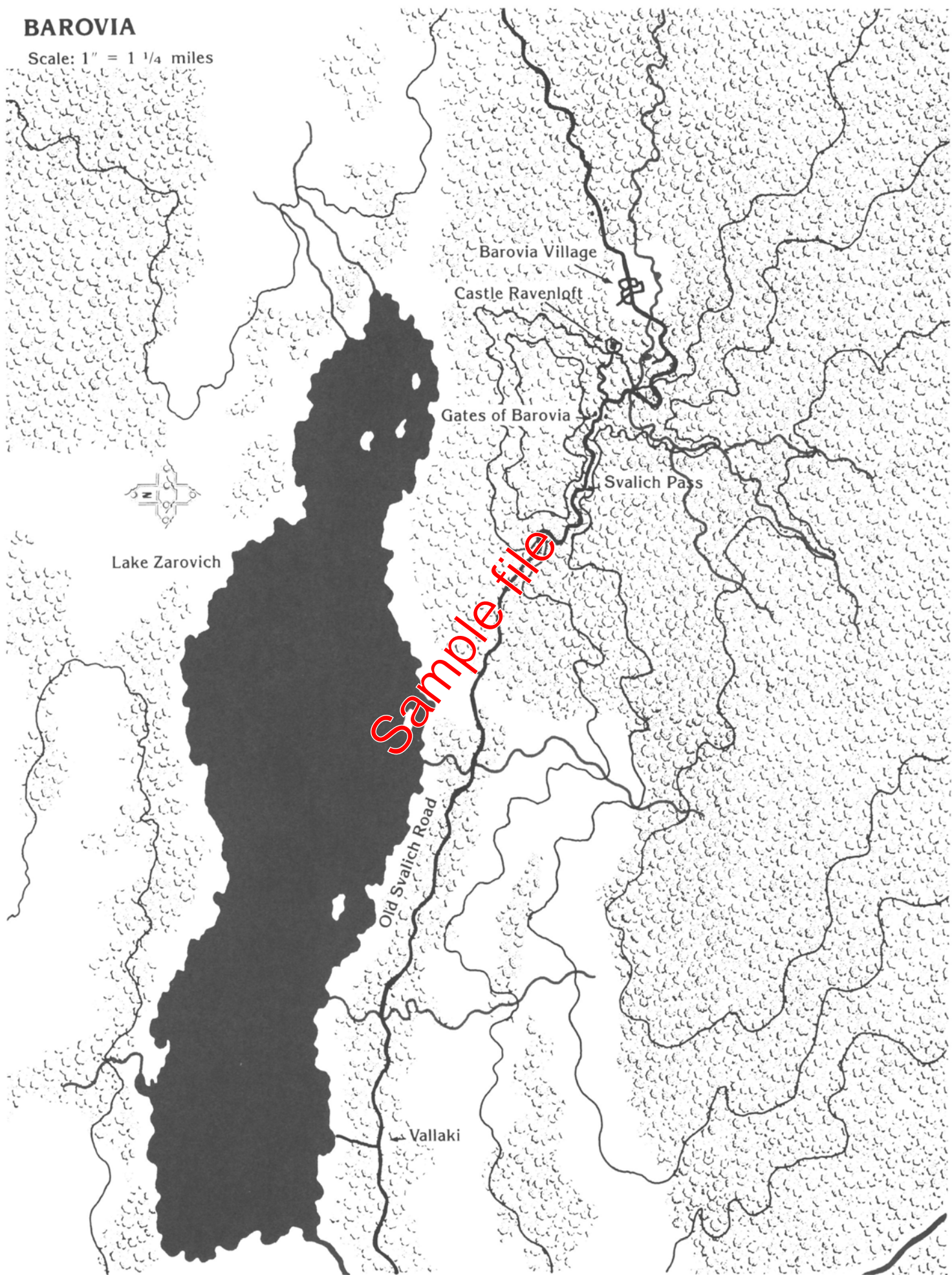


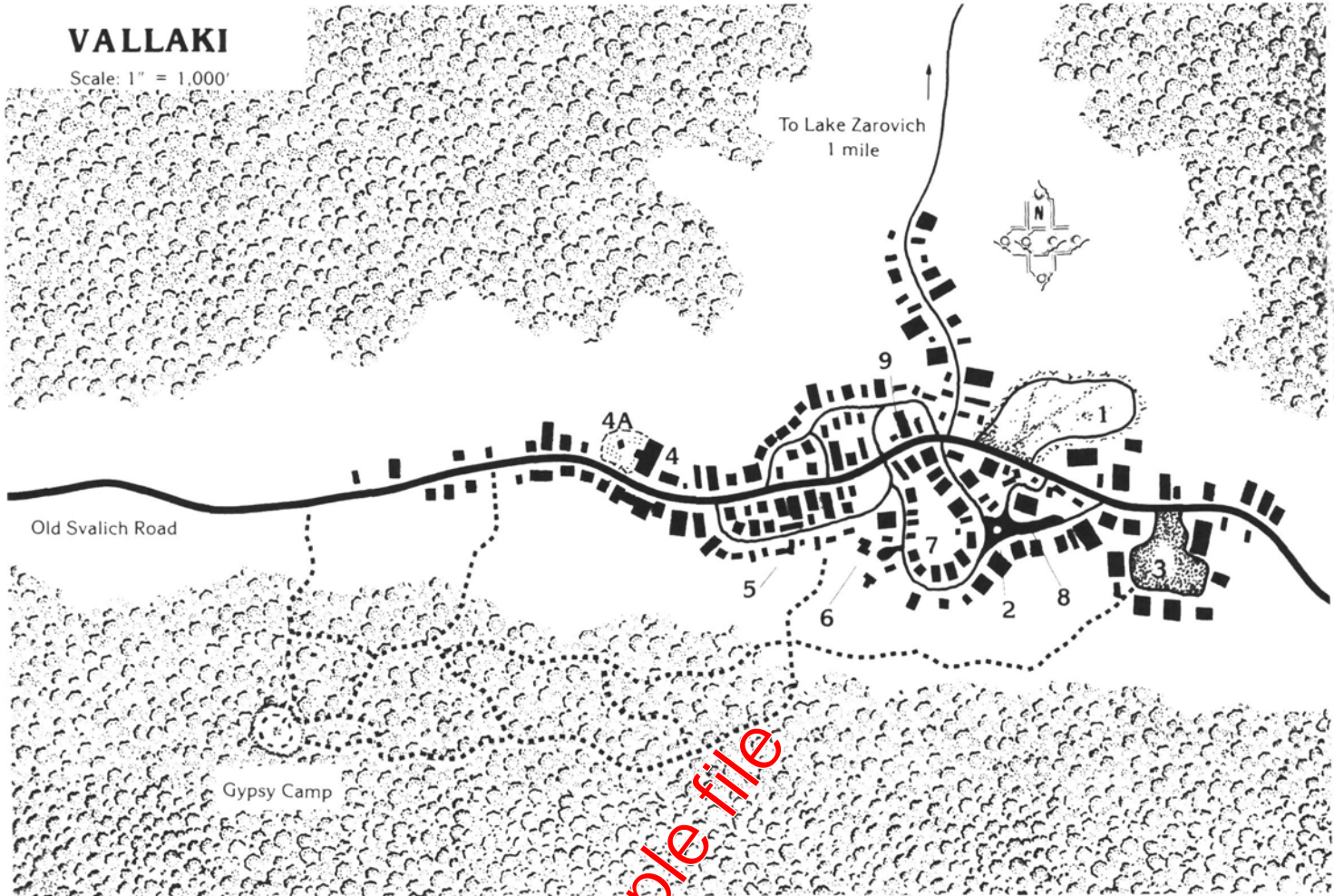
BAROVIA

Scale: 1" = 1 1/4 miles



VALLAKI

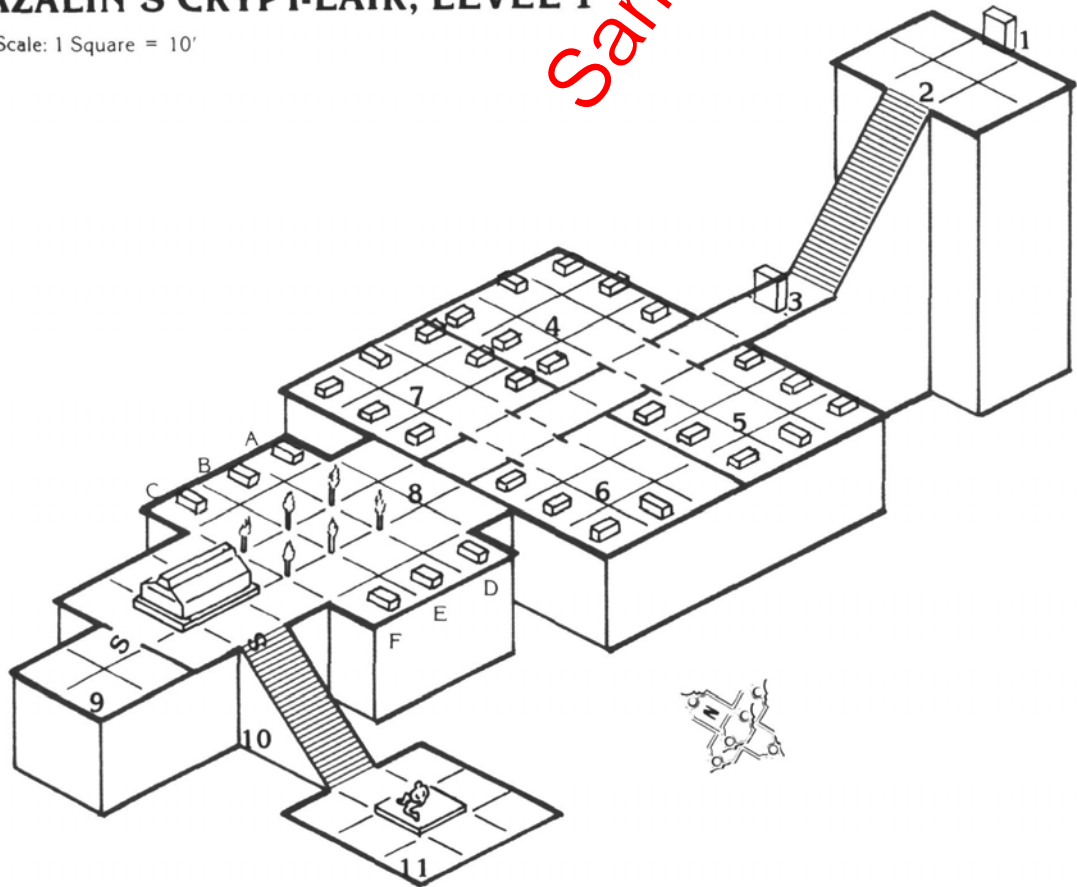
Scale: 1" = 1,000'



AZALIN'S CRYPT-LAIR, LEVEL 1

Scale: 1 Square = 10'

Sample file



KEY

-  Forest
-  Road
-  Wide Path
-  Trail
-  Altar
-  Chair
-  Door
-  One-way Secret Door
-  Secret Door
-  Holy Symbol
-  Illusionary Wall
-  Morkoth Hole
-  Statue
-  Sub-level Waterway
-  Table
-  Tapestry
-  Throne
-  Tomb
-  Trap
-  Trap Door in Ceiling
-  Trap Door in Floor
- Water-filled Area

ROOTS OF EVIL

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Jump Start	12
Continuing the Adventure	13
Madame Yvonna	16
Vallaki	24
Castle Ravenloft	32
Castle Ravenloft Maps	48-49
Back to Vallaki	51
Azalin's Crypt-Lair	58
Back to Castle Ravenloft	88
MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM™ Entry: Yugoloth, Greater—Arcanaloth	96

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INTRODUCTION



Once again the Mists of Ravenloft have parted, but this time it isn't to deliver more hapless victims or evil creatures into the demiplane of dread. No, quite the opposite: Azalin the lich has shattered the boundaries that held him prisoner for centuries and has escaped into the Prime Material Plane! His actions have broken the grip of the land, and all the lords of Ravenloft are finding the way back into the multiverse from whence they came. Evil courses through world after world, and the gods are very, *very* angry!

This adventure is designed for four to six player characters (PCs) of 9th to 12th level. It's assumed that all

adventuring parties in Ravenloft are largely of good and neutral alignments; evil parties rarely feel obliged to "do the right thing," and most adventures in the demiplane of dread depend upon at least a bit of heroism in the PCs. Magical weapons in general are important to the party's success, but few player character groups of the appropriate levels lack a virtual arsenal of magic. Also, the encounters in this module are designed to be life-threatening, so the optional "Hovering on Death's Door" rule (see the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide [DMG]*) is recommended. Dungeon Masters (DMs) who don't employ this rule might justify its sudden use by claiming that the very powers of the universe are at work here. After all, the Grand Conjunction doesn't occur every day (or every millennium, for that matter)!

