. They can periodically be trapped in this dimension by rituals and spells—often gone wrong. Despite their violent tendencies in this world, they are docile entities with a strict set of highly formulaic and measured codes of conduct. The pain of the randomness of this dimension in contrast with their own gives their actions the appearance of pure evil. However, they are more lost and scared than those they encounter, struggling to make sense of a world with diametrically differing rules. Turning a poltergeist gives them comfort and order, which they prefer. Once turned, a poltergeist will remain docile for twice the normal duration.

Area G—Hall of Vicars: *A variety of portraits line the walls of a finely carpeted hall. Each depicts elder high-ranking holy clerics of Justicia. They scowl down at you as you pass; their haunting visages bear a savage coolness masked by sophistication and privilege. Thoughts of your own failings and faithlessness, sin and*

shortcomings plague your mind.

Once the PCs are midway through the hall, the figures in the paintings detach, float towards, and attack the PCs with the lowest Personality score who are not clerics of Justicia. The emergence of these spirits from their portraits is so dream-like and unbelievable that all PCs suffer a -5 to initiative as they collect their wits.

Note: The spirits will entirely ignore a cleric of Justicia, and will not pursue PCs beyond **Area G** and **Area G1**.

Portrait Vicar Spirits (8): Init: +2; Atk faded strikes +5 melee (1d3 Personality + special); AC 14; HD 6d6; hp 20; MV 20' fly; Act 1d20; SP immune to non-magical weapons, PCs reduced to 3 or less Personality are cursed to fade into a painting as a will-sapped background image; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +5; AL N.

Area G1—Dining Hall: *A half-eaten meal wastes away on plates around a dining table. Chairs are pushed back or fallen over as if the chamber was abandoned quite suddenly. The door to the north is open. A single large painting is featured on the south wall, but the figures in the portrait are missing as if they walked off the canvas, leaving only eerie shadows across a barren field of muted background color.*

The food here is actually somewhat fresh, but the effects of the undying ritual make the meat dishes come alive in the stomach. Anyone brave enough to eat must make a DC 20 Fort save or take 1d7 damage per round as the meal claws its way out. This carries on for 6 rounds—if the process is survived.

Careful inspection of the chairs and table reveals odd, oil paint smudges in various colors.

Area H—Reliquary Closet:

This closet is locked (DC 22 pick lock). Unless the silver key (desk **Area F**) is used on the lock, picking it will trigger a trap (DC 20 find trap, DC 22 disable) of strong electrical current (5d7 dam).

In addition, if PCs enter the chamber without speaking aloud the handwritten prayer (see **Area F**) in the back of the High Priest's prayer book, a divine ward scrawled into the door frame is activated. This ward (DC 22 find trap, DC 25 disable) creates a strong compulsion to walk to the front of the sanctuary (**Area J**) and kneel in prayerful repentance. Resisting the potent ward requires a DC 25 Will save. Even

if the PCs have no knowledge of the location of the sanctuary, they will move through **Area G** and **Area G1** toward the destination. This may be a deadly journey, considering the denizens of these chambers. Once the PC kneels at the front of the sanctuary, they regain their wits.

Those who survive the gauntlet of traps to enter the room will discover a marvel of treasures.

Judging by its protection, this closet hosts a number of precious, rare, frightening, and potent relics. These are likely the Cathedral's most prized and protected artifacts. Among them is a severed burnt hand resting in a circle of salt, a thin linen shroud covering a mummified head, and a glass box containing a well-preserved eyeball that possesses a brilliant teal iris.

Cursed hand of St. Cooil: This infamous cleric turned to dark magic, slipping from faith to folly and consorting with demonic forces to extend life. After his fall, the paladins of Justicia burned his cursed body, but alas, his hand would not die. It reanimated and crawls the earth to inflict only death and pain. They keep it here within a protective circle of salt. Anyone removing the hand from the protective circle feels a powerful force. But the hand is crafty and bides its time until the PCs are distracted by a fight. It then casts a spell to take over a living (not undead) PC.

