

Tome of Adventures

City of Half Dead

Vol 1

Issue 3



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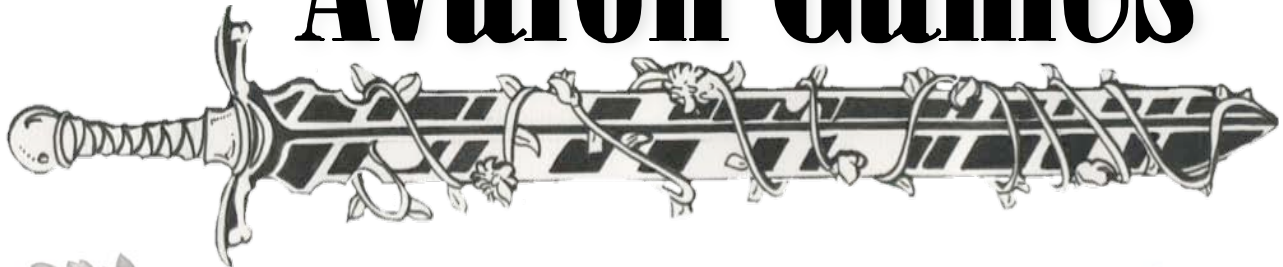
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Introductions

Ancient evils and political intrigue awaits those who are brave or foolish enough to enter the cursed city of Morgoth. The impoverished masses are trapped inside the walls of this vast metropolis, ruled over by a scheming cabal of undying aristocrats. The crumbling streets and ruined buildings of the city hold both danger and the potential for glory. Adventure waits for those who dare to solve the mysteries of the City of the Half Dead.

This book is both a non-linear adventure and a world building supplement fans of Dungeons and Dragons 4E. The DM can transplant The City of the Half Dead into any preexisting campaign world or homebrew setting. The adventure contains setting information; plot hooks, quests, new monsters, NPCs, and everything else the DM should need to run adventures in this the area. The work also provides plenty of room for the DM to expand on what is written by including places to put original dungeons.

City of the Half Dead is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure for characters of 4th to 6th level. You need the Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, and Dungeon Master's Guide to play.





Background

Four hundred years ago, an army marched out of the south and conquered the mountain city of Morgoth. Leading the invaders was Rajon, an exiled prince in search of his own kingdom. Rajon's army was disciplined and zealously loyal. The invaders quickly overran the city's defenders and Rajon anointed himself as Priest-King. As both king and high priest, Rajon forcefully converted the population of Morgoth to the religion of his people. No god could be worshiped within the city save for Rajon's patron deity Url.

The god Url was pleased by Rajon's conquests in his name. The deity rewarded his servant with the gift of immortality, so that Rajon might rule over the city forever. The gift of everlasting life was a great boon to the Priest-King but as the years wore he began to worry that he would be forced to watch all those that he loved grow old and die. Rajon went to the temple of Url and begged his god to bestow immortality upon those closest to him. After days of fasting and many burnt offerings, the Priest-King was given his answer. A vision came over Rajon and he began furiously scribbling upon his sacred scrolls. In his vision, the god Url instructed Rajon how to create a ritual that would bestow immortality upon others using his own divinely infused blood.

For many years Rajon ruled over Morgoth and the city experienced a time of prosperity. Though he was a tyrant who harshly punished any perceived disloyalty, Rajon was an able administrator who oversaw the construction of many temples and other public works. This was a period of stability and

growth for the city, even if it was not a truly happy time. As the years past, the undying Rajon became dissatisfied with his twin roles as king and high priest. As an immortal with the ability to bestow immortality upon others, Rajon saw no reason why he should not be worshipped as a living god. To this end he formed his own priesthood and erected a statue of himself next to the altar of Url.

Url was angered at his servant's arrogance and blasphemy. As punishment for his false claims of divinity, Rajon was stripped of his immortality and his soul was trapped between life and eternal undeath. Such was the fate of all those who had become immortal through Rajon's blood. The family, friends, and retainers of the Priest-King were to share his fate for all time. Unable to experience the joys of mortal life, Rajon's wife cast herself into a pit of flames and was destroyed. As the ages past, the grieving Priest-King became less and less interested in the affairs of state or the worship of the masses. Overcome with lethargy and tedium, he sits unmoving upon his throne day and night. So great is his disinterest in the mortal world that Rajon does not seem to perceive the activities of his retainers as the undead aristocrats hold court around him.

Adventure Synopsis

The cursed city of Morgoth is nestled in the chilly northern peaks of the Black Mountains. This ancient and once-proud city has fallen under the control of a family of immortal aristocrats. The city's ruling class has forsaken their humanity in exchange for an eternal half life. These cold, soulless beings reign over the citizens with an iron grip, using a combination of religious indoctrination and savage brutality. As the half-dead look down on the impoverished masses from their gilded chambers, they also plot and scheme against each other. Morgoth is the stage for an unending struggle for power, an everlasting war waged by means of stealth, treachery and deception.

