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**DCC
RPG**

CATHEDRAL OF THE UNDYING

A LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE
BY C. AARON KREADER



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Cathedral of the Undying
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Note to the Judge: In this adventure, PCs are likely to die and rise up again in a partially undead state. In testing, when this didn't occur early, players thought the challenge hopelessly difficult, but when the horrific transmutation into the undead *did* occur early, it often led to a disastrous sense of bravado. Let the dice fall and allow the death and undeath to occur if the fates of funky dice will it.

Background and the Blackmoon

Ages ago, the earliest Cathedral dedicated to Justicia was built in an era of blood and turmoil. Unbeknownst to the priests, it was also the site of a druidic stone circle charting the phases of the moon in reverence to Shul. The grounds were located on a geographic nexus of potent ley lines, tactically positioned by wise cosmic dreamers. Centuries later, the standing stones were used as building supplies by early priests of Justicia to fashion their original Cathedral bell tower. When Shul's priests arrived for their seasonal rituals, a conflict arose. This was resolved by savvy leadership. They struck a deal. On special holidays, the priests of Shul moved into the Cathedral to create a shared mystical space. The Festival of the Blackmoon is chief among these and occurs every few years. During this celebration, the world of the dead draws closer to the world of the living. For a brief time, the priests of Shul call forth their ancestors and connect those who have passed to the beyond with the living. The faithful of Justicia stand aside in reverence. For hundreds of seasons, this pact has made the unique site all the more powerful.

But agents of the Hidden Lord have carefully infiltrated the ceremonies to systematically, subtly pervert the rituals over the course of centuries in preparation for an auspicious moment. The celestial conjunction on this year's Festival of the Blackmoon provides that opportunity via a rare total solar eclipse! With its power the agents are flooding the site with necromantic energy—plunging the great Cathedral of Justicia into perpetual twilight. Trapped outside the bounds of time, the site has become an abomination to Justicia and Shul. If the dark ritual is not stopped, the sacred site

will be lost in the chaotic folds of the Hidden Lord, a place forever undead—not destroyed, but not existent. From a distance this perverted state causes the entire area to appear smudged out and darkened. Even in daylight, it is a shadowed hillock topped with a foggy structure. On the property, the dead stir and rise in an altered state of being.

Undeath Ritual Effects

The priests of the Hidden Lord have spoiled this sacred site with a perpetual connection to the realm of the dead. This affects rules around **death and dying** and **magic use**. In addition, it prevents anyone crossing into the grounds from being able to exit until the ritual has ended.

Death and Dying

Keep a secret account of how many times each PC dies. Then check below to see how they are affected.

First death: The PC arises after 1d4 rounds with 1hp as unholy necrotic worms bind their wounds.

Second death: After 1d4 rounds, necromantic energy floods the corpse of the PC, who arises with full hit points. They are now partially undead. They retain control over their own thoughts, have a personalized path to redemption, and an ability—depending on the PC's alignment:

Lawful: (GHOST!) *A ghost of your former self peels away from your body, translucent and floating in mid air. In spirit form you are now partially incorporeal. You cannot hold any items not already in your possession for more than 2 rounds. 1 in 4 hits pass right through you, doing no damage. You cannot pass any of your current items to anyone else.*

Ghost Redemption: *If you right the evils of this place and stop the madness within the Cathedral, you earn the privilege to return to the living—assuming your body is not destroyed or lost!*

Neutral: (WIGHT!) *You arise, breathless and unfeeling, your skin as pale as frost. The strength of the grave surges in your veins (gain 1d8 STR—max of 24). You hate the light, but can see in the dark very well (100' range). Strong lights or lights close to you cause blindness for 1d8 rounds and stun you for 1 round.*

Wight Redemption: *You must find and save the Cathedral High Priest and be exorcised (DC 12 Will save) or forever be a wight. The ritual takes 1 full turn.*

Chaos: (GHOUL!) *You rise up with bulging eyes, huge claws, and a crazed hunger for flesh. You gain 1 HD of hit points in your new form. Consuming fresh brains heals 1d4 damage, and your hands are sharpened claws (1d6 damage). This is now your preferred weapon. Attempting to use any other weapon, attack, or spell in the heat of combat requires a DC 10 Will save.*

Ghoul Redemption: *You must consume the brains of 3 recently killed living beings (not undead) to earn the strength to restore your life.*

All PCs who are partially undead, whether ghosts, wights, or ghouls, suffer the following:

- The PC can be turned as an undead of equal level.
- Cleric spells cast on or by an undead PC have -1D on casting die.
- Luck cannot be burned nor can it be gained.
- Undead PCs are pariahs in society, destined to be run out of town, killed, or turned by a local cleric unless a DC 13 disguise check is made or strong concealing magic is used. Powerful perfumes and elaborate costumes may also help.

Third death: The PC arises after 1d4 rounds as a mindless crypt creature (zombie) with one purpose—destroy the living! Allow the PC to play out their killing spree or do it yourself—Judge's choice. PCs killed in this form no longer return.

Magic Use

All magic use and spells cast within the Cathedral grounds are perverted in a few critical categories. Refer to the alterations below to see how spells are affected.

Magical Healing: Spells to restore health cast by a cleric or other spellcasters must flow within rules bound by undead forces housed in the Cathedral. For every point of damage healed, the caster must sacrifice an equal amount of life either from themselves or a willing subject within reach. Without this blood sacrifice, the spell simply fails.

Turning: Undead (excluding PCs who are partially undead) are empowered here, and therefore attempts to turn undead suffer -1D.

Summoning: The proximity to the plane of the dead and undying is so close that portals and summoning spells inadvertently reach into the grave, bringing forth 1d4 undead whose hate for the living makes them aggressive towards the closest living being. Roll 1d3 to determine what is summoned: (1) skeletons, (2) zombies, or (3) ghouls.

Necromancy and the Dead: Necromancy spells and spells associated with the dead gain +2 to the spell check. However, they are also overwhelmingly potent. Any spell check result of natural 1 causes an instant, gruesome death to the caster, whose vascular system bursts with uncontrolled necrotic force.

The Festival Begins

At the start of the adventure, a priest of the Hidden Lord (posing as a priest of Shul) appears to have escaped the horror. Presumably to plead for aid, she approaches clerics of Shul first, Justicia second, calling on their sense of righteousness to cleanse this defiled site. Her true purpose is to spread more chaos and death, so even PCs impartial to an appeal of virtue are tempted with wealth. She claims that the High Priests of both Shul and Justicia would grant great bounties to have the site sanctified once again.

The usual excitement of the Blackmoon celebration is amplified by the appearance of a solar eclipse. This brings a larger than usual host of lunar hermits, moon fanatics and augur witches eager to sell forecasts, issue omens, or cast harvest futures. The eager participants all relish these sacred days when the world of the dead is said to draw closest to the living and whisper secret messages from the grave. Picking your way through excited townsfolk, fortune-tellers, and priests, you are stopped by a peculiarly frantic madwoman. Her muck-covered tunic punctuates her urgent pleading. Gasping, eyes wide, she catches her breath and clutches your robe. "I beg you. Hear me out!"

If there are any clerics in the group, she first directs her appeals toward them. Clerics will notice, despite the muck, she wears the garb of a priest of Shul.

"The greatest Cathedral of Justicia, known to some as a sacred site to the moon god, has come under a foul curse this day! It would usually be a center of focus tonight, where even Shul priests are allowed access. But as preparations were under way, some sinister force crossed over from the grave. The high priest, monks, and laymen are all under siege. I was fortunate to be in the gardens and only just es-