Cursed Hand: Init +4; Atk cast spells 1d20 + 6 (special); AC 15; HD 6d8; hp 25; MV 20' (can climb walls/ceiling); Act 1d20; SP *charm person, word of command, chill touch, curse, ESP, invisibility*; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +6; AL C.

This devious hand, if cornered, uses ESP to contact and make a pact with a chaotic wizard or elf. The deal offered is this: if the PC cuts off their hand (permanent 3 damage) and mounts this withered mitt in its place, the hand promises to serve the master. This adds an extra spell action from the hand at 1d20+6. However, the hand is murderous and will not be easily controlled. The Judge should play it as a chaotic NPC—only semi-cooperative and never cautious.

Shroud of Seadoom: A shroud is placed over the mummified head of the famed priest of the high seas, Luxion Seadoom. Anyone holding the gruesome head can converse through it with any dead immersed in water.

Eye of Catherine: The glass box contains the Eye of Catherine of the Coast. The eye grants the bearer (casters and non-casters) the ability to cast *turn to stone* (DCC RPG, p.233) 1/day with a 1d20 plus any spellcasting bonus. However, the bearer also takes 1d3 unholy damage.

Countless other fingernails in bottles, ancient prayer beads, candles, teeth, shawls, prayer books, and tattered robes are shelved as archival artifacts with purely historical value. They are seemingly valuable to the right buyer; however, anyone knowing the historical value of these would never pay for them, and might even work hard to bring the thief to justice.

Area I—Temple Archives: *You swing open the door to a small, dimly lit storage area. A warm light issues from coals in a low brazier, revealing neatly stacked books and vellum scrolls for what must be an archive. A pair of desks fill out the packed space. You have the sense someone has recently been in here.*

The two archive monks, Adrian and Froot, have hidden themselves within this chamber—fearful of the undead. They prefer matters of administration over those of combat but have hatched a plan for their defense. They are so out of their minds with panic that they think the PCs must be undead. They burst out from behind their desks when the PCs enter and flip the brazier of coals. All PCs in the room must make a DC 10 Ref save or take 1d3 fire damage. After this surprise attack, Adrian tries to “turn the undead” on the group, while Froot uses his staff. Both lay blows down on the group while yelling “Back, ye foul dead!” After 2 rounds, if none of the PCs are undead, they realize their folly and, if still alive, beg forgiveness in a flurry of apologies.

Monks (2): Init +4; Atk ironwood staff +6 melee (1d5 +2 damage); AC 13; HD 5d8; hp 17; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d20; SP +5 resist poison and disease, can block missile fire with a Reflex save above the hit roll; SV Fort +3, Ref+6, Will+2; AL N.

If the monks survive, they may provide some helpful information to PCs who treat them well. They note that the head archivist and another archive monk are missing. They have not seen them for days. They are confounded and have no idea what is happening to the Cathedral. Their main role is as scribes. They welcome the group to read and search the scrolls for any clues. Anyone with a relevant skill or background in bureaucracy, clerical work, etc. will find the information below after a turn of searching. Otherwise, a DC 18 INT or decipher script check is required. Clerics and wizards gain +1 due to their research proficiency. After a successful search, roll 1d4:

1: One note references a “hidden treasure” in the wine cellar (reference to the secret passage to **Area L**). Froot and Adrian know it to be the drunken handwriting of Monk Husblage. They dismiss it as folly. He is a fellow scribe who was last seen the previous day. Husblage is an agent of the Hidden Lord and is now dead (see **Area L**). He wrote this note one night deep into his wine and forgot.

2: Another old manuscript states the first tower was later built into a bell tower and it is imbued with a sacred power of sanctuary and salvation. It also outlines its history and how it was crafted from the sacred standing stones on this site. These stones marked the location for Shul's druids to honor the moon during the lunar eclipse, when special powers of the dead were known to allow communication.

3: A prophecy strikes the reader as relevant:

*As the world of the dead draws close
And the Hidden One becomes manifest
The night shall never end
Lest the source in the sanctuary be found
To kill what cannot die
In a Cathedral that cannot be awakened*

4: A haunting cry arises from outside the hall, then screams of terror and violence. Something is approaching! If PCs attempt to search again, have an undead creature of your liking enter and attack. Otherwise, keep the

horror tension high and invent other sounds and chilling effects. This is a cursed Cathedral, not a library!