The Final Adventure

Roots of Evil is a sequel to the RAVENLOFT® game adventure *From the Shadows*. An optional entry is supplied to allow this module to be played by itself, but both players and the DM™ will enjoy *Roots of Evil* all the more if it's used as the second of a two-part adventure.

In fact, *Roots of Evil* represents the culmination of a six-part series of adventures, loosely connected by the prophecy known as *Hyskosa's Hexad*. Each module deals with one of six couplets written by the Vistani seer Hyskosa. According to the prophet, when all the couplets have been fulfilled, the Grand Conjunction will take place and all the lords of Ravenloft will return to their Prime Material points of origin. The first couplet is realized in *Feast of Goblins* (9298), the second in *Ship of Horror* (9321), the third in *Touch of Death* (9338), and the fourth in *Night of the Walking Dead* (9352). A DM seeking to run a sustained RAVENLOFT game campaign might consider running each of these modules and then continue with *From the Shadows* (9375) and, finally, *Roots of Evil* (9413).

Even if the adventuring party doesn't play through the first four modules, it is still *strongly* advised that *From the Shadows* be played before beginning *Roots of Evil*. These two adventures are more closely related than any of the others, for the first sets the Grand Conjunction in motion while the second gives the player characters a chance to reverse the horrific occurrence. For the most part, this module assumes that *From the Shadows* has been played first, and some adjustments will need to be made by the DM if it hasn't.

Doing Your Homework

As always, the DM should read this entire adventure before running it. It is also recommended that the DM be familiar with the "Azalin" and "Strahd" entries from the rules book of the RAVENLOFT boxed set, as well as the "yugoloth" entry at the end of this book.

In this module, the player characters will find that the *story* supersedes the "dungeon crawl" aspects of the adventure (although that element is present, too). They've started a chain of events that must be resolved in order to avert—literally!—universal catastrophe. It's not enough to defeat the bad guys in combat; the bad guys

INTRODUCTION

in this adventure are too powerful. Thinking things through, using the nonplayer characters (NPCs) against one another, waiting for the right moment to act—these are the real keys to survival, and the DM is free to explain this to the players before the game starts.

There's a lot of story involved in resolving the problems that arose in *From the Shadows* and a lot of information for the PCs to absorb.

Therefore, several encounters in this module are more information- than action-based. During these encounters, the game takes on a “questions and answers” feel. The encounters are set up to anticipate the PCs' questions and to preserve drama and atmosphere, but it falls upon the DM to capture the PCs' imaginations by making conversations sound as natural as possible. Be prepared to discuss *anything* the characters bring up. Of course, what they can learn from an NPC depends upon that NPC's own knowledge, so it's very important for the DM to know this module before playing it.

There's probably no need to say it, but players are notorious for (and sometimes even proud of) erratic behavior and stunts that short-circuit the most carefully planned adventures. As long as the DM knows the adventure fairly well, it should be possible to redirect events to get the party back on track without forcing their hands. However, if the PCs insist on actions that burn their own bridges, then the Grand Conjunction will fully unfold and the PCs will have to live in a hell of their own making.

Shadow-planar Influences

The demiplane of Ravenloft imposes many special conditions upon spells and abilities in the AD&D® game rules system. Although this adventure doesn't take place in the Shadow Plane, the Grand Conjunction has opened the boundaries of Ravenloft to the Prime Material, so all the rules detailed in the RAVENLOFT® and *Forbidden Lore* boxed sets still apply to this module.

Forbidden Lore

Gypsy prognostication contributes much to the all-important atmosphere of a RAVENLOFT game adventure. The DM is always free to simply claim that “Madame Yvonna looks into her crystal ball and sees all” or to take a deck of normal playing cards and role-play a reading for the characters—the rules book in the RAVENLOFT boxed set provides some handy guidelines for performing such activities.

