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INTRODUCTION

Tales of the desert wastes known as the Desolation abound among the peoples who live along its borders. Many still recall the days when the undead first began their shuffling march south, their bony claws grasping the living to feed and to swell their numbers with what was left of their victims. The tide of death seemed without end—surely doom had come to the Empire.

Had it not been for the courage of the crusaders, those doughty folk who took up arms to safeguard the Empire from the undead host, the Northern Reach and the lands to the south would have fallen long ago. Now they guard the Desolation's borders against future incursions, vigilant in their defense of the innocent, watchful for the rotting horde's inevitable return.

The first of a series of setting expansions, the *Tombs of the Desolation*[™] supplement offers a closer look at the world of Rûl and its inhabitants. This book zooms in on one of the continent's most dangerous regions, a wasteland littered with the wreckage of an ancient and wicked civilization, now infested with the animated remains of those vile people. Game Masters will find extensive detail about the region and its inhabitants, including story ideas, new creatures, and a challenging adventure. This supplement also expands player options, adding three new ancestries to those described in the *Shadow of the Demon Lord*[™] rulebook, paths to support those ancestries, and a selection of new spells.

The Desolation is yours to use as you wish. It might be a source of the darkness afflicting the world, a homeland that new characters hope to forget, or simply a new place to explore. Everything in this book is optional; feel free to alter or ignore this material to suit your needs.

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INTO the wastes

The Desolation is a blasted landscape in which only the hardiest and most resourceful people stand a chance of survival. Yet the burning sun, the treacherous terrain, and the savage dust storms pale in comparison to the threat posed by the region's monstrous evil. Legions of the dead crawl across the dunes and march across the stony plains, driven by ancient masters sealed inside great black pyramids scattered across this inhospitable land. Though few dare the Desolation's perils, the lure of fabled treasures and of powerful magic lost since ancient times draws fools and heroes alike. The ruins of the terrible empire of Gog hold countless secrets, awaiting those bold enough to pry them from the skeletal claws of guardians doomed never to die.

The wasteland and its denizens cast a long shadow across the Northern Reach, affecting the lives of everyone living on its borders. Although the setting is suited to more experienced adventurers, it can be the catalyst for a group's formation. Characters might answer the call to battle issued by the Crusader States, devoting themselves to fighting the hordes spawned in the deep wastes. Others might have been born to this land, never knowing a life free from fear. And adventurers flock to the borders, signing on with expeditions in the hopes of winning vast fortunes.

This chapter presents new options for characters with ties to the Desolation or who are descended from people touched by its darkness. New ancestries, paths, and spells expand the options for creating characters and developing their stories.

PEOPLES OF THE DESOLATION

The Desolation is a constant threat menacing the Northern Reach, where only the foolish or desperate dare to tread. It affects the people on its borders in different ways. Some bear the stain of dark magic, while others choose to turn their heritage into an opportunity for power.

Human: Humans are the most numerous people living on the Desolation's borders, as much responsible for creating the wastelands as they are for containing it. When the undead first spilled forth from the sands, humans took up arms to drive them back and raised mighty strongholds against the darkness. The call to action drew humans from all backgrounds, ethnicities, and professions.

1 into the wastes

Descendants of the Men of Gog, corrupted humans who claimed these lands long ago, still inhabit the region among the others. Though their blood bears their ancestral taint, such individuals are no more virtuous or vile than others. People with the blood of Gog have chalky skin, dark eyes, and little body hair. Odd birthmarks resembling words in unknown languages are common.

Dwarf: Most dwarfs consider the Desolation to be a human problem. Humans created it, and the marching dead were all once human. Wise dwarfs, though, understand that if the walking corpses triumph over humanity, they will turn their fell attention to others. They have joined forces with the human defenders in the Crusader States, lending their expertise at the forge and their hardy constitutions to the cause. A few dwarfs, especially those seeking a glorious end, find the Desolation's treasures too tempting to pass up.