Area J—The Sanctuary: *A grisly scene unfolds before you. Near the altar of the Cathedral sanctuary, a tattered, bloody figure rains blows down on a priest of Justicia whose hands are raised in protection. The crazed attacker beats wildly with some sort of beaded whip.*

The High Priest Malubran heard commotion earlier and found what appeared to be a priest here. However, what appears to be a priest is actually a vampire (in life the Arch Vicar Neifo) who arose from the Churchyard and, after a visit to the bell tower, scrawled the ward on the steps (see **Area A**) and entered to retake his old seat of power as the High Priest. Despite appearances, it is Malubran—bloodied and almost dead—who needs aid. He has stunned the grave thing and is attacking with his holy symbol, a string of iron beads. Malubran is heavily wounded and desperate. He calls out as the PCs enter, “Aid me to best this demon!”

PCs must act fast and with good judgment to save Malubran from the vampire. Anyone inspecting them up close notices the bloody figure (Malubran) is also in priestly garb and the figure on the floor has old tattered robes and an antique jeweled bracelet—an identical match to the one in **Area K**. Destroying the one from **Area K** will instantly turn the vampire to dust.

Malubran (Cleric): Init +1; Atk magic beaded rope +4 melee (1d3+2) or by spell; AC 11; HD 7d8; hp (30) 3 currently; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP disapproval 14 and currently lost all faith to cast any more spells; Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +3; AL L.

Undead Arch Vicar Neifo (Vampire): Init +5; Atk slam +10 melee (1d5+5 dam) or bite +8 melee (1d6 +1 dam plus special); AC 17; HD 13d8; hp (59) 51 currently; MV 40'; 1d20 +1d20 bite or spell; SP bite drains 1 STA and restores hp to Vicar equal to damage done, STR of 22, immune to: (critical strikes, non-magic attacks, *sleep*, *charm*, *paralysis*, mental effects, and cold damage); spell casting (+10): *sleep*, *word of command*, *darkness*, *paralysis*, *charm person*, can transform into a pile of worms or vapor to escape (5 round limit); Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +11; AL L.

If PCs defend the Vicar, he thanks the group and then concocts a lie to split them up. He may claim he needs guardians in the sanctuary while suggesting key PCs check certain other areas of the Cathedral. Once he has someone alone, he uses *sleep* or *paralysis* on the victim, then drains their life.

In a group fight, he uses *sleep* first, then *charm* to create an ally. Next, he uses *darkness* to elude being cornered and



word of command to add more allies. Finally, he uses slam attacks to drop the PCs and bite attacks to heal himself. If the battle turns sour, he transforms into vapor (5 round duration) to slip into his old bedroom (**Area F**) then towards the relic closet (**Area H**) in hopes the PCs trigger the traps. He knows the place well and takes advantage of that knowledge.

If Malubran is saved, he is extremely appreciative. He dedicates any resources (human or material) from **Area H** and **Area I** to aid the PCs. He also helps them avoid the traps and the cursed hand in **Area H**. He senses something evil is emanating from the basement and mutters he was betrayed by one of his own. He begs the PCs to trust no one save the loyal monks in the Archives. He then retires to his chambers (**Area F**) to pray and restore himself.