However, the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set contains some excellent tools for enhancing that effect. In particular, the *tarokka* deck is a perfect accessory for this module, containing artwork that is quite appropriate to a magical atmosphere. “The Waking Dream,” one of the five books included in the *Forbidden Lore* box, explains how to lay out the cards and then *spin* the wheel so that the DM will read the proper fortune, making the PCs feel as though fate itself has dictated their actions.

The DM may make use of “Nova Arcanum,” a book of Strahd's personal magic, in the *Forbidden Lore* box. There are also three other books (dealing with psionics, curses, and secret societies in Ravenloft) that may not be directly useful in *Roots of Evil*, but the DM is free to use any element that enhances the players' experience.

Stacking the Deck

Before beginning play, the DM may choose to make the following preparations with the *tarokka* (or a normal) deck: 1) Stack the five following cards so that they can be drawn from the top of the deck in the following order: the necromancer (or the eight of hearts), the diviner (or the two of hearts), the paladin (or the two of clubs), the anarchist (or the six of spades), and the traitor (or the nine of spades). 2) Place these cards in a stack **face up** behind the DM screen where the players can't see them—these will be surreptitiously added to the

INTRODUCTION

top of the deck, so the players shouldn't know they are there (see the "Madame Yvonna" encounter section, p. 22). The following cards should be set aside before play so they can be immediately laid out for the players to see in the "Madame Yvonna" encounter section: the marionette (or jack of clubs), the donjon (or ace of hearts), the darklord (or king of hearts), the beast (or king of diamonds), the artifact (or ace of diamonds), the mists (or ace of clubs), the raven (or king of clubs), the hangman (or ace of spades), and the innocent (or king of spades).

The Holy Symbol of Ravenkind

This ancient platinum medallion is shaped like the sun and has a crystal at its center. In the hands of a good-aligned priest, it adds +2 bonus to turning undead attempts. When presented against a vampire, it flares with the light of the sun for 1d10 rounds—this functions only once per week; an *identify* spell reveals this fact.

Strahd von Zarovich is more terrified of the *Holy Symbol* than is any other creature. He cannot approach within 10 feet of it, regardless of the turning PC priest's die roll.

The Icon of Ravenloft

This lawful-good holy artifact adds a +4 bonus to any good-aligned priest's attempt to turn undead, if he or she holds it along with a holy symbol. (This effect is cumulative with the bonus afforded by the *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind*.) The casting of an *identify* spell upon the *Icon* reveals that it heals 3d6 + 3 points of damage, once per day.

If the PCs have played *From the Shadows*, then they may or may not have taken the *Icon* from the altar in the chapel of Castle Ravenloft when they took the *Holy Symbol*. At no point were they asked to do so, but many quick-thinking groups will have seized the opportunity when it arose. If the PCs did so, then the woman who received the items kept them safe for Azalin, awaiting the day when he would arrive in Prime Material Barovia

(the realms of Ravenloft are shadowy replications of actual places). If the PCs never bothered with the *Icon*, then it disappeared into Ravenloft when the demiplane was created. In that case, the *Icon* will have "miraculously" reappeared on the altar of Prime Material Castle Ravenloft when the Grand Conjunction takes place.

The position of the *Icon* affects the scope of the PCs' objectives in *Roots of Evil*. If Azalin has both relics, then the characters need to retrieve them both. This is accounted for in the text as much as possible, but the DM will still have to make adjustments to the boxed copy here and there to be sure that the continuity of the adventure doesn't break down.

Azalin's Phylactery

In this adventure, Azalin's phylactery has a special feature: Whenever the eyes of the skull point directly in the lich's direction, they flash very subtly and then glow as long as the skull remains pointed at the lich. Distance isn't a barrier, although the phylactery cannot track Azalin across planar boundaries. This makes the phylactery a perfect homing device for characters who know the secret.

The Book of Keeping

This tome is described in the general "yugoloth" entry, in the *Outer Planes* appendix of the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM™*. Briefly, the *Book* is used to specifically summon yugoloths, a kind of "lower-planar lawyer." Some *Books of Keeping* summon a particular yugoloth by name. In the case of this module, the *Book* belongs to the major NPC Inajira. He keeps all his negotiated contracts in the *Book*, so it contains all the proof of his success and failure as a negotiator, which is paramount to a yugoloth's social standing and self-worth. Anyone who would attempt to take or keep it from him had better have godlike powers!

Within the confines of this game module a few significant attributes are ascribed to Inajira's *Book*