There are many factions set against each other in the city. First and foremost, the aristocrats are engaged in a long standing game of rivalry and vendettas, with each member of the ruling class hoping to drive his or her rivals from power and claim total control of the city. Aside from this political fight, there is also a battle between religious factions. Though Rajon outlawed the worship of all beings save himself, there are still many underground cults that exist in secret. These religious groups include a wide range of faiths and their objects of worship range from deities and demons to otherworldly entities. The various factions of the cult movement must continuously struggle to keep their activities secret while simultaneously battling each other over ideological issues. Another contentious battle that occupies the city involves old fashioned greed and monetary gain. The impoverished city is the battleground in a war between rival criminal gangs, ruthless merchant families, and corrupt bureaucrats. All of these fights, political, religious, and economic are tangled together in a murky and ever shifting web of alliances and double crosses.

There are also external forces that seek to destabilize the city from outside. Would be conquerors and barbarian hordes send spies and saboteurs to gauge the city for any weakness in its defenses. Religious sects from other lands try to infiltrate Morgoth in order to covertly preach their faith to the people. Of all the outsiders that are working to undermine the city's rulers are the shadar-kai. Ruthless shadar-kai agents slip into the city from their home plane in order to fell Moroth's undead rulers. Barring that, many shadar-kai would also like the chance to prove themselves by defeating a powerful mortal foe.

The adventure begins when the player characters enter the city of Morgoth and begin exploring. All always, numerous factions within the city are setting plans in motion against each other. It is likely that the adventuring party will be recruited to aid one side or another. The adventure does not have a pre-determined plot and how the events unfold is determined by the actions of the player characters.

Adventure Hooks


The Dungeon Master can use one or more of the hooks below to lure that adventurers into the City of the Half Dead and give them a reason to explore the region. Some of these adventure hooks are also quests that provide the characters with experience once they complete them.

HOOK: INHERITENCE

One of the player characters learns that he or she has been named as the beneficiary of a will. A former mentor, distant relation, or family friend has named the character as his heir. The inheritance includes a town house and other property located in the city of Morgoth. The character must travel to the city to personally claim his or her inheritance or it will be deemed forfeit and seized by the aristocracy.

Quest: Restoring the House

The characters must travel to Morgoth and lay claim to the house that has been bequeathed to a member of their party. In order to make the claim legal, the characters must spend the night within the walls of the townhouse. Local rumor has it that the house is haunted. .



Start: The party is contacted by a magistrate from the city of Morgoth.

Goal: The adventurers must survive the night inside of the haunted house. .

Outcome: Upon completing this quest the adventurers gain 200 Quest XP. If the character claiming the house wishes to sell it then he or she will be paid 550 gp. If the adventurers fail then the house will be seized by one of the local nobles.

HOOK: MISSIONARY WORK

The city of Morgoth has forsaken the gods. The ruling class has long banned the worship of any deity save the Rajon, who is revered as a god-king. Even the cult of Url, the one time patron of Rajon has been banished from the city. Yet, despite the risks, small sects of devout believers pray to the gods in secret. The adventurers are asked by a religious order to travel to the city and make contact with this underground spiritual movement. If possible, the order or temple would like to find a secure route for its priests to move in and out of the city.

Quest: Pilgrim Trail

A religious order seeks to spread its influence to the forsaken city of Morgoth.

Start: The party is asked to secure safe passage for group of priests who wish to preach their faith in Morgoth.

Goal: The adventurers must find a secret route into the city.

Outcome: Upon completing this quest the adventurers gain 200 Quest XP. If the adventurers

fail then the priests will attempt to sneak into the city on their own. In this event they will most likely be caught and executed.

HOOK: PASSING THROUGH

The adventuring party is traveling through the Black Mountains when they spy the fog enshrouded walls of Morgoth. The adventurers may wish to stop here in order to purchase supplies and rest for the night. They may be forced to take shelter in the city in order to escape a vicious snowstorm that has buried the mountain passes. In either case, the adventurers find themselves tangled up in the dark dealings and bloodthirsty politics of the city soon after arriving.

HOOK: LOST HEIRLOOM

The adventures are recruited by a merchant whose family fled Morgoth generations ago. In the years following Rajon's conquest, this family hid their sacred idol in the family's crypt in order to keep it safe from the inquisitors. When the family finally decided to leave the city, they were unable to retrieve this religious icon. The loss of this idol has weighed heavily on the family ever since. The idol is made from clay and has no inherent value but it has great religious and sentimental value for the merchant and his kin.

Quest: Retrieve the Sacred Idol

A wealthy patriarch wishes to reclaim a lost artifact.

Start: The party is asked to secure travel to Morgoth and recover a sacred artifact that was hidden in a family crypt.

Goal: The adventurers must find the family's idol and return it to them.

Outcome: Upon completing this quest the adventurers gain 200 Quest XP and are paid a reward of eleven small moonstones (50 gp each.)