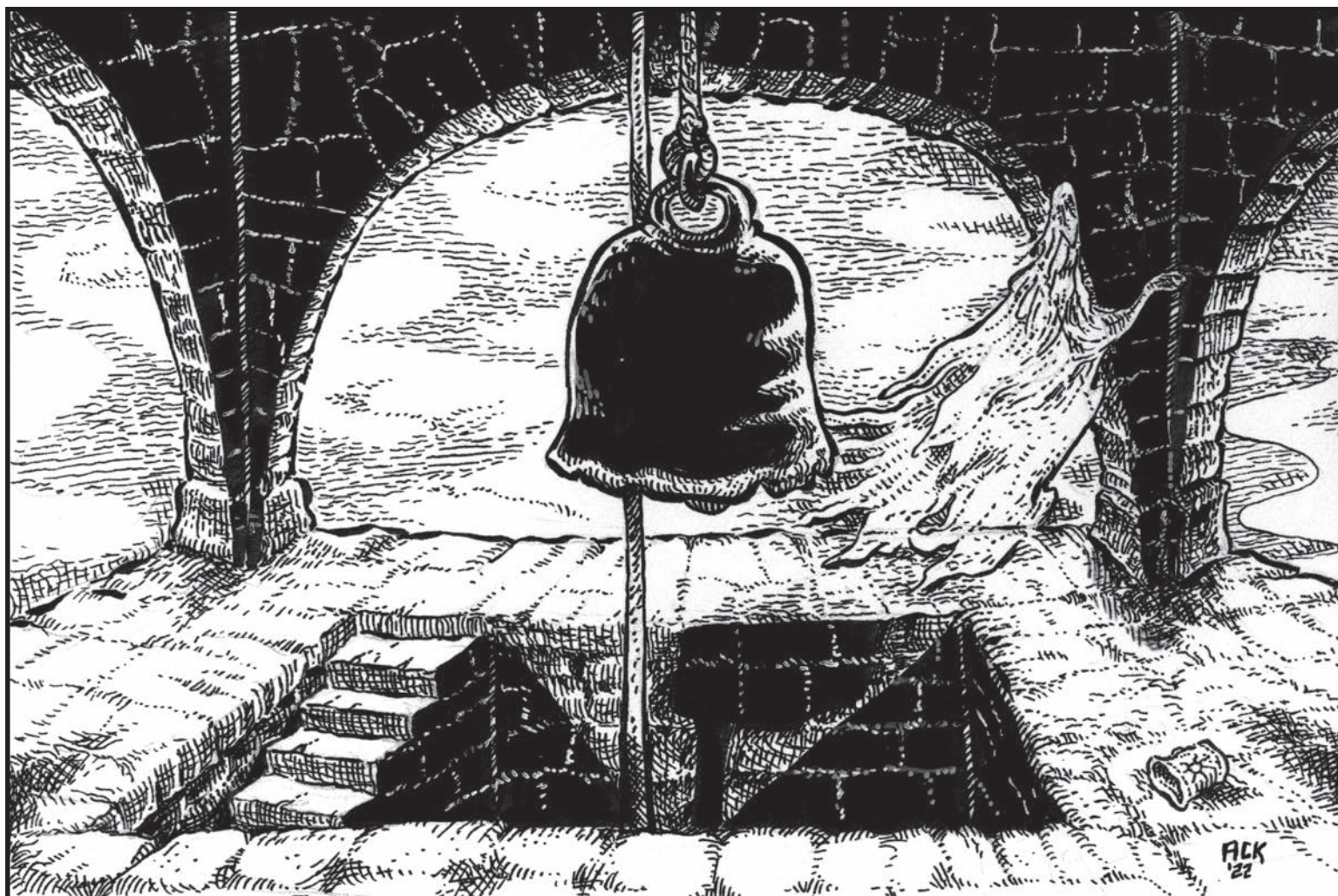
Area K—Bell Tower: *Emerging from the hedge, you come upon a squat bell tower. Its antiquated construction style clearly predates the main Cathedral by centuries. Nonetheless, it possesses solid fabrication and a stout, imposing presence.*

Before you is a solid iron reinforced door with a distinct

cone shape—another vestige of an older construction style. Something about this place feels sacred.

Due to age, the door sticks. It can be forced open (DC 13 STR check). Opening it startles a host of residents who make a horrific, echoing racket of skittering and flapping. An old set of stone stairs leads up to a platform featuring a great brass bell, where the floor is thick with droppings. Inspection reveals them to be from birds, bats, and rats. Oddly, there is a clearing of immaculate space on the floor around an ornate, antique jeweled bracelet. It is identical to the one worn by the High Vicar in **Area J**.