Orc: The provincial governor of the Northern Reach dispatched a force of orcs and humans from Sixton to slow the invasion. These forces held back the walking dead long enough for reinforcements to arrive from Caecras and eventually established the citadel of West Hold. The stronghold remains friendly to orcs and offers sanctuary to those who have escaped the chains of slavery in the Empire.

Other Ancestries: The defenders of the citadels rarely ask questions about the lives of volunteers—all help is welcome.

Goblins work as scouts, laborers, spies, and squires in the citadels and the borderlands. As with anywhere in the Empire's provinces, there's plenty of work for them here.

Clockworks lack the numbers to have a significant presence on the desert's edge, but those who make their way to the Crusader States always find welcome. They need none of the things that living people do, and those who fall in battle never rise up as undead to bolster the enemies' ranks.

Fauns and halflings are rare. Fauns sometimes drift north to escape the scorn of their home communities. Halflings, being skilled farmers and artisans, can earn good livings supplying the crusaders with foodstuffs, beer, weapons, and armor. Even changelings whose true natures have been exposed sometimes find a place among the crusaders.

NEW INTERESTING THINGS

At the Game Master's discretion, characters starting the game near the Desolation can roll on the replacement **Interesting Things from the Desolation** table instead of the tables included in chapter 1 of *Shadow of the Demon Lord*.

INTERESTING THINGS FROM THE DESOLATION

d20	Interesting Thing
1	A cartouche bearing strange symbols.
2	Old, stained linen wrappings.
3	The answer to the next riddle you hear.
4	A gambling problem.
5	A canopic jar filled with sand.
6	A necklace of human teeth.
7	A piece of desert glass.
8	An ornately wrought sacrificial blade.
9	A really bad sunburn or a mass of scars.
10	A bronze khopesh (treat as a sword).
11	A small stone that is always warm to the touch.
12	An urn filled with ashes.
13	A mummified tiny animal.
14	A dead scarab beetle.
15	An odd symbol carved from bronze.
16	A chunk of petrified wood.
17	An obsidian arrowhead that, when placed on a flat surface, turns to point toward the center of the Desolation.
18	A sandbag weighing 18 pounds.
19	A scroll of papyrus that bears illustrations of humans engaged in lewd and improbable activities.
20	A small cup that fills with fresh water each day at dawn.





NEW ANCESTRIES

The Desolation's influence stretches across the Empire. It can offer escape from death or summon those who have abandoned the mortal world for the isolation of the wilds.

REVENANT

Sometimes death calls too soon, claiming the soul before a mortal can fulfill a destiny, right a wrong, or repay a debt. When the burden of responsibility proves too heavy to set aside, death may stay its hand and let the mortal complete those unfinished tasks as a revenant.

Between Life and Death: Revenants are neither fully alive nor fully dead. They count as living creatures but never suffer the ailments that plague the living, such as the throes of fever or the agony of venom. They still can be wounded and can be destroyed by weapons. But even when brought low, the pull of their obligations drags revenants from the grave once more to finish the work they began.

Deathly Pallor: Revenants look more or less as they did when they were fully alive, but dark circles ring their eyes, and they tend toward gauntness. New-made revenants

use cosmetics and pack their bodies with fragrant spices to cover up the stench of decay. Simple disguises are insufficient to mask the nature of older revenants, who use magic to conceal the truth of what they have become.

Driven and Relentless: Mighty oaths, great injustices, and strong emotions keep revenants in the world. Rising from the grave instills them with a single-minded focus on achieving their objectives. Not all emerge from the transformation with their mental faculties intact; many experience emotional swings that range from manic exuberance to the blackest depression.

Tied to the Desolation: The Desolation is the source of the power that creates revenants. In ancient times, the Men of Gog who lived in this toxic place used foul magic to extend their lifespans or to escape death altogether. Those who could not afford such spells bargained directly with Father Death to give them more time. The dour god refuses most requests, but mortals who have been wronged and crave vengeance sometimes gain his blessing, escaping the Underworld until they can put their affairs in order.