Area Overview

The area surrounding the city of Morgoth is dominated by the Black Mountains. These rocky peaks are covered with snow and ice throughout much of the year. Any land in the region that is suitable for cultivation is owned by the aristocrats who have built large plantations in the valleys and terraced foothills of the mountains. Each plantation is centered around an opulent villa. The land itself is worked by hundreds of slaves who live in ramshackle villages that dot the mountainsides.

GREYMIRE SWAMP

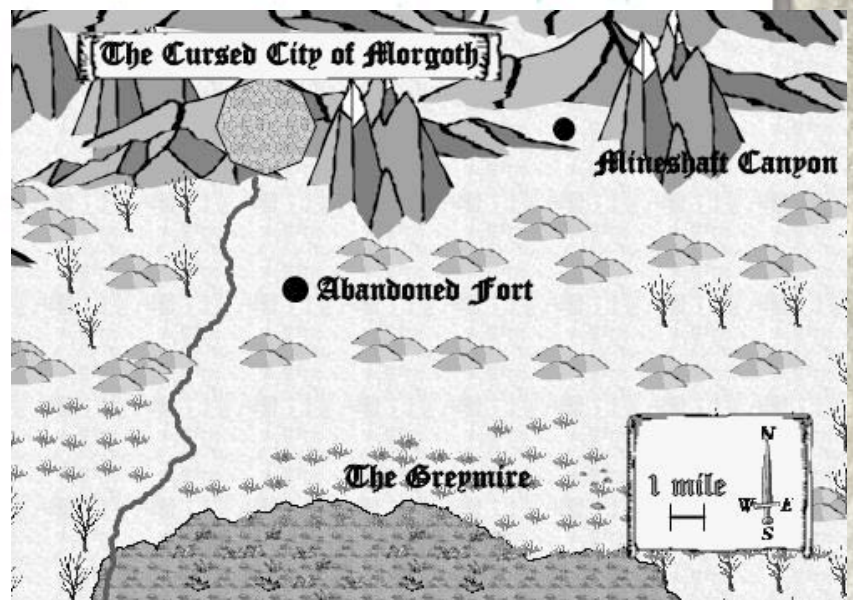
To the south of Morgoth lies a river valley that is dominated by a dismal swamp known as the Greymire. Though the swamp lies within the borders of the city-state, none of Morgoth's citizens dare to go near it. Many rumors and stories circulate through the region about the swamp and its supposed secrets. Though the stories contradict each other on many points, they all agree on one thing, no one who has ventured into Greymire Swamp has ever returned to tell the tale. More information about this location can be found in Encounter 3.

ABONDONED FORT

This structure was used as a base of operations by Rajon's army when he first came to conquer Morgoth. The fort is constructed of fieldstone and stout wooden timbers, though time has caused part of the outer walls to crumble. The barracks and watchtowers of the old fort have become overgrown with vegetation and are now inhabited by a variety of birds and small animals. It is rumored that the smoke of campfires has been spotted coming from inside the walls of the fort recently. Who has taken up residence here and what their purposes are is a complete mystery.

MINESHAFT CANYON

This deep mountain gorge is riddled with copper mines. A small base camp has been erected near the mouth of the canyon and this is where the majority of the miners live when they are not visiting the city. In recent years the mines have begun to run dry. The merchants and aristocrats who own the mines have been goading their workers into reopening closed shafts and cutting new tunnels that go deeper in the canyon walls. Several miners have disappeared ever since this new construction began. Officially, the miners have been told that the miners have run away after stealing several pounds worth of copper ingots. The whispers around the miner's camp tell a different story, that reopening the old shafts has awakened something evil that had long been hidden inside the forgotten mines.



City of the Half Dead

The city of Morgoth is a sprawling urban center surrounded by a roughly circular wall. The mountain city is built on a high peak, with the city center atop the summit. There is almost no flat ground to be found in the city as the streets slope up and down in accordance to the inclined terrain. The streets of Morgoth are a haphazard maze of alleys, arcades, courtyards, and winding lanes. The streets that connect the Great Palace-Temple to the merchant's district are wide and straight, the rest are narrow zigzagging corridors that intersect randomly with each other. The city has undergone several phases of construction over the centuries with newer structures being built literally on top of older ones.

Life in the city is hard. The aristocracy has grown complacent and set in their ways. They neglect public buildings and ignore the needs of the populace. The citizens are taxed into poverty in order to fund the lavish lifestyle of the court. The aristocracy has seized control of all of the land surrounding the city and they alone control the food supply. These slave run plantations are the only source of food available to the people as all other trade is strictly controlled. This legacy of abuse and economic strangulation has had a devastating effect on the population as a whole. The once thriving city is now stagnant and large portions of it have been largely abandoned.

The city's only exports are timber and copper that they ship down river to buyers in the far south. Those freemen who cannot find work within the walls of the city are forced to sell their labor in the camps set up in the wooden vales and mineshaft canyon. Anyone who incurs a debt in the city that they cannot repay is sold into slavery and sent to work on one of the many plantations that surround the city proper. Imports into the city are carefully monitored and taxed heavily. It is against the law to import foodstuffs into the city, though a large number of smugglers make their living doing just that.