The High Vicar visited this location first when raised by the undying ritual. In confusion, he discovered the bell tower was no longer the revered place it used to be. He left his prized jeweled bracelet here for safekeeping. It rests near the ledge of the bell tower by large bay windows looking out over the swirling, darkened fog. Close inspection reveals an inscription, “For my beloved—you have my entire heart and soul.” The bracelet is his only weakness because it contains his last remaining humanity and mortality—his attachment to his beloved. Destroying it kills the High Vicar in **Area J**. Touching it fills the PC with a kaleidoscope of emotions:





loathing, love, fear and fury. Chaotic PCs will find this exhilarating, neutral PCs become confused, and lawful PCs are repulsed. It appears to be of great value (350 gp).

The High Vicar assigned his risen, ghostly vassal, Priest Hiaccath, to guard the bracelet. This loyal servant hides within the bell, unseen. Anyone approaching the bracelet will be thrown off the tower by a translucent figure emerging from the great bell. Hiaccath is a lanky, handsome elder with noble features. Hiaccath is waiting and watching from inside the bell which, oddly, will not ring with him inside. Anyone inspecting this is greeted by him with a grin before he shoves them into the central shaft. The fall is 40' (4d6 dam—don't forget broken bones occur on natural 6s). Hiaccath howls, "Leave this place!" as he pushes PCs off the tower and down to the ground below.

Hiaccath has been deluded into loyal service to the High Vicar and viciously adheres to his master's will. However, ringing the bell after he has emerged from it will remind him of his original service to the will of Justicia. In this state, he returns to his senses and begs sweet release from his undead curse. He gladly reveals this can be granted by killing his master and then placing Hiaccath back into his grave. If the PCs do this, they release him and gain +1 Luck.

Ghostly Priest Hiaccath: Init +3; Atk force push +9 melee

(falling damage, plus cold touch); AC 10; HD 3d12; hp 22; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP immune to non-magical weapons/attacks (as well as crits, disease, poison, *sleep*, *charm*, *paralysis*, mental effects and cold damage), force of strength (+4 on STR checks), force push (opposing STR checks) if fail PC falls out of tower, cold touch (DC 15 Fort or paralysis for 1d4 hours and push is automatic), invisibility, telekinesis (4 objects up to 100' and 100lbs); Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +7; AL L.

Hiaccath will not push PCs in ghost form off the tower. He engages any ghosts in an intellectual discourse once the "others" have been pushed away. This conversation is civil and profound—his mind is sharp and his will transparent and forceful. At some point he will gesture to the bell and plead, "Refrain, by the mercy of Justicia, from ringing this infernal contraption that serves to only rattle the brain."

One of Hiaccath's special talents was exorcisms. PCs afflicted as a wight may befriend Hiaccath, who can cast *exorcise* to return them back to their living form (DC 12 Will save).

Area L—Hidden Ritual Chamber: *The halls leading to this area are triangular in shape and oddly crafted with techniques unknown to the PCs. Each portion of the floor, walls, and ceiling is finished with shimmering gray and red tiles. The entire area seems newly constructed in relation to the rest of the Cathedral.*

You finally emerge into a large chamber with a sunken pit and three upraised triangular side chambers, each hosting a unique throne. The floors and ceiling are cut at angles that distort your sense of depth. The space is charged with a force of magic, but something about it is off. It appears a ritual was being conducted here, one that has not yet stopped despite the fact that three robed figures with curved blades are lying dead in key positions for conducting ritual magic. None of them are dressed as laymen of Shul or Justicia. All three victims have deep bruises on their necks.

The Hidden Lord directed his three highest-ranking clerics to start the ritual of the undying beginning a week ago and reaching its conclusion earlier this day. They were also charged to complete the spell in a manner that would allow his agents free access to the site as a shadowy sanctuary. Whatever mysterious goals were to follow remain unknown because a powerful mummy awakened in the Churchyard (**Area C**)—attracted by potent necromantic forces. It burrowed down (**C1**), entered the ritual chamber, and proved too great a foe for the three unsuspecting priests. The ritual then spun out of control and continues to surge until it can be reversed or completed.

