

# DARKLORDS





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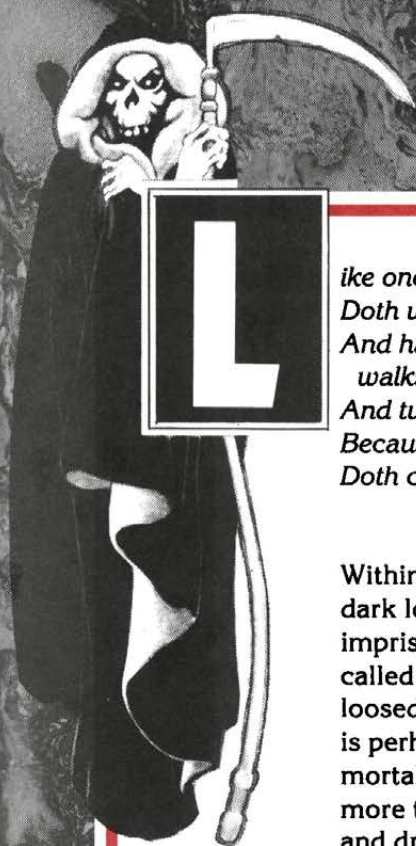
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# INTRODUCTION



**L**

*like one that on a lonesome road  
Doth walk in fear and dread,  
And having once turned round  
walks on,  
And turns no more his head;  
Because he knows a frightful fiend  
Doth close behind him tread.*

—Coleridge

Within this book are tales of 16 dark lords and ladies, each imprisoned in the shadowy abyss called Ravenloft, each waiting to be loosed in your campaign. Patience is perhaps their only virtue. What mortals blithely call “forever” is no more than a moment in their bleak and dreary existence. Still, they

know that the time to emerge is nearing. By opening this book, you have opened a door into Darkness, releasing the horrors that lurk within.

## Using Darklords

**T**he more powerful a lord in Ravenloft is, the more daunting and hopeless an encounter with that lord may seem. Lords need not always take center stage, however. In fact, it can be more interesting if they linger in the background like a malevolent threat, intruding into the foreground only when adventurers foolishly provoke their attention.

For example, Keening’s banshee is a deadly force; to enflame her wrath is to join her other victims as spirits and other undead. But she rarely attacks anyone who stays away from her mountain. Even by day (when she is able to walk about), she may not attack unless someone disturbs her. What role could she then serve in an adventure? The banshee has an enmity with the drow of Arak. What if the PCs unwittingly aid the banshee in exacting her revenge—or vice versa? Keening has no living inhabitants, only a city filled with undead that listlessly continue the routines of their former lives. What if a necromancer serving another

lord were attempting to harness the forces of that city?

Anhktepot, lord of Har’Akir, is a mummy described in this book. He has slumbered in his tomb for nearly a century. In the adventure *Touch of Death*, someone—or something—is attempting to usurp Anhktepot’s power. The usurper drives the plot of the adventure, not Anhktepot himself.

## Powers and Destruction

**D**arklords have an ally that most creatures do not have: the Land of Ravenloft itself. The darklords can be assumed to have any power that logically fits the mood and tone of their realm. For example, if it is important to an adventure that Strahd can sense the use of magic in Barovia, then grant him that ability. This is not to say that he can do *anything*—merely that you can be more flexible with darklords than with other creatures.

If player characters kill a lord, and you’d like to use that lord again, that too is possible in Ravenloft. In fact, many of the lords, as written, are rarely destroyed even if they disappear. Three hags rule Tepest, for example. If two are killed, the third can conjure them up again in her cauldron of regeneration. In the desert kingdom of Sebuia, the lord may turn to glittering sand, dispersed by the wind, only to be formed again later by the land. Rebirth as well as reincarnation are possible in Ravenloft.

## Creating Your Own Lords

**T**he RAVENLOFT™ boxed set offers several tips for DMs who wish to create their own lords. A detailed history, which explains how the villain became a lord, is one of those elements. When creating such tales, keep in mind that the Dark Powers and the Mists of Ravenloft rarely trick or entice a lord into their midst. A character is not offered power, for example; he demands it. He willingly takes the step that seals his fate; the Dark Powers



# INTRODUCTION

welcome him, but they do not force him to become a lord.

## The Mood of Ravenloft

**A**dventures set in Ravenloft demand more of a DM, because their success depends as much—or more—upon the ability of the DM to be a storyteller rather than a rules lawyer.

