



# Avalon Encounters

## Cult of the Dead

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The Cult of the Dead is a paradoxical organization. An ancient desert society founded the Church of the Dead to assure that the sleep of the dead would not be disturbed. The Church gathered priests and master craftsmen to create hidden tombs, laden with traps and magical wards to keep the dead and their treasures safe.

In addition to protecting the dead from outside threats, the Church of the Dead was also responsible for making sure they would not be cursed by undeath. Their duties included laying undead to rest. To this end they studied necromancy and compiled the Book of the Dead, filled with horrible secrets about death and undeath that mortals were never meant to learn in this life.

Over the decades, ingenious thieves uncovered the carefully hidden tomb entrances, bypassed the traps and wards and looted the burial chambers. Distraught at seeing their defenses overcome, the Church of the Dead searched for a way to shore up their defenses. Since traps are stationary and reactive, they tried to think of defenses which would be able to react and adapt to the tactics used by the tomb invaders. With the extensive necromantic secrets contained in the Book of the Dead, placing undead guardians in tombs was a natural decision.

The decision to use undead created a schism in the Church. The bulk of the followers rejected the idea. The splinter group which embraced the darker side was labeled the Cult of the Dead. They sometimes refer to themselves as the 'True Church of the Dead' but most members have accepted the 'cult' label.

The rhetoric of the Cult of the Dead remains anti-undead. They include extra ceremonies in their rituals which supposedly lessen the pain of undead and allow the faithful to serve beyond the limits of life. Another common tactic is to give low level undead (skeletons/zombies) funeral rights and lay them in tombs, with instructions not to move until nonbelievers enter the tomb. Thus they can technically blame the 'dead rising' on the tomb invaders.

They continue their quest to hunt down and destroy undead which were not created by the Cult of the Dead. Their goal is not complete extermination, but a monopoly on undead to ensure they are used 'correctly.' The Cult of the Dead is more zealous about tracking down and destroying the wrong kind of undead than actual Church of the Dead. All Cult undead are created by spells and rituals. The Cult will never create or work with creatures such as wights, which are capable of creating undead from slain victims. Vampires are particularly despised.