Clerics, wizards and elves in the group are all aware this chamber was specifically designed to conduct ritual magic. If any of them spend a turn studying the room, they discover the potent design of the triangular ritual pit in the center adds +4 to ritual magic.

Casters will know that a ritual of reversal must be cast, or the spell completed. However, completing the spell without more information is impossible. Reversing it requires a DC 25 spell check. The special ritual chamber will add +4 if anyone in the group understands its design. The ritual gains an additional +1 per caster involved. Another +2 is added if a relevant spell is used in the ritual (i.e., *remove curse*, *dispel magic*, etc.), and of course, wizards and elves can spell burn. It takes 1 turn to complete if the casters are uninterrupted. If any of those involved in the reversal stop casting, the entire process is arrested. If halted prematurely, adverse effects arise. Any caster will know this, but will not know the specifics. Stopping the ritual of reversal before it concludes causes 1d20 necrotic damage to all living creatures in the room and heals undead for the same amount; partially undead PCs take half damage. The ritual of reversal must then start over from the beginning in order for it to succeed.

The three thrones bear three symbols vital to the Hidden Lord: the known, the unknown, and the unknowable. Resting behind the throne of the unknown is the mummy,

hidden from view and drunk with necromantic energy. It is content to rest here unless the ritual is tampered with. After a spell of reversal begins, it hobbles out and attempts to choke the nearest caster involved in the ritual.

Greater Mummy: Init +1; Atk choke +7 melee (1d6 + special); AC 12; HD 10d8+10; hp 58; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP choke hold adds 1d6 extra damage for each round the choke is sustained (DC 20 STR check to break hold), damage reduction 7hp/strike, mummy rot, vulnerable to fire, undead traits; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +12; AL N.

Mummy rot is contracted when one touches or is touched by a mummy. Unless a DC 13 Fort save is made, mummy rot causes a loss of 1 STR/day and a sensation of thirst. Mummies take double damage from fire, but are immune to crits, disease, poison, *sleep*, *charm*, *paralysis*, mental effects and cold damage.

If the reversal succeeds, all the undead instantly turn to dust. This does not affect partially undead PCs. PCs who are not undead are granted a +2 Luck boon from Justicia upon ending the ritual.

The Shadow Lifts

PCs may return to the festival for rest and recovery. Those afflicted as the undead will find it difficult to survive undetected. The PCs will not be able to locate the priestess who originally approached them. She appears to have fled, mysteriously healed. Those who were caring for her report they found her missing soon after her arrival. Most of the festival folk have no inkling or concern for what has occurred on the shadowy hillock this day.