Rich description is vital to maintaining the mood of this campaign setting. While running an adventure, remember that the shadows of Ravenloft are more likely to conceal an opponent here than in other lands. PCs seldom know the true nature of a threat initially. You needn't lie or mislead the players, however. If PCs are facing a rat in broad daylight, obviously they'll know it's a rat. But bright light is a rarity in Ravenloft. Catching only a glimpse of some small, black creature slipping into the shadows, the player characters cannot be sure of what they've seen. Take advantage of the murkiness and uncertainty of this setting.

Quoting the numbers intrinsic to the AD&D® game—"You suffer 5 points of damage," for example—tends to detract from Ravenloft's mood. If someone suffers damage, always describe the effects of that damage. For example, a swing from the Headless Horseman's scythe may cause "1d4 points of damage," but the numbers are secondary. First, a DM will tell the player that the blade caught his PC's face, creating a painful, gaping wound that is certain to leave a scar. In some encounters, it's appropriate to calculate damage for the PCs yourself, describing the wounds to players, and any weakness that results, but keeping the numbers to yourself.

Before you design an adventure using one of the darklords in this book, review the chapters titled "Techniques of Terror" and "From Gothic Roots" in the boxed set. They'll help you fine-tune your story and prepare you for unnerving even the most unshakable PC. Then call your players together late at night, dim the lights, and play.





# ANHKTEPOT



**T**

he desert of Har' Akir is ancient beyond belief. Not all of its past is marked by noble deeds and great kings. In ancient days, the evil pharaoh Anhktepote ruled the nation of Har' Akir. Although he died long ago, his mummified body occasionally awakens to stalk the burning wastelands and remind the people of his reign of terror.

## Appearance

**W**hen Anhktepote died, his body was wrapped in strips of white funeral linen.

Originally his eyes were covered and his hands bound across his chest. He has since ripped the cloth from his eyes and torn his hands and arms free. The torn, graying cloth dangles and flutters in the desert winds. His eyes are golden lights tinged with orange. His uncovered fingers are brown and shrunken.

He walks with a stagger, his gait stiff and awkward. His voice is a scratchy whisper, like sand on rock. A golden ankh hangs on a chain around his neck. He wears the ceremonial headgear of the pharaohs; he removed the rest of the funeral vestments.

## Background

**P**haraoh Anhktepote ruled centuries ago in the great desert land of Har' Akir. The pharaoh, like most of his culture, was obsessed with death. The religion of the people revolved around death, and the pharaoh was the link between men and the gods. Anhktepote himself was a priest of Ra, the sun god.

Anhktepote commanded his priests to find a way for him to live forever. Many slaves and prisoners died horribly as subjects in Anhktepote's gruesome experiments. Totally frustrated with the lack of success, the pharaoh had several temples burned and razed. He

stalked into the Kharn temple, greatest of all in Har' Akir, and cursed the gods for not granting him his heart's desire. Ra, sun god and patron of the pharaohs, answered Anhktepote. He told the pharaoh that he would live even after death, though he might wish otherwise. Ra did not elaborate.

Anhktepote left the temple elated but confused. He still did not know how to cheat death. That night, everyone he touched died. His wife, several servants, and his eldest child—all were dead. According to custom, they were mummified and entombed in great buildings in the desert.

Soon the great pharaoh came to understand his curse. So long as Ra shone upon him, he was safe. But once he was no longer under the sun's watchful eye, whomever he touched died horribly.

Shortly after the final ceremony of his wife's funeral, Anhktepote was visited in the night. A mummy wrapped in funeral linens entered his chambers. By the vestments he knew it was Nephyr. He fled from her down the long halls of the palace. Finally she cornered him. Unable to talk, the mummy Nephyr tried to embrace Anhktepote. Horrified, he screamed for her to leave him forever. She turned and left. Nephyr walked into the desert and was never seen again. Her tomb remained open and empty.

Anhktepote was also visited by the mummified bodies of the others whom he had killed. He came to understand that he controlled them utterly. They did his every bidding. He used their strength and his own touch of death to tighten the reigns of his evil power over Har' Akir.

He killed many of the kingdom's priests, making them his undead slaves. The priests kept their spellcasting powers as mummies. Occasionally he would find one of his mummies destroyed, burned from the inside out. Anhktepote was convinced that Nephyr was responsible, but he had no proof of this.

One day the priests rebelled against the pharaoh and murdered him in his sleep. The