Common Names: Revenants use the names they had in life or adopt ones that summarize their new existence, such as Raven, Harlequin, Tears, or Vengeance.

CREATING A REVENANT

First create a human, dwarf, or orc character. Other ancestries may be available at the Game Master's discretion, but they must be living and mortal, possess souls, and not be created by magic—so no changelings or clockworks. Then apply the following traits to that character.

Starting Attribute Scores Strength +1, Intellect -1

Characteristics Defense -1, Insanity +1d3

Immune damage from disease and poison; diseased, fatigued, poisoned

Darksight You can see in areas obscured by shadows and darkness within medium range as if those areas were lit. Beyond this distance, you treat darkness as shadows and shadows as lit.

Eternal Returns You die instantly when you become incapacitated, and you remain dead for 1d3 hours. At the end of this time, if your head is still attached to your body, you return to life, heal damage equal to your healing rate, and gain 1d3 Insanity. Otherwise, you are destroyed.

One Foot in the Grave You heal only half the normal amount of damage from magic and potions.

LEVEL 4 EXPERT REVENANT

Characteristics Health +6

You learn one spell, gain Eyes of the Underworld, or gain an expert trait from your other ancestry.

Eyes of the Underworld You can use an action to make a Will attack roll against the Will of one target creature within short range that can see you. On a success, the target becomes frightened for 1 minute. On a failure, the target becomes immune to your use of this talent until it completes a rest.

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OPTIONAL RULE: RISING FROM THE DEAD

The GM might allow a dead character to return as a revenant, provided he or she meets the criteria and doing so would be appropriate to the story. For example, an expert character might have been killed before she had a chance to find her husband's murderer, while a master character could return to find the cure to a vile contagion that not only destroyed him but threatens many others. If the GM intervenes in this way, the character typically returns to life at the start of the next adventure, with all damage healed, and gains all the revenant traits.

REVENANT ANCESTRY TABLES

Use the tables from your character's base ancestry to determine his or her background before returning from the dead. Then choose from or randomly determine the options presented in the following tables to describe how the character became a revenant and the effects of that transformation on his or her personality and nature.

CAUSE OF DEATH

d20	Cause
1	You were executed for a crime you did not commit.
2	You were brutally murdered after watching your loved ones die.
3	You stumbled into a violent situation and were killed as a result.
4	You committed suicide.
5	You died protecting or fighting for a dark magic-user.
6	Your spouse poisoned you.
7	Your sibling or parent murdered you.
8	A rival had you assassinated.
9	A lethal trap killed you suddenly.
10	A monster butchered you while you were fighting to protect your loved ones.
11	A cultist ended your life using dark magic.
12	A demon tore you to pieces.
13	A falling piano or other heavy object abbreviated your lifespan.
14	You succumbed to disease.
15	You died after fooling around with a dangerous relic.
16	Some natural disaster claimed your life.
17	A psychopath tortured you for days before killing you.
18	You drowned.
19	You were burned at the stake for demonology, sorcery, or heresy.
20	Cultists sacrificed you to the Demon Lord.

REASON FOR RETURN

1d6	Reason for Return
1	Vengeance
2	Love
3	Duty or an oath
4	Delusion
5	Hate
6	Spreading chaos

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

d20	Feature
1	You never cast a shadow.
2	You are so thin that you appear skeletal.
3	Vermin infest your body.
4	You have a curious odor.
5	You do not bleed.
6	You move with an awkward, jarring gait.
7	Your smile stretches weirdly across your face.
8	You're missing a few fingers and toes.
9	You have a terrible scar as a result of your death.
10	You are bloated.
11	You smell of the spices you use to preserve your flesh.
12	In place of eyes, you have glowing red pinpricks floating in pools of darkness.
13	You have a raspy voice.
14	You have no teeth.
15	Your face never shows expressions.
16	You are always filthy, no matter how often you bathe.
17	You wrap yourself in funerary linens.
18	Your eyes and mouth have been sewn shut, but you can still see and speak.
19	Your neck is broken and never heals. Your head flops about when you move.
20	The air around you grows chill.