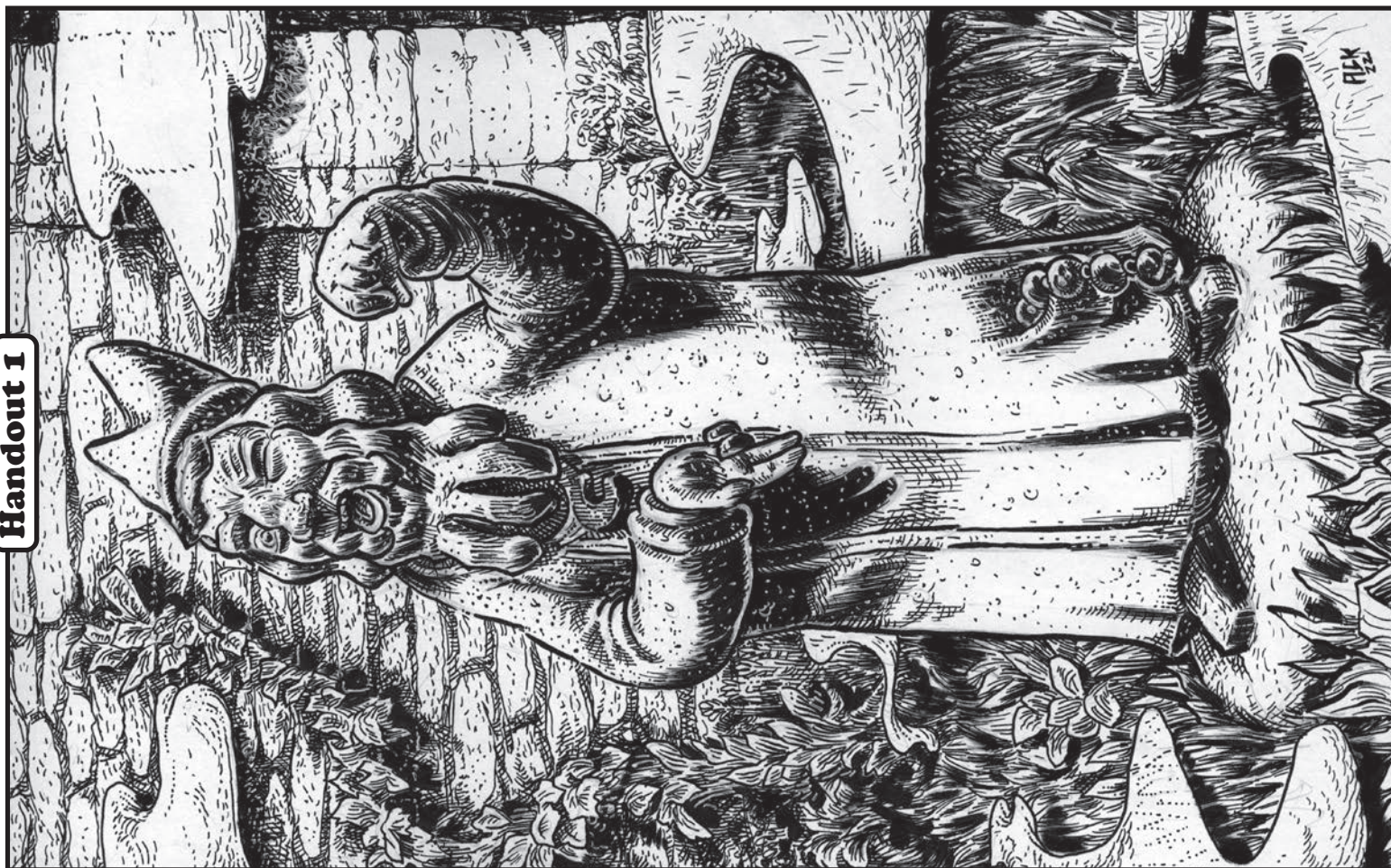
Those who survived without dying even once gain the **Boon of the Living**, accompanied by an unusual sensation (akin to worms crawling bone-deep) until the next time they drop to zero hit points.

Boon of the Living: An infusion of unreleased spectral energy surges deep within your bones. Until the next time you fall to zero hit points, you can sense an undead creature on sight. In addition, you gain an uncanny knowing about those who are close to death. The next time you are reduced to zero hit points, you suddenly see yourself from outside your body. The unique, otherworldly experience grants 2XP. You can still take non-physical actions, cast spells (at -2D), and whisper to the living until someone revives you or you perish—passing beyond the veil. Once you are revived, the **Boon of the Living** ends.

Handout 2



Handout 1







CATHEDRAL OF THE UNDYING

\$9.99

The usual excitement of the Blackmoon celebration is amplified by the appearance of a solar eclipse, bringing a larger than usual host of lunar hermits, fanatics, and witches eager to sell forecasts, issue omens, or cast harvest futures. The eager participants relish these sacred days when the world of the dead is said to draw closest to the living and whisper messages from the grave.

But this year, agents of the Hidden Lord used the auspicious confluence to secretly flood the site with necromantic energy, plunging the great Cathedral into perpetual twilight—not gone, but not existent. The undying curse is blurring the separation between the living and the dead—worse yet, between allies and enemies! Those trapped in the gloom will have to make hard choices.

This product is compatible with the
Dungeon Crawl Classics Role Playing Game.



\$9.99

S9G10024

www.studio9inc.com

SKU: S9G10024



© 2023 Studio 9 Games